

## UNIT - I

### **CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM**

Indian culture is the heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, political systems, artifacts and technologies that originated in or are associated with the Indian subcontinent. The term also applies beyond India to countries and cultures whose histories are strongly connected to India by immigration, colonization, or influence, particularly in South Asia and Southeast Asia. India's languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food and customs differ from place to place within the country

**Cultural heritage** is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that is inherited from past generations.

Cultural heritage includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artifacts), intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity).

### **RELIGIONS IN INDIA**

India is the land of religions. India being a secular country does not recognise any religion as state religion. The Constitution allows freedom of faith, worship and religion. India is the birth place of four of the world's major religious traditions, namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. The other religions in India are Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and the Bahai faith.

#### **Hinduism**

It is believed that Hinduism was the oldest religion to come into existence in India. Almost 80% of the population follows the Hindu religion in India. Hinduism is world's third largest religion after Christianity and Islam. Many aspects of Hindu philosophy like Yoga, Ayurvedic medicine, Vegetarianism, Karma and reincarnation have been popularized in the West by Indian Spiritual figures. Hinduism has a profound philosophy. The sacred tasks of Hindus are the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

#### **Jainism**

Jains form less than one percent of the Indian population. The states of Gujarat and Rajasthan have the highest concentration of Jain population in India. Jainism rejected the authority of the Vedas and Vedic rituals. It did not believe in the existence of God, but it believe in Karma and the transmigration of soul (Nirvana). The early Jains discarded the Sanskrit language and adopted Prakrit language.

## **Buddhism**

Though Buddhism originated in India, Now there is less than 1% of the India's population 85 percent of all the Buddhists in India are concentrated in Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh and the higher Himalayan habitats of north western India too have some Buddhist population. After originating in India , Buddhism spread throughout the central Asia, Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

## **Sikhism**

About 2% of the total population of India form Sikhs In comparison to other religions, Sikhism is a younger religion. Sri Guru Nanak Dev started the Sikh religion He was the first Guru of the Sikhs. Sikhism which emerged in the 15th Century tried to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Islam. Though Sikhism is dispersed widely over the entire India , their largest concentration is in Punjab, where they form the majority of the state's population.

## **Islam**

The second most dominant religion after Hinduism is Islam. In India, about 12% of the population follows the Islam religion. Though spread all over all parts of India. The ratio of Muslim population exceeds the national average in Lakshadweep Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and West Bengal. Though the Muslims form only 12 percent of the total population of India, the influence of Islam on Indian society is much stronger. The Muslim population in India is the third largest in the world. The shrines of some of the most famous saints of sufism like Moinuddin Chishti and Nizamuddin Auliya are in India. India is also home to some of the most famous monuments of Islamic architecture like the Taj Mahal and the Qutab Minar.

## **BAHA'I FAITH**

Bahai's are from various parts of the world. The Baha'i Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religion. India was the 6th country to have the Baha'i Faith introduced to it. Baha'i Faith in India is numerically small and tiny in proportion of the national population. The Baha'i House of worship in Delhi, popularly known as the Lotus Temple is a prominent attraction in Delhi. It was completed in 1986 and serves as the mother temple of the Indian subcontinent

## **Christianity**

Christianity is the third most dominant religion in India. At present there are about 2.3percent Christians in India .They are highly concentrated in Goa, Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

## **Zoroastrianism**

Zoroastrianism have an ancient history in India. Though the total number of Zoroastrains (Parsis) in Indian population is very less yet they continue to be one of the important religious communities of India. According to 2001 census, there are about 70,000 Parsis in India. Most of them live in Mumbai and the rest in Gujarat

## **Judaism**

Indian Jews are a religious minority of India. Judaism was one of the first foreign religions to arrive in India. According to the 1991 census there were about 5,271 Jews in India. Of the total Jewish population in India about half live in Manipur and Mizoram and a quarter live in the city of Mumbai. In Kerala a community of Jews are seen in the cities of Kannur (Kodungalloor) and Kochi.

## **PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN NORTH INDIA**

- Amarnath Cave, Jammu & Kashmir



One of the most sacred shrines for Hindus, the holy 'Amarnath Cave' is located in a narrow gorge at the end of the 'Lidder Valley' in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Covered with snow for most of the year, the cave gets accessible to pilgrims for only a short duration in summers around the festival of Shravani Mela in July and August. It is believed that Lord Shiva unrevealed the secrets of life, death, moksha and immortality to Goddess Parvati in this holy cave. Large number of devotees gather here to get the divine darshans of the natural Shivlinga formed from ice in this cave.

- Vaishno Devi, Jammu & Kashmir



Another one of the most revered Hindu pilgrimage destinations in India, is the holy shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi located on the 'Trikoort Parvat' near Katra in Jammu and Kashmir. Thousands of devotees from all across India and different corners of the world visit the temple every year. Three forms of Goddess Durga in shape of three natural rock formations known as 'Pindies' are worshipped in the cave of Mata Vaishno Devi.

The holy 'Vaishno Devi Yatra' starts from the base camp of Katra, covering a distance of almost 12km. Pilgrims need to cover the distance on foot. For those not in prime of health, ponies and palkis can be rented from Katra.

- Yamunotri, Uttarakhand



One of the 4 pilgrim destinations of the 'Chhota Char Dham Yatra' in Uttarakhand, Yamunotri marks the holy abode of Goddess 'Yamuna'. Home to the originating point of River Yamuna, one of the sacred rivers for Hindus, the place is visited by thousands of pilgrims every year. According to Hindu mythology, whoever takes bath in waters of River Yamuna gets a painless and peaceful death.

- Gangotri, Uttarakhand



Second of the 4 pilgrim destinations of the 'Char Dham Yatra' in Uttarakhand, Gangotri marks the holy abode of Goddess 'Ganga', the most sacred river of Hindus. Home to the originating point of Ganga River, this is one of the

most spiritual places for Hindus in the world. It is believed that taking a dip in holy waters of Ganga can relieve you from the vicious cycle of life and death.

- Kedarnath, Uttarakhand



One of the most revered pilgrim destinations for Hindus, Kedarnath is the home to one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva and also forms the 3<sup>rd</sup> dham of the Char Dham Yatra. The place is visited by uncountable number of pilgrims every year seeking spiritual bliss and salvation from an unending cycle of life and death.

- Badrinath, Uttarakhand



Last of the four dhams of the 'Chhota Char Dham Yatra' in Uttarakhand, Badrinath is the holy abode of Lord Vishnu. According to Puranic legends, Lord Vishnu performed a great penance here and his consort, Goddess Lakshmi, took the form of berry trees to shade him from the harsh sun. 'Badri' is the local name for berries and hence, this place came to be known as 'Badrinath'.

- Haridwar, Uttarakhand



Haridwar or the 'Gateway to God', is one of the most sacred pilgrim destinations in India. Located on the foothills of Himalayas and banks of holy Ganga River in the state of Uttarakhand, Haridwar attracts umpteen number of pilgrims, travellers and holiday seekers from across India and different corners of the world. Pilgrims travel to this holy city from far-off locations to take bath in holy waters of the sacred river to absolve their sins. Haridwar is also one of the 4 pilgrim destinations in India where 'Kumbh Mela' is organized on a rotation basis. Magical charm of the city with its bustling markets lined up with small eateries and curio shops, ghats crowded with pilgrims and sadhus and sounds of temple bells echoing in the ears; takes you in its full spirits.

- Rishikesh, Uttarakhand



Another sacred pilgrim destination for Hindus, Rishikesh is situated on the foothills of Himalayas on the banks of Ganga River in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand. Also named as the 'World's Yoga Capital', the place is dotted with numerous Yoga and meditation centres. Rishikesh is also home to various ashrams and is a hub of adventure activities like white water river rafting, mountain climbing and river rappelling.

- Mathura-Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh





The twin cities of Mathura and Vrindavan are associated with Lord Krishna. Located on the banks of River Yamuna in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Mathura is the place where Krishna was born and Vrindavan is where he spent his childhood and early youth. Many folktales of Radha and Krishna revolve around the city of Vrindavan. One of the important pilgrimage centres for Hindus, these holy cities are thronged by millions of pilgrims every year particularly during festivals of Janmashtmi and Holi.

- Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh



Nicknamed as the 'City of Temples', Varanasi is acclaimed to be one of the oldest cities in the world, situated on the banks of holy River Ganges in state of Uttar Pradesh. Once known as Benaras or Kashi, Varanasi is the most sacred city and spiritual centre for Hindus. Believed to have been created by Lord Shiva himself, many people come to Varanasi to spend their last days so as to attain salvation from the cycle of life and death. The city is a magnet for pilgrims, travellers, knowledge seekers and historians alike. Electrifying sounds of the temple bells, echoing chants and hymns of the temple prayers and a fragrance of incense in the air of the city; is sure to make you connect with your spiritual self.

## PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN SOUTH INDIA

- Guruvayur, Kerala

Guruvayur, Kerala PC: Vinayaraj Situated in the Thrissur district, Guruvayur is considered as Vaikuntam on earth for the devotees of Lord Krishna, making it one of the most visited shrines in South India. The main deity here is Lord Krishna, who is known as Guruvayurappan, apart from shrines dedicated to Ganesha, Devi and Sastha. Guruvayur Temple is considered as one of the richest temples in the state of Kerala and is managed by Guruvayur Devaswom Board. The shrine stands at one of the top positions for the number devotees that it gets on an everyday basis.



- Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh

Located atop the Seshachalam range, dedicated to Venkateshwara. the temple is considered as one of the richest temples in the country. The temple is also one of the most visited shrines which brings in visitors from not only across the country, but also from across the globe. Most of the devotees who come to this temple get their head tonsured as an offering to the deity for the numerous prayers answered and for the ones which are yet to be fulfilled. The shrine is administered by a governing body called Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. Apart from the shrine of Venkateshwara at Tirumala, TTD manages a number of temples across the country which includes historical ones such as the Padmavathi temple at Tiruchanur along with a number of them built by TTD.



- Sabarimala, Kerala

Located inside the Periyar Tiger Reserve in the Sahyadri ranges of Kerala is Sabarimala. Dedicated to Dharmasastha or Ayyappa, the shrine is one of the largest annual pilgrimages which happens across the globe which brings roughly about 50 million devotees every year. Unlike other temples, one cannot visit here everyday; the temple opens for worship only for a period of approximately 51 days annually and for the first five days of each Malayalam month.



- Madurai Meenakshi, Tamil Nadu

Located on the southern bank of the Vaigai river, the ancient temple is dedicated to Meenakshi and Sundereshwara. The temple is considered as the lifeline of the ancient city of Madurai. The shrine is well known across the globe for its grand gopurams which are filled with hundreds of sculptures of various gods and goddesses. The temple complex showcases one of the fine examples of Dravidian architecture. Here one would come across a 1000-pillar hall known as Meenakshi Nayakkar Mandapam.

- Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

A normal town in the state of Tamil Nadu which is home to the architectural wonders of the ancient Chola dynasty is Thanjavur. The place is one of the most visited destinations in South India and well known for the magnificent Brihadeshwara Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple not only holds an important place for its religious values but is equally important amongst those who love history. The structure is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one amongst the great living Chola temples. Thanjavur is home to various other temples, such as Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Keelaperumpallam Temple and many more.



- Hampi, Karnataka

Located on the banks of the Tungabhadra, Hampi is yet another UNESCO World Heritage Site. The place is home to the ruins of the glorious Vijayanagara Empire. Amongst the ruins is Virupaksha Temple which is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple is well known for its tall entrance tower, intricate carvings and grand architecture. Built in the 7th century, the temple had undergone a lot of additions by the rulers who came and ruled the place. Amongst the many, the Ranga Mandapa or the central pillared hall is the most visited and the credit for this goes to the king Krishnadevaraya.



- Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu

Dedicated to Lord Shiva is one of the rare temples where one gets to worship him in the form of the cosmic dancer, Nataraja. Shiva is worshipped here as Thillai Koothan and is one of the Pancha Bootha Sthalams, which are spread across Tamil Nadu. The deity here represents the element of the sky and is also known for some unique forms of worship apart from its architecture which is influenced by various art forms.



- Sripuram Golden Temple, Tamil Nadu

Dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, the temple complex is a spiritual park, which was opened to public in the year 2007. Covering a total area of 100 acres of land, the temple is constructed by Sri Narayani Peedam and features intricate works which are entirely covered in pure gold.



- **Ramanathaswamy Temple** is a Hindu temple dedicated to the god Shiva located on Rameswaram island in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. It is also one of the twelve Jyotirlinga temples. It is one of the 274 Paadal Petra Sthalams, where the three of the most revered Nayanars (Saivite saints), Appar, Sundarar and Tirugnana Sambandar, have glorified the temple with their songs. The temple was expanded during the 12th century by Pandya Dynasty, and its principal shrines sanctum were renovated by Jeyaveera Cinkaiariyan and his successor Gunaveera Cinkaiariyan of the Jaffna kingdom. The temple has the longest corridor among all Hindu temples in India.<sup>[1]</sup> The temple is located in Rameswaram considered a holy pilgrimage site for Shaivites, Vaishnavites and Smarthas

