

EVALUATING THE VALUE OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS: THE CASE OF RAJASTHAN, INDIA

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Abstract- In modern India, the tourism sector has flourished given the vast scale of heritage buildings and sites. The revenue of India's tourism sector has tripled ever since the preservation of historical structures came to the forefront. In light of this, the study undertakes the discussion of heritage buildings in relation to Rajasthan; the land of kings. The cultural grounds of Rajasthan are extensively high which is embarked on by the displacement of several Rajput rulers as well as Mughal kings. In addition, there is an active connectivity between Islam and Rajput since the latter's architecture is duly inspired from Islamic styles. Thereby, the study highlights the overview of India's heritage and role of cultural diversity and the evaluation of famous forts such as Chittorgarh, Amber and Jaisalmer.

Keywords: India's heritage, cultural diversity, heritage buildings, Rajasthan

INTRODUCTION:

India's prominence is entangled with its rich history of cultural and social values embarked on by the inception of the Indus valley civilisation and the introduction of Buddhism. Decades later, the historical value of monumental arches and figures is observed to be aggravated wherein it upholds the heritage of India (Chandel & Sharma, 2020). It is duly noted that heritage places have gained a critical position in the modern-day tourism sector attracting visitors from across the world. Accordingly, the impact of Rajasthan's history is viewed to be detrimental to securing the essence of heritage buildings and showcasing the grandiose rulers and their palaces and forts. UNESCO has created an elaborate list of buildings that hold the heritage and history of Rajasthan; Amer Fort, Jaisalmer Fort, Ranthambore Fort, Chittorgarh Fort and several others (Unesco.org, 2023).

In accordance, UNESCO undertakes three key facets; historical, cultural as well as scientific that helps in marking periodical places as a legacy of the concerned country. The value of cultural legacy passed on through the architectural structures is said to be crucial in preserving the core gems of India; highlighting the distinctiveness and diversity the nation offers to its spectators. Moreover, Rajasthan is treated as the heart of India's heritage and architectural marvels; solidifying the grounds of history and culture. Therefore, the study aims at assessing the impact of heritage buildings, especially, considering the case study of Rajasthan.

Literature Review

Assessing the magnitude and diversity of heritage buildings in India

It is undeniable that India's pride is rooted in diversity; incorporating a host of cultural values, religious beliefs and customs. As per the views of Saurabh & Sudhanshu (2021), India's heritage sites are ascertained to be an inherent factor in supporting its tourism sector. In compliance, the depth of diversity is observed to flourish through the marking of heritage buildings in India. Concerning this, it is ascertained that the theory of heritage is grounded in the practice of preserving historical time through the conservation of places, structures, parks and more. According to the notions of Pandit & Master (2021), the proposition of cultural diversity is envisaged in terms of history and time giving birth to legacy. On the same hand, Dhirendra, Sudesh & Suraj (2022) support this; diverseness observed in heritage structures is noted to be a direct outcome of the diversity of time. In other words, from the inception of the Indus Valley civilisation to the culmination of the Common Era, the expansion of cultural values, heritage buildings and diversity is witnessed in India.

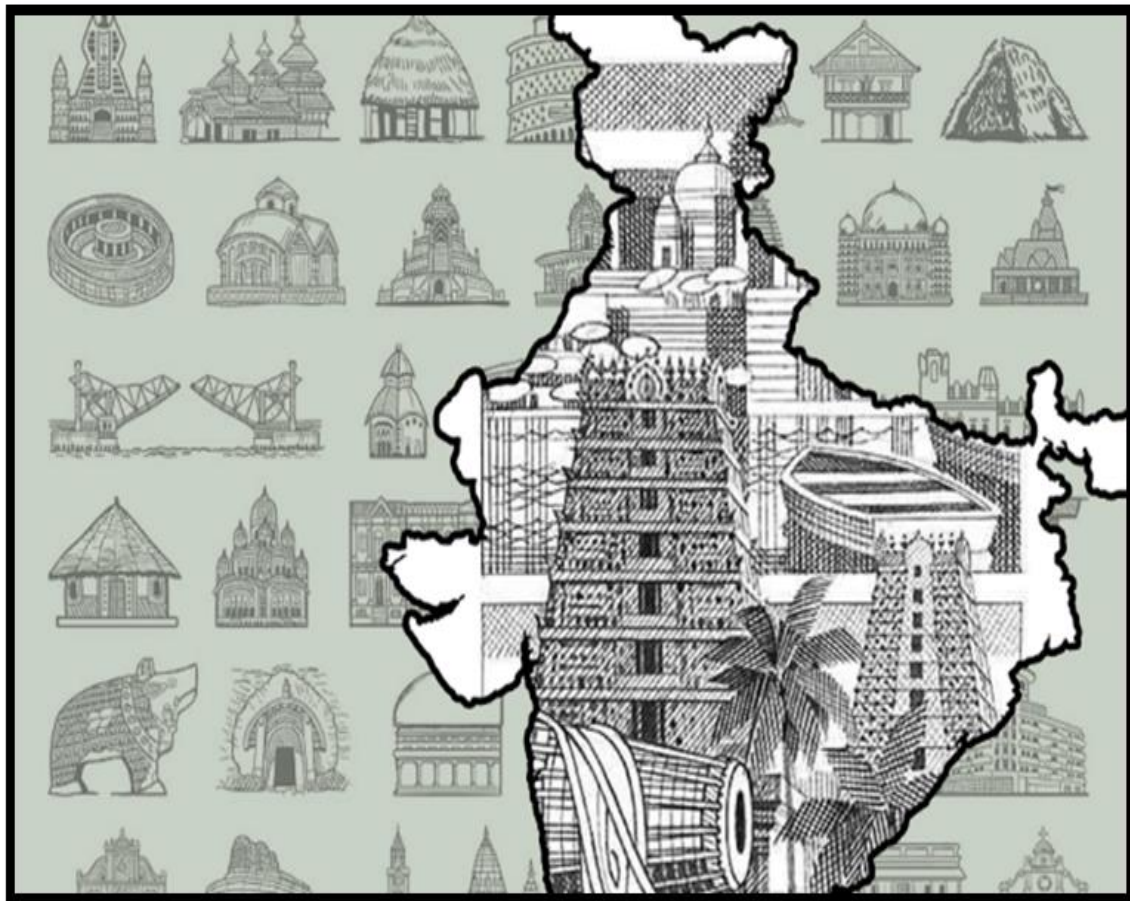


Figure 1: Glimpse of India's cultural and architectural heritage

(Source: Raj Sharma *et al.*, 2022)

From the preceding discussion, it is seen that diversity plays a pivotal role in accelerating the magnitude of heritage in India. Accordingly, the studies of Raj Sharma *et al.* (2022) outline the notion, along with cultural diversity; architectural styles and features of historical periods have become an emblem of India's heritage. There is huge distinctiveness in architectural structures that range from Hindu temples to South Indian worship places, an amalgamation of Indo-Islamic and Rajput styles, rock-cut architecture and many more. As pointed out by Chandel & Sharma (2020), the legacy of Indian rulers is ascertained to be the core fundamental in strengthening the grounds of heritage structures. Based on this, UNESCO's expansive list is witnessed which covers the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern regions of India. Thereby, the magnitude of heritage buildings is measured to be essential in brandishing the diverseness of the nation and incurring revenues in the tourism sector.

Overview of the historical monuments in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is viewed as one of the precursors in displaying a vast range of cultures, communities, and rich history. As per the views of Raj Sharma *et al.* (2022), the grandeur of Rajasthan is measured in its forts, fortress, palaces, Havelis and Jharokas, folk dance, cuisines and others. There is a mixture of old and new cultures which underlines the essence of Rajasthan; it is seen that royal structures have withstood the terror of time and surpassed regalness. According to the notions of Singh & Kumar (2022), the deserts land also known as the land of kings; Rajasthan has truly held onto its heritage which draws a pool of tourists to witness the rich and extraordinary buildings. In accordance, a list of UNESCO-added heritage buildings in Rajasthan is discussed.

Chittorgarh Fort

The timeless era of the Mewar Kingdom during the 7th century is observed through the lens of Chittorgarh Fort (Chandan & Kumar, 2019). In compliance with this fort, modern history has underlined the defeat of Rana Ratan Singh by the Turkic ruler; Alauddin Khilji in the era of 1303 (Wadhawan, 2021). Following the reports of Chandel & Kanga (2019), it can be seen that in the present day, the value of witnessing historic battle areas has gained immense prominence. In simple terms, the current flow of tourists has aggravated to view the enigma of the fort that comprises seven gates, giving the opportunity to explore the cultural regalness of Rajputana warriors. Moreover, it is observed that Chittorgarh Fort is recorded as India's largest fort (Frommen *et al.*, 2021). This historic piece of land has become a heritage site considering the history of Rajput and Mughal rulers along with queens such as Rani Padmini, Meera Bai and more.

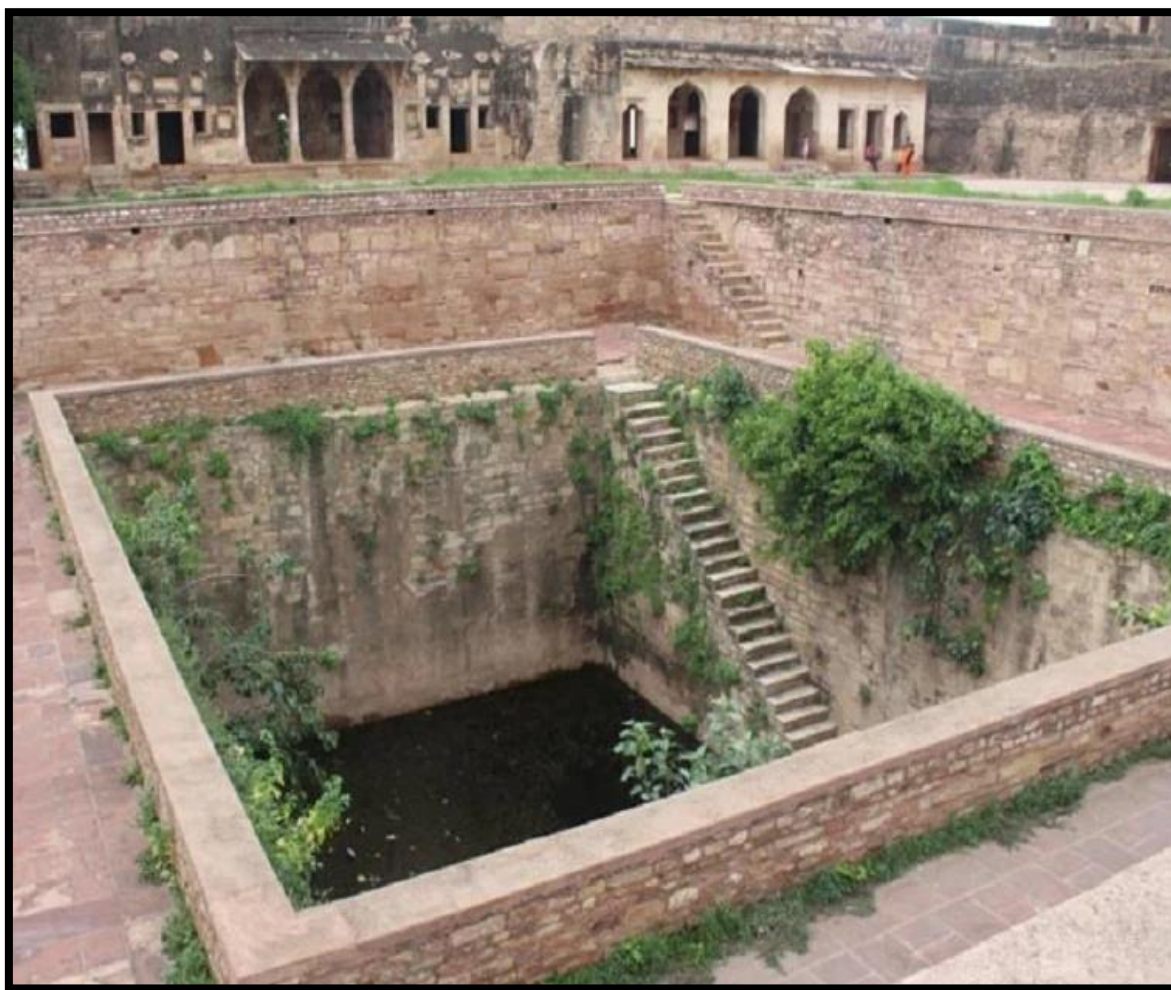


Figure 2: Jauhar Kund in Chittorgarh Fort

(Source: Wadhawan, 2021)

Figure 2 shows the famous Jauhar Kund that existed during the reign of Rana Ratan Singh which breeds the ground of self-immolation. As pointed out by Sharma & Kumar (2021), the practice of self-immolation has been an integral factor in India's history to save the pride and modesty of Rajput queens and ladies. Thereby, it can be said that Raajsthan's legacy follows a broad spectrum of battles, Rajput and Mughal cultures and many more (Dhingra & Chattopadhyay, 2021).

Jaisalmer Fort

The construction of the Jaisalmer fort is a resemblance to both Islamic and Rajput architectural styles which represent intricate arches and stone carved engravings (Chandel & Kanga, 2020). Built during the timeline of 1156 AD under the rule of King Rawal Jaisal involves a complex design that draws a geographical connection between India, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. Following the reports of Kaur *et al.* (2021), the most valuable factor of the Jaisalmer fort is its usage of golden sandstone wherein the name Golden Fort is derived from. It can be said that visitors come from around the world to behold the beauty of shining sandstone giving a golden reflection.



Figure 3: Jain Temples of Jaisalmer Fort
(Source: Saridhe & Selvaraj, 2021)

According to the findings of Saridhe & Selvaraj (2021), the Jaisalmer Fort incorporates both Islamic and Rajput features, however, the latter is much more visible in the marvellous structure. This is because religion is pivotal in Rajput architecture in accordance with mysticism and spiritual factors. Accordingly, figure 3 shows an interconnected relationship between religious beliefs and grandeur through the establishment of Jain temples.

Amber Fort

The etymology of the term Amber originates from the roots of the Ambikeshwar temple which is a religious depiction of Lord Shiva. However, as opined by Tiwari *et al.* (2021), most local population believe that Amber fort derived its name from its namesake; Goddess Amba. Following the religious connotation, it is seen that the enigmatic appeal of Amber fort is inherently correlated with scientific factors.

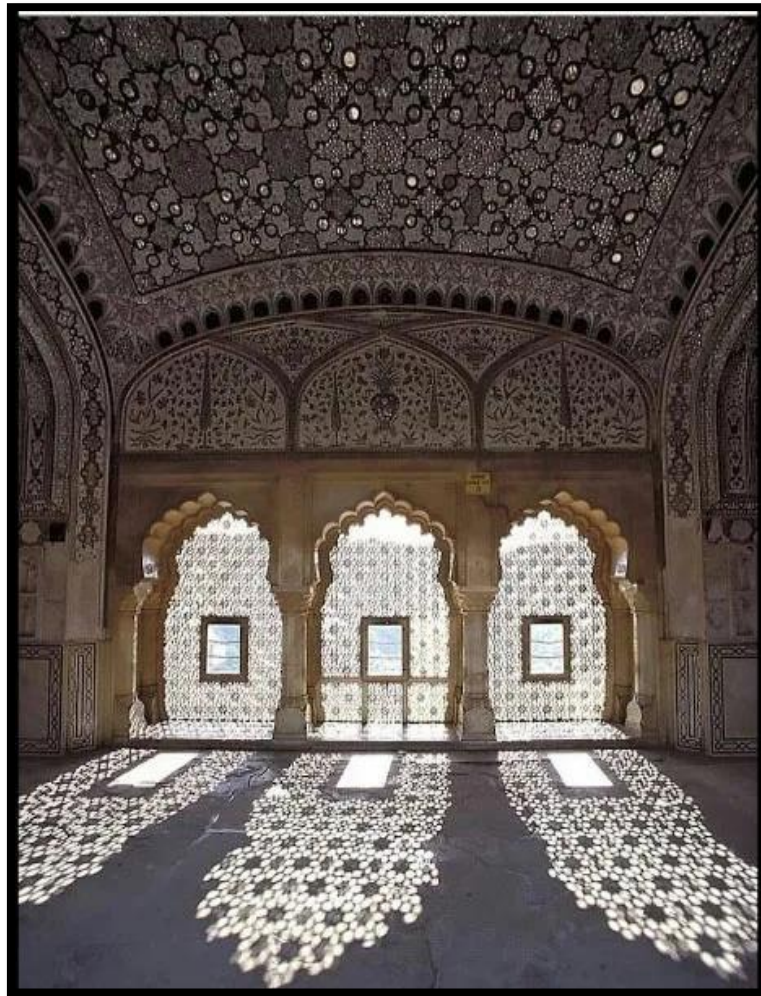


Figure 4: Sheesh Mahal in Amer Fort
(Source: Arora & Sharma, 2020)

As pointed out by Arora & Sharma (2020), a significant aspect of Amer fort is the creation of Sheesh Mahal also called the Palace of Mirrors. This involves scientific value wherein the ceiling is filled with strategically cut mirrors and it is placed in such a manner to reflect endless tiny specks of light from a single burning candle. Thus, the religious sanctum and scientific aura of Sheesh Mahal have given popularity to Amer Fort.

Critically analysing the implications of Rajasthan's monumental arches on India's tourism

From the above discussion, it is seen that Rajasthan architecture and historical buildings are a replica of the culture, tradition and customs borne by the population. As per the opinions of Rathore, Maheshwari & Kamal (2021), the role of heritage buildings is ascertained to be of immense value in accelerating the tourism sector of India. Concerning this, ancient India's history and royalty of Mughal, Rajput, Marathas warriors and other rulers have given rise to the rich heritage and cultural values that are still predisposed within the cultural sects of contemporary India.

On the contrary, Choudhary & Panwar (2022) argue, it is observed that excess tourism has derogated the conditions of timeless architectural structures and sites. Albeit Rajasthan's heritage buildings have increased the revenue of the tourism sector, it can be said that human civilisation is responsible to degrade the quality of places. Therefore, the monumental arches of Rajasthan are instrumental to map the line of a dynasty of ancient rulers and give a thorough understanding of the historical ties and treaties.

CONCLUSION:

The notion of heritage is assessed to be subjective considering the factors of culture, religion, science and history. Following the precedent arguments, it can be concluded that India's rich heritage is an active result of cultural diversity and the construction of humongous forts and palaces that stood the test of time. In present-day, the heritage value of the architectural structures has aggravated ten-fold and the rise of tourism industry is witnessed.

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