Chapter 13
UN SDGs and Context of Holy-Heritage Cities in India: A Study of Ayodhya and Varanasi

Rana P. B. Singh ⑩**, Sarvesh Kumar and Pravin S. Rana**

Abstract Following the UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) Target 11.4, focussing on 'Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', cultural heritage and urban sustainability are now considered inseparable part of holistic development. Religion had played an important role for controlling power in Indian monarchy in the ancient past, and in contemporary India too it played a role in the formation of religious landscape and corporate identity of religious heritage, through commonly using processions, pilgrimage, religious assemblies, religious fairs (*melā*) and sacred places. Newly introduced concepts of pilgrimage tourism will help to revitalise these sacred cities. Situated in the Ganga river basin, Ayodhya and Banaras both have been primarily ancient *tīrthas* (riverfront sacredscapes) and salvific cities that record settlement continuity since at least ca 800BCE. Under the umbrella of holistic development, Government of India is promoting inclusive heritage sustainable development of heritage sites (cities), through active participation of stakeholders in the purview of SDGs and future development.

Keywords SDGs · Pilgrimage tourism · Ayodhya · Varanasi · Inclusive heritage development · Riverfront sacredscapes

R. P. B. Singh (✉) · P. S. Rana
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 221005, UP, India
e-mail: ranapbs@gmail.com
URL: https://banaras.academia.edu/RanaPBSINGH/Papers

P. S. Rana
e-mail: psranabhu@gmail.com

R. P. B. Singh
ACLA-Asian Cultural Landscape Association (SNU), Seoul, Korea

S. Kumar
Department of Geography, D.D.U. Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur 273009, UP, India
e-mail: sarvesh1k@gmail.com

13.1 The Perspective: Culture, Cultural Heritage and Inclusive Heritage Development

The classical model of Sustainable Development (Gro Herlem Brundtland Report 1987; Fig. 13.1) has been critically examined after the passage of time and comprehended under the umbrella of Universal Forum of Cultures 2007, emphasising the base of Developing Civility—culture, language and religions for inter-faith dialogue. Three modes' model for culture and sustainable development has been structured engulfing sustainability (Fig. 13.2): **So**, Social; **En**, Environment; and **En**, Economic, where the three roles of Culture in Sustainable Development (the three circles representing the three pillars, **So**, **En** and **Ec**) are envisaged. In this model, Culture is *added* as the fourth pillar (a), Culture *mediating* between the three pillars (b) and Culture as the *foundation* for sustainable development (c). The arrows in the model indicate the ever-changing dynamics of culture and sustainable development (Dessein et al. 2015, p. 29).

Fig. 13.1 Basic frame of sustainability (*Source* Kumar 2018, p. 215, after Brundtland Report 1987)
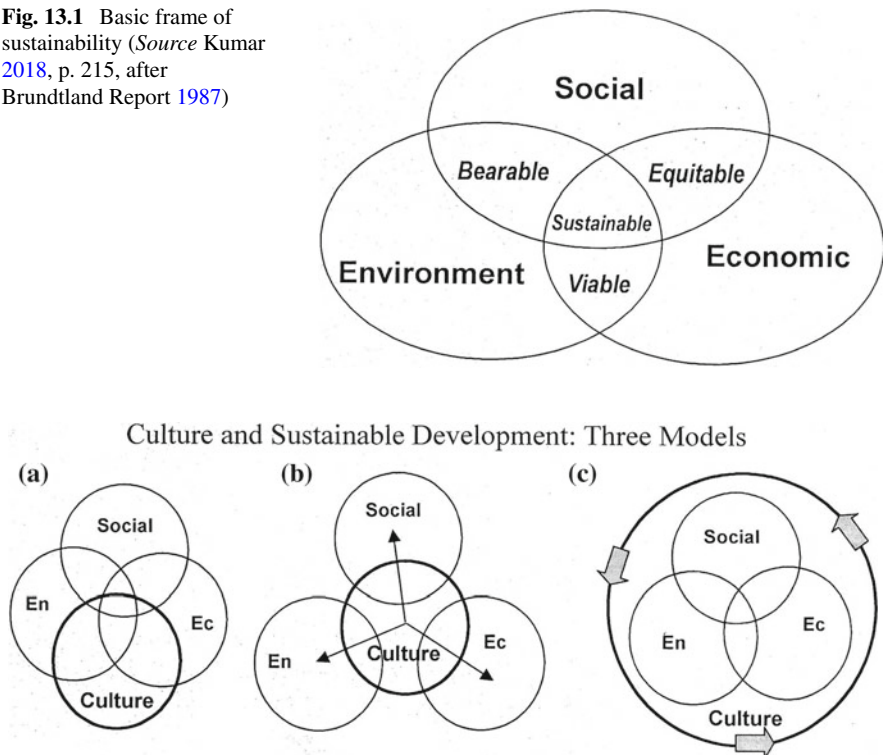

Fig. 13.2 Culture and sustainable development: Three models—**a** Culture *in* sustainable development, **b** Culture *for* sustainable development, **c** Culture *as* sustainable development (*Source* Kumar 2018, p. 215, substantially modified after Dessein et al. 2015, p. 29)

Within this perspective, the two heritage-holy cities of India, Ayodhya and Varanasi, are selected for illustrating their inclusive heritage development strategies and interlinking SDGs, especially Target 11.4, i.e. (i) vision for protecting and safeguarding cultural and natural heritages, and (ii) consideration of the local conditions, policies and orientation for preservation, protection and conservation of national cultural heritages.

13.2 Introducing the Two Heritage-Holy Cities: Ayodhya and Varanasi

It is important to note that not all of the geographical sites mountains, hills, rivers, caves, etc. are considered holy. They must possess some peculiarity together with sacral spirit and power of the place to qualify as a point where human beings can seek contact with the divine. Association of sacrality and the geographical setting enhances the sacred power of a place and therefore the awe or reverence to that. In fact, in the Indian case, one finds great attraction of sacred places that has initially not been due to a particular temple (alone), rather the geography of such holy places was significant (Singh 2015, p. 70, also Singh 2013, and Singh and Rana 2016).

The seven most sacred and salvific cities of the India include Ayodhya, Varanasi (Kashi), Mathura, Maya-Haridwar, Kanchi, Avantika-Ujjain, Puri, Dwarka (Fig. 13.3). The heritage-holy cities of Ayodhya and Varanasi are located in the Ganga river basin, which is served by the two main tributaries, the Sarayu (Ghaghara) and the Yamuna. The *Rig Veda* (RgV 1.23.20), one of the earliest texts dated ca 2000 BCE, narrates water as the possessor of life's infusing power, and the motherly qualities, thus considered as a spiritual endowment. The stories of the Ganga also associate the metaphysical, mystical and material worldviews of existence, continuity and maintenance of human life (Singh 2009a), thus the whole of its basin became sacred landscape (Singh 2015, p. 72).

Ayodhya (latitude of 26°47′16.67″ N and a longitude of 82°11′54.79″ E) is situated on the right bank of the holy river Sarayu (Ghaghara, a tributary of the Ganga) at a distance of 7 km east from Faizabad city (Fig. 13.3). Ayodhya was one of the famous cities and the first capital of the powerful Kosala Kingdom among the 16 Mahajanapadas of ancient India (Law 1944, p. 424). The city for a period of over two thousand years has borne witnessed to the presence of Jainism, Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Islam, and therefore Ayodhya consists of the sacred and religious places for Hindus together with Muslims, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs (Shaw 2000, p. 698, also Kumar and Singh 2016).

Ayodhya is sacred and religious place even for Janis. There are five Jain temples located near birthplaces of the five Jain Tirthankaras (angels), viz., Adinatha or Rishabhadev temple in Muraitola Swargadvara, Ajeetnatha temple near Saptsagar, Abhinandananatha temple near to Saraya, Sumanthnatha temple near to the Ramkot and last one Anantnath temple near to Golaghat. Ayodhya also records more than
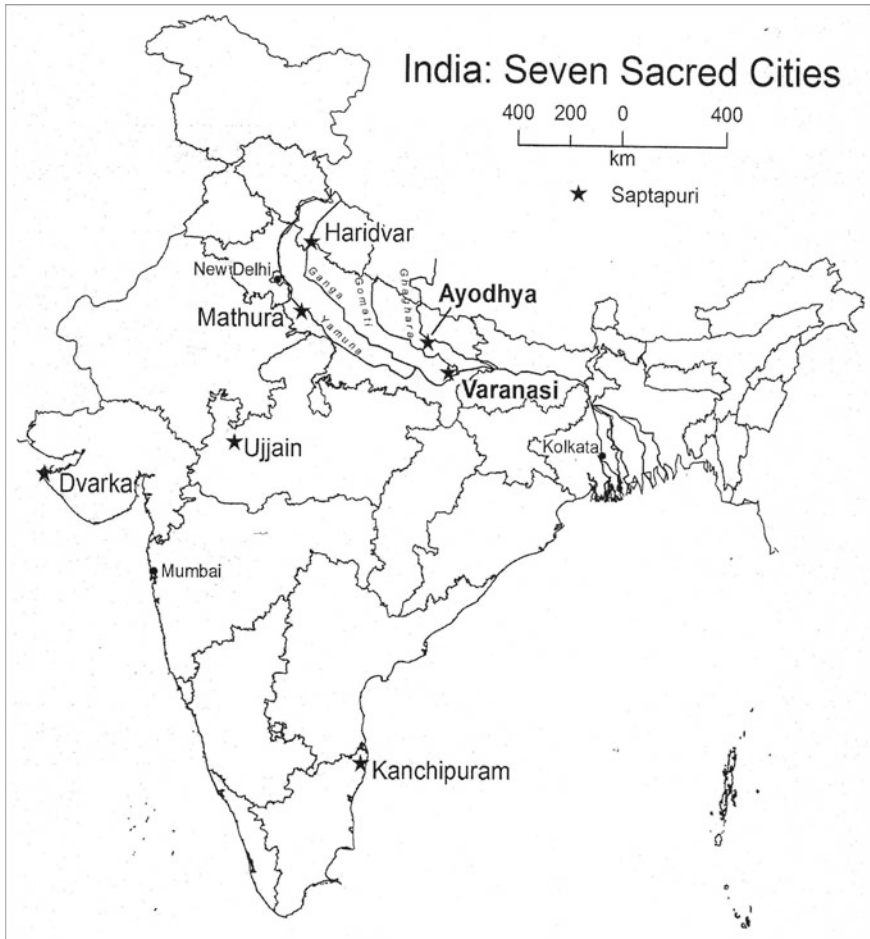
Fig. 13.3 India: Seven sacred holy-heritage cities (prepared by the authors)

hundred mosques, *mazars* (tombs), *idgahs* (prayer ground), Karbala (burial place), etc. related to Muslim sacred/ritual landscapes, that is how in metaphorically the city is called 'Chhoti Mecca' (Little Mecca). Muslims perform a variety of rituals in their sacred places.

Varanasi (latitude of 25° 19′3.52″ N and a longitude of 82° 58′26.09″ E) exists on the left side bank of the Ganga river (Fig. 13.3), and popularly called Kashi or Banaras. This city is popularly known as the Cultural Capital and Heritage city of India, and also as one of the oldest living cities in the world. While a number of cultures have risen high and fallen down, a number of cities disappeared in the abyss of time, Varanasi continued to grow and maintained its cultural and scholastic traditions of religious performances, learning, and arts and crafts.

Ashoka (272-242 BCE), who established the Buddhism as state religion, had paid a visit to Sarnath (northern part of the city), and under his patronage many monasteries, *stupas* and shrines were built. After the downfall of Mauryas, the prosperity of the city has gone into darkness till the rule of Kushana in the first century CE. However, again in the twelfth century, the city has recorded the glorious days, but due to several invasions the glories fell down.

In the early eighteenth century with the decline of the government in Delhi, Banaras first came under the rule of the Nawabs of Oudh in 1722, and later became the seat of Mansaram (1730–1738), the initiator of the present state of Kashi. Under the influence of the Marathas (1734–1785), a wave of cultural renaissance overtook Banaras who substantially rebuilt the city. For the first time in 1948, the Banaras Improvement Trust was formed for making 'Master Plan of Banaras', and thus in 1951 the first such plan was prepared. The ongoing Master Plan of Varanasi 2011–2031 incorporated the earlier strategies and structure for the future development on the line of SDGs and 'Smart City Development Plan'. The Comprehensive Development Plans (CDP) of both of the cities, Ayodhya and Varanasi, are in process of development under GOI missions of HRIDAY (*Heritage city Development and Augmentation Yojana*) and PRASAD (*Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive*).

Both of these historic cities are sacred places, of course primarily for Hindus, but also they historically represent other religious groups, like Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhs and Islam/Sufis (Muslims). Banaras is predominated by the Shaiva imageries, while Ayodhya by Vaishnavite. These sacred-heritage cities record a number of rituals, festivities, pilgrimage journeys and ancient temples, river ghats (stairways and bathing places), holy water bodies and riverfront sites, and associated heritage values—those are the representative grandeur of art and tangible and intangible heritage repositories that should be used as resources for sustainable urban development. Presently, around 1.9 million pilgrims/tourists pay visit to each of these places every year. Of course, there appear many dilapidating religious heritage sites and monuments in lack of sustainable conservation and preservation strategy, bad administrative management and lack of people awareness and their active involvement.

13.3 Heritage Zones: Ayodhya and Varanasi

The idea of heritage zone is based on the importance of an area possessing representation of ancient and alive religious and sacred sites that maintained the continuity of age-old tradition and considered to be a basic resource for inclusive heritage development. These areas and zones are identified in the ongoing Master Plans of the heritage-holy cities of Ayodhya and Varanasi.

13.3.1   Ayodhya

Ayodhya is predominantly a sacred-heritage city that is how religious landscapes are the prevalent scene, and their concentration in specific area is taken to demarcate the specific zone. The ongoing framing of the Master Plan, which first shaped for 1983–2001 and now still in process for 2021, mentions scattered religious sites spotted in different parts, which can easily be bounded with four heritage zones (Fig. 13.4).

13.3.1.1   Ramkot Heritage Zone

In this zone, 55 properties are enumerated, including Hindu temples, *ghats* (riverfront bathing places), *kunds* (water pools), Jain temples, Muslim shrines and tombs, and passing on pilgrimage routes. The Ayodhya Act-1993 and Archaeological Survey of India's rules related to acquisition of land (buildings, shops, residential houses) near to Ramkot (Ramajanmabhumi) by provenance and rule under the Central Government of India prohibits any type of new constructions in the vicinity of Ramkot, to avoid interrupting security of the Ramajanmabhumi. However, there are incidences of illegal encroachments, taking benefit of religious sentiments.
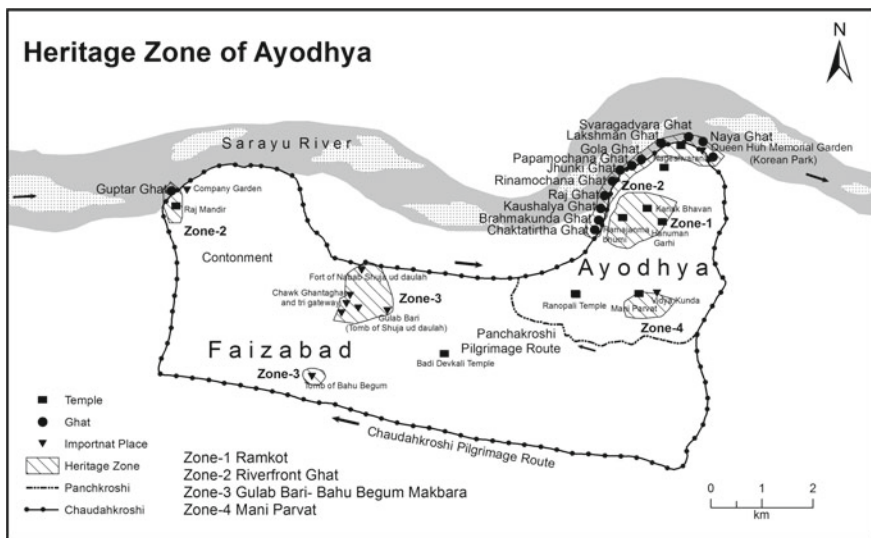

Fig. 13.4 Ayodhya: Heritage zone (compiled and prepared by the authors)

13.3.1.2   Riverfront Heritage Zone: Ghats and Temples

The bank of the Sarayu River at Ayodhya consists of 25 bathing places (*ghats*); those are counted as sacred and ritualistic sites for Hindu adherents. The riverfront buildings (monasteries and built heritage) are the distinct architectural grandeur, built mostly by kings and lords from different parts of India between eighteenth and twentieth centuries. This zone consists of two parts, viz., the eastern and the western. Most of the riverfront sacred-heritage sites are in the eastern part. Among these, Svargadvara Ghat ('door to the heaven'), spreads between the Sahastradhara and the temple of Treta Ke Thakur, is the most popular *ghat* for bathing and related rituals (Kumar and Singh 2015).

13.3.1.3   Gulab Bari–Bahu Begum Maqbara Zone

This zone contains about seven properties related to Nawab period, i.e. Gulab Bari or tomb of Suja-ud-daula, Tomb of Bahu Begum (Maqbara) and Tomb of Bane Khanam, and all are under the protection of Archaeological Survey of India. Tomb of third Nawab of Avadh Shuja-ud-daula is situated in the inner part of Gulab Bari. The construction of this tomb was initiated by Shuja-ud-daula in his Nawabi period and after death in CE 1775 he was buried in this tomb. The final construction of the tomb with dome and tower was accomplished by Bahu Begum, the wife of Nawab Suja-ud-daula in CE 1789.

13.3.1.4   Mani Parvat Zone

This zone contains more than 20 properties associated with Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. Mani Parvat (mound) is the oldest Buddhist ruined site dated ca 400 CE that was seen by Faxian (Bakker 1986 II, p. 31), but presently it is known for Rama Sita temple and the ceremonial place for Shravan Jhula festival. This site is under the protection of Archaeological Survey of India. The Vidya Kunda lying 200 m east from the Mani Parvat and 1.75 km south-west from the Sita Kunda is situated in the inner courtyard of the Mahavidya temple complex.

Apart from the four heritage zones, pilgrimage and its associated sacred routes are the other common religious heritage zones in holy cities. Ayodhya has developed five pilgrimage routes in continuity of history, viz., Chaurasikroshi, Chaudahakroshi, Panchakroshi, Ramkot ki Parikrama and Antargrihi Parikrama; among these the two latter are minor and relatively less popular (Fig. 13.4). Three major pilgrimage routes define the three territorial limits of Ayodhya, viz., Chaurasikroshi, Chaudahakroshi and Panchakroshi. Like most of the pan-Indian holy centres, Ayodhya too displays a three-tier cosmology, respectively, as *macro* (i.e. *mandala*, the Outer one), *meso* (i.e. Kshetra, the Middle one) and *micro* (i.e. Puri/city, inner sanctum) cosmos, all demarcated by routes and linked archetypally by temples/shrines and are described

in the ancient mythologies, which are frequently cited in various rituals and group-chanting and sacred walks.

13.3.2 Varanasi: Heritage Zones

In the Master Plans for Varanasi, for the first time some strategies of urban heritage and heritage zoning were proposed in the recent Master Plan (1991–2011; Singh 2009b, p. 327), focussing on to maintain and preserve the ancient glory of Varanasi, and to identify necessary facilities and infrastructure and various heritage complexes. The heritage zone as delimited in the Master Plan 2011 has been further incorporated in the ongoing Master Plan 2011–2031. Only a little over 2% of the total area is proposed under tourism and heritage zone. According to the zoning plan, five heritage zones have been identified (see Singh 2009b, p. 329–332; and Singh and Rana 2019, p. 155–158, Fig. 13.5).
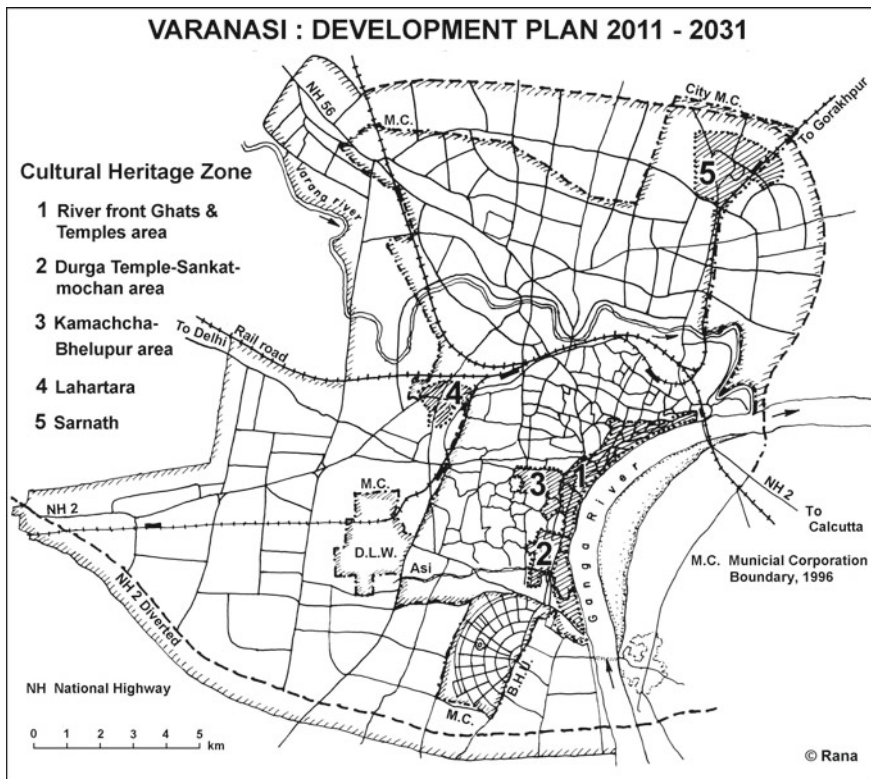

Fig. 13.5 Varanasi, Development Plan 2011–2031 (after Singh 2015, p. 102)

13.3.2.1 Riverfront Ghats (Stairways to the Riverbank)

The riverfront heritage covers the eastern portion of the city stretching within 200 m from the riverbank. Eighty-four riverfront *ghats* spread over a length of 6.8 km along the crescent-shaped bank of the River Ganga, from the south to the north. The riverfront is overlooked by lofty palatial buildings built between eighteenth and twentieth centuries, mostly by kings and lords from different parts of India; the area is primarily occupied by various shrines, temples and religious places.

13.3.2.2 Durgakund–Sankatmochan Area

This area contains about twenty temples and shrines and the water pools of Durgakund and Kurukshetra *kundas*, which are two historic sacred tanks dating from the late eighteenth century. Every Tuesday, and more frequently in the month of *Shravana* (July–August) and *Ashvina* (September–October), especially during the nine nights (*Navaratri*) in the light lunar fortnight (waxing), worshippers perform rituals honouring goddess in the Durga temple. This temple was built on the orthodox model of Hindu architecture. Towards the east near the Ganga river is the oldest sacred pond in Varanasi, called Lolark Kund, which was referred to in the epic *Mahabharata* (second century BCE) and which continue to attract a large mass of pilgrims, especially on its annual day of celebration falling on the *Bhadrapada* (August–September) 6th of the light-half lunar fortnight.

13.3.2.3 Kamachha–Bhelupura Area

This area records some of the old monasteries, ancient shrines and an ancient heritage site associated with the Jain Tirthankara Parshvanath, together with many monuments and buildings of the British period (eighteenth—nineteenth centuries). The historically notable temples and shrines of heritage values in this zone are Kamachha Devi, Krodhan Bhairava, Angareshi Chandi, Vatuka Bhairava and Vaidyanath Shiva.

13.3.2.4 Kabir Math (Lahartara) Area

This site was the birthplace of Kabir, a great saint-poet and social reformer of the sixteenth century. The Kabir Temple Complex is coming up as a great modern religious heritage and centre of solace and learning; of course it is turning to be a 'White Elephant'—less associated with the local society and culture. Under the heritage development project by the State Government, some works have already been going on.

13.3.2.5   Sarnath

This archaeological heritage site was famous for its sanctity, beauty and natural scenery, qualities that attracted the Buddha to give his first sermon here in 528 BCE. Following Muslim invasions and the downfall of the Gahadavalas Kings in the late twelfth century, the site was left in ruins and only came to light in CE 1793.

Varanasi is famous for its series and layers of sacred circuits (counting to 54), among which the Panchakroshi is the most popular. This pilgrimage circuit representing the cosmo-spatial *mandalic* territory (*kshetra*) of Kashi is a unique attribute of Varanasi, where exist 108 temples and shrines. Under the recently initiated heritage development project, partial works like improvement of roads, cleaning of the water pools and repairing of some of the roads are being completed. On the ground of pilgrimage tourism, this cosmic circuit should be given special emphasis, so also promote sustainable heritage tourism (for details see Singh and Rana 2018).

13.4   Ayodhya and Varanasi: Intangible Heritage on UNESCO Scale

The Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), conceived as the mainspring of humanity's cultural diversity, covers the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. The ICH has been transmitted from generation to generation, maintained and continued while also absorbing several aspects at different times as response and acceptance of the society.

The UNESCO has broadly classified ICH into five categories: (1) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (2) performing arts; (3) social practices, rituals and festive events; (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) traditional craftsmanship (see Singh 2015, pp. 125–126). While giving due consideration to the UNESCO Scale of ICH, in the Indian perspective of the ICH, specially referring to holy-heritage cities like Ayodhya and Banaras, various attributes of the ICH can be classified into ten broad categories (see Singh 2015, p. 127, also Singh et al. 2020, p. 252; see Table 13.1).

As discussed above, Ayodhya and Banaras, both are fully suited to be designated as sites of intangible cultural heritages (ICH) and their associated attributes should be taken care of in the inclusive heritage development in the frame of SDGs.

Table 13.1 Attributes of intangible cultural Heritage: Ayodhya and Varanasi

Se	Cultural Heritage attribute (selective)	Ayodhya (major/selected ones referred)	Varanasi/Banaras (major/selected ones referred)
1	Oral Traditions	Rama Katha (religious storytelling), Birha—folk songs, singing, dancing	Katha (religious storytelling), Birha—folk songs, singing, dancing
2	Performance Arts	Bhajan, Nautanki, Bharat Milap, Lok Nritya (folk dances), Ramajanma Badhai, Birha, Ramanami chanting, etc.	Classical like Dhrupad, Sanskrit Theatre, Folk dance and singings, Bharat Milap, instrumental and performances
3	Ramalila—Krishnalila (theatre form of the God's story; varieties, distinctive; historical)	at Bhagvatacharya Smaraksadan, Bade Sthan, Gola Ghat, Lakshmankila, Jankimahal trust, Ramajanaki Mandir—Sahabganj, Kothaparcha, Fatehganj, etc.	at Ramanagar, Chitrakut, Assi Ghat, Nati Emli, Chetganj, Khojwa, Shivpur, Dashavatar Lila; Krishnalila—(Assi Ghat), Nrisimhalila, etc.
4	Parikrama/Yatras, Pilgrimages	Chaurashikroshi Yatra, Chaudahkroshi Yatra, Panchakroshi Yatra, Ramkot ki Parikrama, Antergrihe Parikrama, Kalpvas	Chaurashikroshi; Panchakroshi; Avimukta; Nagar Pradakshina; Antargriha—Vishveshvara; Omkareshvara; Kedareshvara; Aditya (Sun) Yatra; etc.
5	Rituals and Festivals (selective) # For dates of selective Festivals, see Singh 2015, the Appendix: 1, p. 124	*HINDU Festivals*: Makara Samkranti, Matgajendra Mela, Chaitra Navaratri, Rama Navami, Sarayu Mahotsav, Savan Jhula Mela, Krishna Janmasthami, Hanuman Jayanti, Gudara ka Mela, Surya Kunda Mela, *MUSLIM Festivals*: Muharraum, Idul-Fitr/Idul-Juha, Sabbe-rat, etc.	*HINDU Festivals*: Makara Samkranti, Maha Shivaratri, Ganga Dashahara, Krishna Janmasthami, Lolarka Chhata Mela, Naga Nathaiya, Surya Shashthi Chhatha (Karttika Purnima), Buddha Purnima; *MUSLIM Festivals*: Muharraum, Idul-Fitr/Idul-Juha, Sabbe-rat, etc.
6	Traditional Art and Craftsmanship	Murti casting (sculpturing), wooden work, special sweets (e.g. Anarsa), special breakfasts—Kachori and Imarte, Samosa	Murti casting (sculpturing), Shringar (icon decorative art), Silver work, wooden toy making, Silk weaving (Banarasi Sari), etc.

Table 13.1 (continued)

Se	Cultural Heritage attribute (selective)	Ayodhya (major/selected ones referred)	Varanasi/Banaras (major/selected ones referred)
7	Scholastic Traditions and schooling and discourses system	RML Avadh University, Narendra Dev University of Agriculture and Technology, Gurukul Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, KPSL Saket Mahavidyalaya, Rama Nam International Bank	B.H.U., M.G.K. Vidhyapith, S. Sanskrit University, Central University of Tibetan Studies, Parshvanath Jain Institute, Institute of Textile and Weaving, Udai Pratap PG College, Darul Salfia Islamia
8	Indigenous Knowledge and Healing Tradition	Sanskrit study, meditation, Ramakatha Vyas Pitha (Rama Katha Vachak)	Nature therapy, Yoga centres and tradition, Ayurvedic medicine and centres
9	Memorials, icons and Saints' associated sites and related performances	Shri Rama, Gautam Buddha; Five Jain Tirthankara: Rishabhadev, Ajeetnatha, Abhinandananatha, Sumanthnatha, Anantnatha; Tulasi; Nanak/other Sikh saints; Muslim Mazars: Hazrat Noah, Shesh Paigambar, Hazrat Sayad shah (Adgada Mazar)	sites related to Shankarachaya, Tulasi, Kabir, Ravidas, Dadu, Nanak, etc., Rani Lakshmi Bai; Muslim Mazars: Sheikh Salim Chisti, Sheikh Ali Hazim, Shah Taaiyyab Banarasi, Ghazi Miyan Chandan Shahid
10	Birthplaces and memorials of Freedom Fighters and Literates, and related celebrations	Narendra Deva, Mangal Pandey, Chakbast and Mir Babar Ali Anis (Urdu Poet), Umrao Jaan, Begum Akhtar (singer of Ghazal, Dadra, and Thumri genres of Hindustani classical music)	Pt Gopinath Kaviraj, L.B. Shastri, Bismillah Khan, Pt. Ravi Shankar, Premchand, Bhartendu Harishchandra, Jaishankar Prasad, Ram Chandra Shukla, Birju Maharaj, Girja Devi, and others

Source Compiled by the authors, with additions; see also Singh 2015, p. 127

13.5 Shaping Sustainable Heritage City System

The structuring, shaping and operating sustainable heritage city (SHC) system may be arranged into six-tier operation, i.e. 1—Setting the vision for SHC of the venture, 2—Identifying the SDGs Target 11.4 and Inclusive Heritage Development, IHD, Strategies, 3—Achieving the Political Cohesion, 4—Building the SHC Frame, 5—Measuring the SHC's Potential and the Progress, and 6—Ensure Accountability and Responsibility (see Table 13.2). The structural shaping is rationally befitting to both of the cities, Ayodhya and Varanasi.

Table 13.2 Shaping sustainable heritage city (**SHC**) system

SHC attribute	Resultant function
1. Setting the vision for SHC of the venture ↓↑	Identifying—an inclusive heritage city vision is tune with the heritage city's identity and long-term inclusive heritage development, **IHD**, strategy; relevant multi-stakeholders and mechanisms; the existing governance and organisational mechanisms for historic heritage city solutions
2. Identifying the SDGs Target 11.4 and IHD Strategies ↓↑	Developing heritage city infrastructure (e.g. Internet of Things); Identifying and developing smart and sustainable heritage city services in the purview of SDGs Target 11.4 containing within the so-called 'Urban Sustainable Development Goals'
3. Achieving the Political Cohesion ↓↑	Local governments should obtain the necessary political approval and backing to ensure that the strategic programme is pursued as related to IHD. This includes the adoption of the programme/targets through consensus
4. Building the SHC Frame ↓↑	Improvement of existing traditional infrastructure and new infrastructure must be built under the IHD; developing an action plan for Public–Private–Partnership programmes; ensuring long-term services via good operation maintenance of Sustainable Heritage City, **SHC**
5. Measuring the SHC's Potential and the progress ↓↑	Consisting of monitoring and evaluating potential and work programme required to achieve the UN—SDGs Target 11.4, emphasising a set of sustainable development targets related to heritage cities and heritage sites and settlements
6. Ensure Accountability and Responsibility ↓↑	Involves evaluating, reporting and learning from SHC process and related experiences. The reflective process of evaluation will feed into a process of continuous learning, which in turn will influence and inform the IHD of the future vision and strategy for smart and SHC

Source Kumar (2018), p. 216, developed in Indian context taking in view the ITU-T FG-SSC (2015), and Habitat III Quito Report, October (2016)

In successful operation of Sustainable Heritage City System, like to other planning models, community participation is the key energy in functioning and maintenance of the system by making rational balance among social (religious and cultural heritage), physical (housing and community development) and economic (cultural heritage tourism) attributes of heritage-holy city; this can easily be schematized using set and superimposing sets (see Fig. 13.6).

Fig. 13.6 Interacting Action
Plan for Community
Participation (prepared by
the authors)

13.6 Heritage and Pilgrimage Inclusive Development: Framing HRIDAY and PRASAD

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, and Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, have recently initiated counter-depending missions of (i) *Heritage city Development and Augmentation Yojana* (HRIDAY), and (ii) *Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive* (PRASAD), with an aim to strengthen and promote the heritage sites and centres of pilgrimage tourism in making the environment green and sustainable while befitting into the roots of culture and traditions. Through the newly formed government in Uttar Pradesh, an agreement between GOI Ministry of Culture and Tourism and government of U.P. has been made on 24 March 2017 to develop and transform the holy cities as special sites for heritage and religious tourism, which includes Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura, Gorakhpur and Agra. Special plans are also in process preparing conservation and rejuvenation of heritage and religious sites in these cities (see Singh and Rana 2019, p. 168).

13.6.1 National Mission of HRIDAY

The National mission on the '*Heritage city Development and Augmentation Yojana*' (HRIDAY), aims conserving and preserving the distinct and unique characters of the *heritage cities*, those continued their traditions of heritage (tangible, intangible, transitory and cultural landscapes. They would be used as a resource for sustainable development and ecological restoration on the line of achieving the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). The strategy of SDGs also includes cleanliness, planning, livelihood of the local people and economy (cf. Kumar and Singh 2019, p. 78). The protection, augmentation, management, authenticity and integrity of properties (both

tangible, intangible, and transitory) are also important considerations, together with the marked specific characteristics.

13.6.2 National Mission of PRASAD

Aiming to beautify and improve the amenities and infrastructure at pilgrimage centres of all faiths, a National mission on '*Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive*' (PRASAD) has been announced in the Union Budget 2014–2015 and an amount of Rs. 1,000 million (US$ 15 mill.) has been proposed for this initiative. Under PRASAD the old historical–cultural pilgrimage routes and associated sites would also be developed (see Kumar and Singh 2019, pp. 78–79).

These two schemes together planned to activate the following objectives (see Kumar and Singh 2019, p. 326):

- Enhancing heritage sensitive infrastructure in the purview of planning, development and implementation.
- Introducing service delivery and infrastructure provision that befit to core areas in historic cities (e.g. Ayodhya and Varanasi).
- Motivating tourist and pilgrims to have direct experience of uniqueness of city' heritage and improving sensitivity to preserve and revitalise heritage.
- Preparation and easy accessibility of Heritage Inventory Register, which may provide the historical accounts and a basis for urban planning, growth and service provision and delivery.
- Basic service delivery, including sanitation services like public conveniences, toilets, water taps, street lights with the use of latest technologies in improving tourist facilities/amenities to provided, having a system of monitoring and continuous appraisal.
- Local capacity building and scope for absorbing the contemporary problems related to inclusive heritage-based industry be implemented.
- An inter-changing and countering system of effective linkages between tourism and cultural facilities, including conservation of natural and built heritage, should be strengthened.
- Using appropriate and indigenous technologies for retrofitting historic buildings and urban heritage adaptive rehabilitation and maintenance, the structural plan to be chalked out (HRIDAY 2015).

The interfaces and reciprocity between pilgrimage and tourism are integral parts of human travel. That is how 'pilgrimage tourism' ('*Tīrthayātrā-Paryatan*') is considered as an alternative for the solution; of course, this is more inclined to metaphysical issue and life philosophy: meeting sacred and profane. Pilgrimage tourism is considered now as strategy for heritage awakening, deeper experiences and transferring the religiosity into global humanism and spirituality (see Rana 2014). The sustainable frame of pilgrimage tourism and heritage should be promoted in three ways: philosophical, organisational and managerial, which may fulfil the objectives

of SDGs Target 4.7 and Target 11.4, focussing inclusive development together with protecting and safeguarding the cultural and natural heritages. In recent debate, the eco-healing approach to pilgrimage tourism is considered as a post-modernist way to consider pilgrimage as a bridge between recreation and spirituality; this way pilgrimage tourism will hope to provide a rational alternative for cultural awakening and strategy for poverty alleviation (cf. Singh, Rana and Kumar 2019, p. 80). As the 'caring for the place (the *Earth*)' is inherent in the pilgrimage tourism, it will also provide opportunity to intimately sense and deep feelings for the place and the people—their behaviour, their heritage and the present lifeworld in which they live, act and keep the glorious tradition alive, see Singh (2011a, 2011b).

The approach to study tourism so for has been the study of economic activity. However, it limits the scope and answer to many questions posed as a consequential result. On the line of 'commodification approach' proposed by Ashworth (1991, p. 111), the 'eco-healing package' may be considered that may extend the horizon of potential resources in pilgrimage tourism as an alternative tourism, expected that it will fulfil the objectives of PRASAD (see Singh 2004, p. 213).

13.7   Epilogue: Vision and Concluding Remarks

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, as a result of a concerted effort from many sectors, the SDGs contain an explicit heritage target, Target 11.4, it calls for making cities and human settlements inclusive, and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. The Target is contained within the so-called 'Urban Sustainable Development Goals', a set of sustainable development targets related to heritage cities and settlements. Taking in view the prevailing condition in holy-heritage cities in India (e.g. Ayodhya and Varanasi), the basic frame for holistic development will be chalked out. Conserving heritage renews a sense of identity can inspire new smart and sustainable system in pilgrimage city and sacred town development patterns, especially emphasising on the valorisation of the assets of the poor. In the other context of SDGs, the social sustainability of heritage city is based on social groups of local living peoples, pilgrims and *sadhus* (Hindu religious ascetic), resulting in social beliefs and cultural performances in the form of intangible cultural heritage. According to the ancient history, Ayodhya and Varanasi have been historically the holy-heritage cities where various social groups through the religious faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam meet together in making multiple visitation sites of heritage importance and nexus of harmonious life.

On the line of the earlier proposal (that was not finalised yet), taking UNESCO Guidelines for inscription in the World Heritage List, cities of Ayodhya and Varanasi are also in the process of assessment as both fulfil the five criteria out of ten (see Kumar 2018, pp. 243–247, and Kumar and Singh 2017, pp. 58–65). The making of dossiers for getting Ayodhya and Varanasi in the UNESCO WHL is in process since last decades, while taking in view the strategies of Smart City Development and

SDGs (cf. Gidwani 2012); however, these are only the political agenda for mobilising people in their support, instead of real sense, prioritisation and action.

Cultural tourism plays a great role towards socio-economic changes and promotion of sustainability. According to Indian sentiment, the pilgrim's centres or *tirthasthāna* used to be visited by number of tourists to earn virtue (Dasgupta, et al. 2006, p. 11). As one of the largest industries, tourism is associated with many of the prime sectors of world's economy. Economic sustainability of Ayodhya and Varanasi is regulated by annual visit of tourists (of course, mostly pilgrims), recorded ca 1.9 million, in each of the places, in 2018. Taking this view government is trying to promote pilgrimage tourism in the purview of SDGs, taking in view 'heritage-making' ('*heritagization*' or '*patrimonialization*' in French). Pilgrimage defined as 'a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding' (Collins-Kreiner 2009, p. 153); that's how pilgrimage tourism will promote, sustain and maintain economic and cultural sustainability, together with maintaining belief systems. Both of the pilgrimage cities bear various interrelated phenomena to which people are affiliated with the belief system, faith and spiritual merits. This is also to be kept in mind that the sacred spaces vis-à-vis public spaces, in a way, will serve as peace plaza and places of spiritual awakening having 'the potential for healing communal strife and reviving urban art, (*cultural and*) folk practices. Heritage conservation can thus become an empowering tool for local communities and for the visitor an opportunity for spiritual growth' (Sinha 2014, p. 60), which is an ultimate aim of the urban areas.

A recent study remarks that 'If the urban SDG is to prove useful as a tool as intended for encouraging local and national authorities alike to make positive investments in the various components of urban sustainability transitions, then it must be widely relevant, acceptable and practicable' (Simon et al. 2016, p. 60). This is valid in the case of Indian heritage cities, where one always faces the problem of linking locality and universality. Additionally, central to this task has been the challenge of determining how to benchmark and measure performance according to the SMART criteria (i.e. specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-specific), based on specialist scholarship, the existing literature and practical experience of the site (see Birch 2015, p. 228), taking into account demand, pressure response and multifactor versus single factor, and also considering two metrics: the traditional dimensions of sustainability (equity, economics and environment) and later forming the Liveability Principles of Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC), while making bridge between the age-old traditions and high-tech smart city plans.

In a recent meeting ICOMOS (2016) having discourses on 'Heritage as Driver of Sustainability: Mission and Activities for 2017–18', it has been noticed that the SDGs focused on achieving representation of heritage in the major policy papers of Agenda 2030. Now that these policy papers are adopted at the highest, global level, and their goals and targets await being fulfilled, focus has shifted to 'implementation' through public participation and PPP (Public–Private–Partnership). Therefore, the mission that ICOMOS has given its Focal Point for the SDGs in the new term is to 'steer a coordinated process of advocacy to advance the implementation of UN Agenda 2030—SDGs and Habitat NUA (New Urban Agenda) from the perspective

of cultural and natural heritage, within the framework of the ICOMOS mandate and inputs from strategic partners'. The NUA, a framework laying out how cities should be planned and managed to best promote sustainable urbanisation within the purview of culture and cultural heritage will keep the vitality and image of holy-heritage cities.

Activities towards accomplishing this mission include liaising with stakeholders at national, regional and local level (e.g. holy-heritage cities like Ayodhya and Varanasi) and across governance sectors (public, private, civil society, experts/academia), in particular for

1. *Localising implementation*, by providing guidance and direction to stakeholders to adopt tools of implementation,
2. *Monitoring implementation*, with a focus on Indicator Target 11.4.1 defined by the UN (expenditure and share of budgets allocated to heritage) to achieve consistent and comprehensive data collection,
3. *General advocacy*, for mainstreaming culture and heritage within sustainable development, by increasing visibility and outreach across the UN system and the public sphere.

From the perspective of historic preservation in the ancient culture like India, the goal looks great, the target thought to be good, but the indicator in view of the contemporary scenario, frankly, is terrible. In this context, the crucial and critical issues, mostly against viability and optimality, include inappropriate expenditure (public and private) used per capita on the preservation, protection and conservation of all types of heritage (cultural, natural, mixed, intangible and transitory), hierarchical gaps in the layers of government (national, regional and local/municipal), type of expenditure (operating expenditure/investment) and also type of private funding (donations in kind, private non-profit sector and sponsorship), and finally the resultant consequential issues that intensify the problems.

While making plans and strategies in this direction, the hard realities to be kept serious consideration, i.e. (1) while the SDGs set targets for nations, most of the implementation will need to take place at the city or regional levels; (2) the SDGs have much to say about '*what'* but much less about '*how*' or '*by whom*'; and (3) goals are great, but the real tests of success will be implementation, bottom-up experimentation, and localization! Considering all the diagnostic niches and consequences, let us March and make 'pilot models' at the level of holy-heritage city. The following six such procedures represent a direct commitment to heritage conservation in the spectrum of SDGs and NUA (Rypkema 2016):

- Leverage cultural heritage to strengthen social participation and the exercise of citizenship;
- Develop vibrant, sustainable and inclusive urban economies, building on cultural heritage;
- Support urban economies through promoting heritage conservation activities;
- Promote regeneration while preserving cultural heritage;
- Include culture as a priority component of urban plans and strategies that safeguard cultural heritage; and

- Support leveraging cultural heritage for sustainable urban development.

Following the path towards SDGs Target 11.4 in making holy-heritage cities vibrant and liveable centre of global harmony, spiritual awakening, peace and deeper understanding, public participation and education are pre-requisite (see Singh 2017, p. 26). This paper should be taken as a frame and appeal in this direction.

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