4. The Nexus between Heritage Management and Cultural Tourism in India with Special Reference to the Taj Mahal, Agra

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Abstract

Tourism in India essentially revolves around cultural properties. Cultural tourism, in fact, plays a vital role in conserving and realising the value of our heritage and at the same time generating employment and investment opportunities. It is also a dynamic means of cultural exchange, promotion of understanding and cultural diversity. However, tourism and its associated activities sometimes pose problems for historical places, sites and monuments and cultural properties. Many historic places have to face the issues of congestion, wear and tear and disturbance, giving a sense of displacement among some of the local public. The paper discusses in detail about the nexus between heritage management and cultural tourism in India with special reference to the Taj Mahal, the most visited historical monument in India.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Heritage Management, Cultural Tourism, Conservation, Taj Mahal, Sustainable Tourism

India is a repository of rich cultural heritage, which dates from the prehistoric to the contemporary periods. It is one of the few countries in the world that thrives on the principle of unity in diversity. From the natural and geographic to cultural resources, to the diverse linguistic to religious traditions, overwhelming to some and deeply comforting to many, India truly holds a great treat for the senses. The diversity of culture and heritage in the country is not only a matter of great pride but also an exceptional source of spiritual and intellectual richness for the entire humankind. The cultural properties are broadly classified as tangible and intangible by a school of thought for the sake of academic convenience, although they are interrelated. Tangible properties are historical buildings, sculptures, manuscripts, paintings and structures of historical and aesthetic value. Intangible properties

are music, drama, dance and traditional skills such as handicrafts. The wide range of cultural heritage of India includes pre-historic rock-shelters, Harappan settlements, megalithic monuments, rock-cut caves, monoliths, stupas, monasteries, chaityas, temples of different religions and styles, mosques, tombs, churches and chapels, gurudwaras, Jewish synagogues, cemeteries, forts, palaces, bathing-ghats, reservoirs, bridges and many other innumerable varieties of cultural vestiges. The variation in the cultural heritage of India is mainly due to the geographical location, time period, builder's choice, architectural style and various regional cultural and religious traditions.

Heritage Management

Heritage management is an important area of research necessary for proper preservation of heritage resources. Let us briefly look at the principles related to conservation and heritage management. The purpose of an appropriate heritage management mechanism is to ensure effective protection of cultural properties for the benefit of present and future generations and also to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the cultural properties to the maximum possible extent. Cultural heritage management is a measure aimed at ensuring the viability, identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission as well as revitalisation of cultural heritage. It is about striking a balance between developing the tourism industry and generating revenue, while conserving the physical integrity of the monuments and promoting and celebrating their educational, historic and cultural values.

The poor condition of any monument can often be attributed to the lack of a proper management plan and inadequate resources for maintenance, monitoring or enforcement of sound management principles in practice. Lack of resources is a primary reason for poor conservation outcomes in several contexts. In many developing countries, budgets for cultural heritage conservation are understandably limited, and the restricted funding often results in inadequate staffing levels, training and equipment for adopting effective heritage management. Even if a management plan exists for a site, there may be little hope, if it is not implemented properly. Low morale among the staff due to inadequate funding, inadequate understanding about

the importance of maintaining heritage assets and cultural preferences that favour other short-term objectives and economic benefits over site management can also adversely affect the condition of a heritage site. Insufficient expertise can often lead to unscientific restoration, which is one of the most debilitating threats to heritage resources. Despite the Athens, Venice, Nara and Burra charters and the guidelines issued by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and other organisations, aggressive restorations were executed at many monuments without caring much about the integrity and authenticity of the cultural heritage in different parts of the globe.

In the recent years, the threat to the monuments and the archaeological sites and their environs has intensified considerably, due to the construction of multipurpose dams, roads, unabated urban growth, population growth and various other development activities, including unsustainable tourism-oriented development. Sometimes unscientific or improper activities also pose threat to the monuments and sites. There is also a threat to monuments posed by air pollution, changes in weather conditions and unplanned development. To safeguard the cultural properties from the above threats and to pass on the rich heritage resources to the future generations and at the same time to ensure and obtain economic benefits, conservation and maintenance of the monuments and the archaeological sites are certainly essential.

Therefore, there is an absolute need of a proper management system for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. The management mechanism should incorporate traditional technological practices, existing urban or regional planning instruments and other planning control mechanisms, both formal and informal.

The management mechanism should be so structured as to achieve the following common elements:

(i) the active involvement of partners and stakeholders in the management of cultural properties;

(ii) a thorough shared understanding of the ancient monument or archaeological site and remains by all stakeholders;

(iii) a cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback;

(iv) the allocation of necessary resources;

(v) an accountable, transparent description of how the management scheme functions and

(vi) capacity-building among the concerned professionals.

The management of cultural properties can be dealt under the following headings:

- Conservation management

- Disaster management

- Management of the ambience of the monument

- Tourism and Visitor management

- Sustainable usage and rehabilitation of monument

- Management of illegal/unauthorized activates including hawkers and touts.

- Generating funds for conservation and maintenance

- Capacity building

- Cultural awareness

Conservation of tangible cultural heritage includes all acts that prolong the life of the heritage property from any further decay without changing its character. The historical value and material authenticity of the cultural property has to be safeguarded through this process. The minimum affective action is always the best. If possible, the action should be reversible and should not hamper a possible future intervention. The conservation work should only be taken up after proper study of the causes of the decay and deterioration, documentation in the form of drawing and photography and involvement of multidisciplinary specialists. The condition of the building, the material used, method of construction and the technology adopted in the ancient times have to be fully documented before undertaking any conservation effort. All the

methods and material used during treatment must be fully documented. To the maximum extent, the existing materials should be retained. Any intervention should be in conformity with the aesthetic, historical and physical integrity of the cultural property.

Cultural Tourism

India's rich cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage resources provide a huge potential for the development of tourism in the country. A large number of both national and international tourists visit the historical monuments and sites for various reasons such as recreation, education, information, entertainment and research. India registered roughly 10.5 million international tourist arrivals in a year (i.e., 2017), excluding non-resident Indian (NRI) arrivals and transit arrivals. The total contribution of travel and tourism to the country's GDP is 9.4% (US $ 234.3 billion or INR 15,239.6 billion) in 2017. India was ranked 7th among 184 countries in terms of travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2017. On the employment generation front, having supported 40.5 million direct and indirect jobs in 2017, the travel and tourism industry accounts for almost 9.3% of the total employment in India.[1]

Cultural tourism plays a vital role in conserving and realising the value of our heritage, and generating employment and investment at the same time. It is also a dynamic route for cultural exchange, promotion of understanding and cultural diversity.

Tourism supports many historic places in the following ways:

- Generating economic value and contributing to local, regional and national income;

- Raising the image and profile of the town as a place to visit, live and invest;

- Bringing back the derelict historic buildings into productive use;

- Creating reasons to invest in the town's heritage, as the

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1. The details are based on the Report of Tourism Department, Government of India.

place becomes economically prosperous due to the visit of a large number of tourists and their expenditure;

- Increasing the use of local facilities and services, which helps their viability, particularly in smaller towns and villages;

- Helping to keep alive the local traditions and events;

- Supporting to market the locally produced food, drink and crafts to visitors and

- Creating job opportunity for the local communities.

However, tourism and its associated activities sometimes pose threats to historic places, monuments and sites. Many historic places have to face the issues of congestion, wear and tear, disturbances and a sense of displacement among some of the local people. Worldwide tourism to global heritage sites is increasing considerably in the recent years. The rapid growth in international and domestic tourism has engulfed the most significant and fragile global heritage sites. But, many archaeological and cultural heritage sites in the world are being used as "cash cows," without corresponding reinvestment of tourism proceeds in the heritage asset's long-term protection and preservation. There are several monuments in different parts of the country, which are popular tourist destinations and are under stress due to unorganised tourism activities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to identify all causes of the stress to heritage sites and address them appropriately. One of the principal threats to the monuments or archaeological sites is the failure to plan to properly deal with mass tourism. The Taj Mahal and Fort at Agra, the Qutb complex and Red fort in Delhi, the group of monuments at Mamallapuram (Tamil Nadu), Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh), Bhubaneswar (Odisha) and Hampi (Karnataka); the Sun temple at Konarak (Odisha), the monuments in Jaipur and many other monuments are facing the problems of wear and tear, vandalism and other distresses due to over-visitation and misuse by the visitors (Fig.1). Notwithstanding, the tourism is economically an important activity, but at the same time, it should not be promoted at the cost of cultural heritage. The goal of sustainable tourism is to maintain a balance between these extreme situations. There should be an apt management
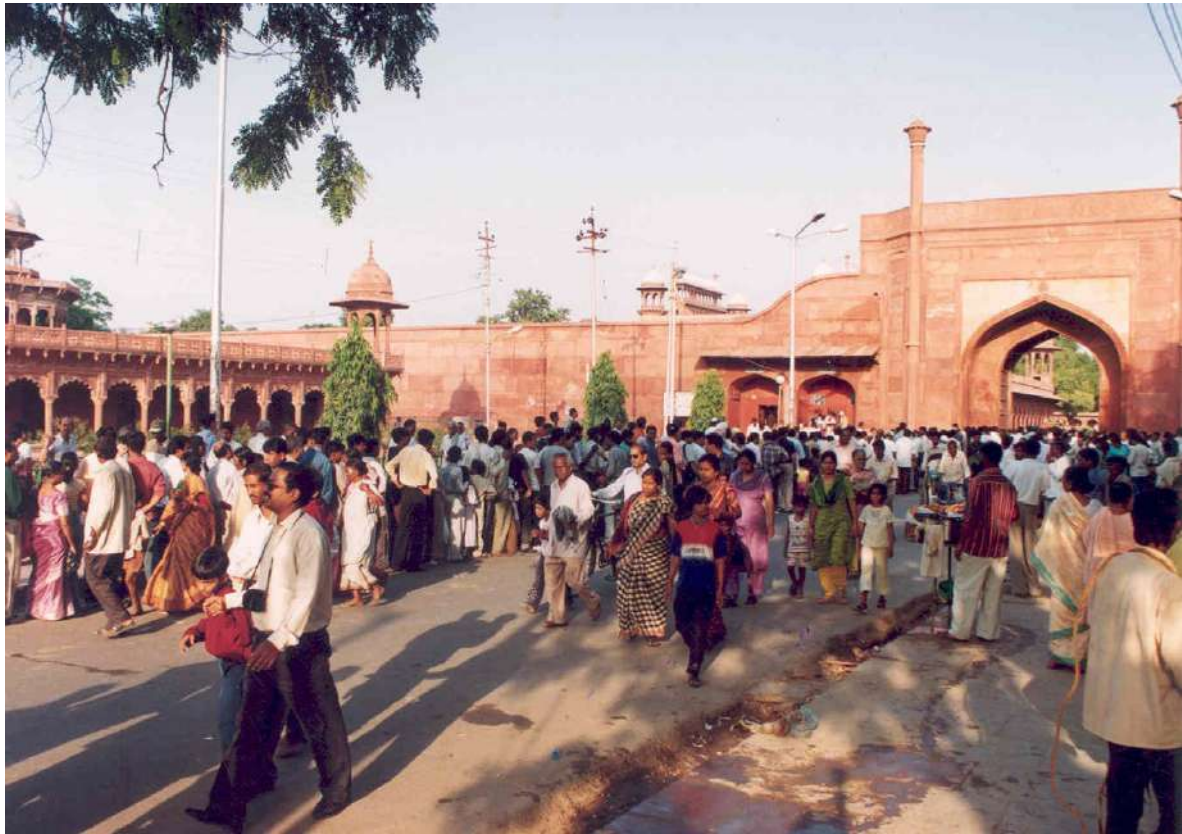
Fig. 1. Uncontrollable crowd at Taj Mahal, Source: Author.

system to promote cultural tourism without affecting the protection of cultural property and to maintain its authenticity and integrity. In the other words, the sustainable tourism's purpose is to manage tourism and tourism growth in a responsible manner, i.e., not harming the cultural property, causing environmental damage, climate change, pollution, loss of ecosystems and keeping the consumption of resources at unsustainable levels (Dayalan 2019).

Often perceived as a threat to the preservation of cultural and natural sites, the presence of tourists can also be useful in certain cases for the protection and maintenance of cultural properties. In fact, tourism is often the driving force behind the efforts aimed at preserving the cultural heritage sites, and it has likely saved many sites that may have been otherwise neglected or destroyed. The tourist movement in the huge palaces, complexes and forts is useful to maintain them in a presentable condition; otherwise they may remain uncared or become shelters for birds, bats, insects, trees and creepers and sometime even for illegal elements.

The management mechanism has to include how sustainable tourism can be achieved in the cultural heritage sites. The tourism has to be planned in such a way that it takes care of all resources such as economic and social and aesthetic value, while maintaining cultural integrity, biological diversity and life support systems. In fact, the cultural properties are not seen as an overall priority for national development, unless they have clear relationship with social values, economic activities and local development. It is evident that heritage is a driving force for the development of tourism industry. The revenue generated by cultural tourism is the most significant for the economy. Many people who live where these important heritage sites exist have gained substantial economic benefits from increased development designed to serve the influx of visiting tourists. Tourism's power, however, can turn inadvertently destructive without proper management. Thus, the sustainable tourism constitutes an essential engine for economic development, where the major measurable economic impacts of cultural properties include job opportunities and household income, development of infrastructure and business incubation. In developing the management plan in order to balance tourism flow and sustainability of the sites, it is important to have appropriate legal frameworks in managing cultural heritage sites and the relevant role of public participation. The local communities may be involved as a key stakeholder, as the benefit of social, economic and moral boost due to the cultural property goes to them.

In order to maintain the monuments in a better manner, it is important to control the number of tourists visiting them and also their access, especially in such areas that are highly vulnerable to decay or deterioration. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the carrying capacity of a monument, especially for those where visitation is in high numbers. The term 'carrying capacity' refers, in the present context, to the number of individuals a given area can support within the monument and without degrading the structural, historical and aesthetic environment for present and future generations. On the basis of the study of carrying capacity, appropriate decisions can be taken in this regard. Visitor access and movement within the monument should be worked out in such a way that it should effectively serve crowd management

without hindrance to the visitors. In the vulnerable or narrow portions of the monument, tourist movement can be regulated or restricted. A successful management of congested tourism mainly depends upon the effective coordination between a range of stakeholders, such as site managers, local authorities, tour operators, transportation companies and information managers at different levels.

The objective of sustainable cultural tourism is to maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about the cultural heritage and become compatible with the social, cultural and ecological environment.

Visitor Facilities

The visitor facilities and interpretation of the monument should be developed at all levels to meet visitor expectations as a means of improving the enjoyment and understanding of visitors and their appreciation of the significance of the monument.

Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure like toilets, cloakroom, potable water, parking slot, audio-guide facilities, ticket booths (if it is a ticketed monument), souvenir counter and information centre have to be created within or near the monument and site for the convenience of the tourists. These facilities should be easily accessible to the visitors and there should be proper signage to guide the visitors properly.

The signage has to be designed in such a way that they are clearly legible, should not be more attractive and the materials used for its preparation should be aptly matched with the nature of the monument. They are to be provided at suitable locations in the monument without interrupting the view of the monument and the movement of visitors and also, they should not be an eyesore.

Amenities

Adequate amenities have to be provided for the visit of the differently abled persons without compromising the authenticity and integrity of the monument. Braille signage (for the benefit of visually disabled persons), wheelchairs, battery-operated small vehicles and

other facilities are to be made available to the differently abled persons and senior citizens during their visit.

Interpretation Centres

For better understanding and appraisal of the monument by the visitors, the interpretation centres have to be created wherever possible. This centre should provide all information about the monuments and other relevant details. If possible, screenplay, demonstration and other audio-visual systems can also be arranged in the interpretation centres.

Information Brochures

Similarly, guidebooks or pamphlets providing information about the history, architecture and other details of the monument may be also made available to the visitors.

Communication of Good Practices

Communication about the acceptable behaviour and good practices to the tourists is very important. The various do's and don'ts within the premises of the monument have to be exhibited wherever possible for guiding the activities of the visitors in the heritage zone.

Nexus between Tourism and Conservation Management of Taj Mahal

Taj Mahal at Agra, Uttar Pradesh, one of the most visited monuments in India (Figs. 2 and 3), exhibits a graphic picture of the nexus between tourism and the conservation management. Agra has three world heritage monuments. i.e., Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri. Out of these monuments, the first two are located on the right bank of the river Yamuna in the city of Agra within a distance of about 800 metre in between. Fatehpur Sikri is situated at a distance of 40 km from Agra. Taj Mahal (1631–1648), a miracle in marble, is one of the outstanding creations in the whole spectrum of Islamic architecture in India (Ebba Koch 2006). Notwithstanding, the contemporary sources refer to this most exquisite specimen of human architecture as "Illumined Tomb" (*rauza-i-munavvara*), it is popularly known as Taj Mahal, obviously derived its name from the title of the queen i.e., Mumtaz Mahal. (Begley and Desai 1989) The Taj Mahal

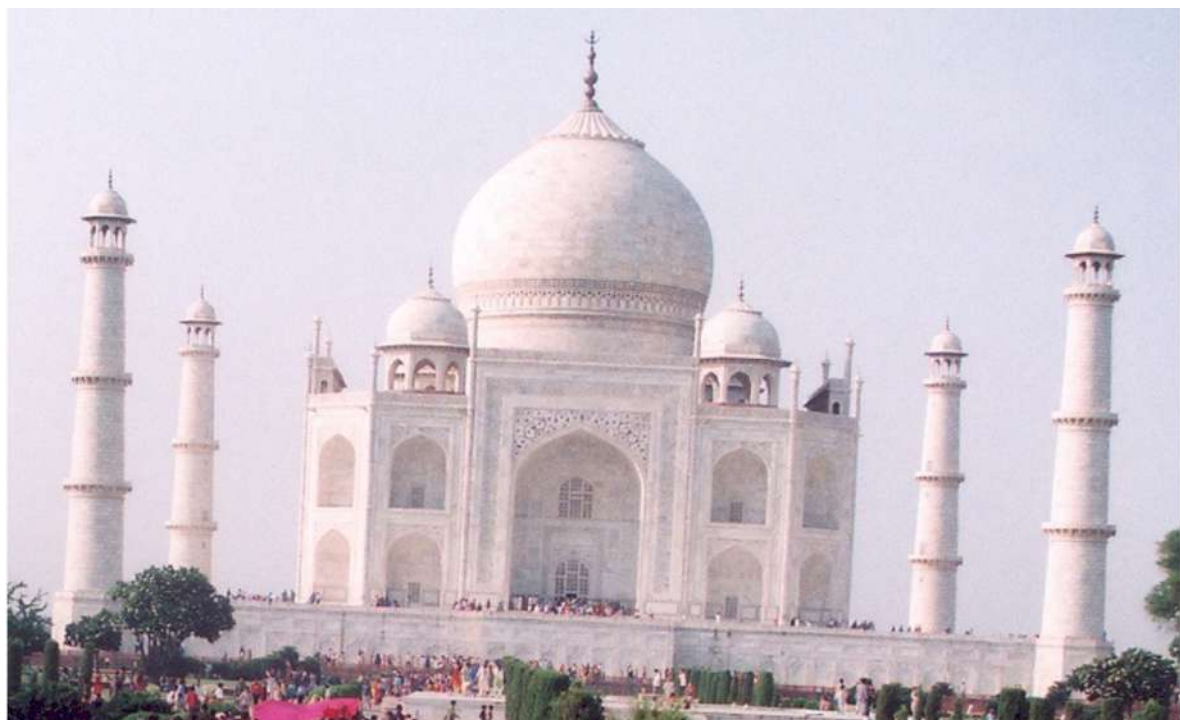*Fig. 2. An overall view of Taj Mahal, Source : Author*

Fig. 3. A general view of Taj Mahal, Source : Author

was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1983. Its inscription as a cultural property of universal significance was justified in the following words:

The Taj Mahal is the greatest architectural achievement of the whole range of Indo-Islamic architecture. Apart from its tremendous romantic appeal, it is a masterpiece of architectural style, in conception, treatment and execution, all alike.

Taj Mahal has a long-recorded history of its conservation. The earliest record of its repair is available in a letter (*farman*) dated 1652 CE from Prince Aurangzeb to his imperial father Shah Jahan wherein he pointed out the defect in the dome and vaults of the mausoleum. Since then, the conservation works of the minor and major nature were undertaken to the various buildings of the Taj Mahal complex from time to time depending upon necessity and requirements. Notwithstanding, Taj Mahal is in a good state of preservation. Due to its age, minor defects such as cracking of stones due to corrosion of iron dowels and clamp, weathering effect on the stones, decay of the mortar of the roof, missing of inlay due to human vandalism and the loss of the adhesive are bound to occur. The environmental effect on the building, wear and tear and some degradation due to the movement of a large number of visitors are some of the major issues. Extensive studies have been carried out by multi-disciplinary experts from India and abroad to understand the various factors responsible for the possible deterioration or defect of the monument and remedial measures have been taken from time to time to safeguard it. The properties of the materials used for construction are thoroughly analysed and the stability of the structure and foundation and the nature of the sub-soil strata are examined meticulously. The verticality of the minarets, dome and other structures are monitored periodically to know any change in their position (Dayalan 2009a, 2009b).

An integrated digital database for Taj Mahal complex on the designated geographic information system (GIS) platform has been created after site survey for proper monitoring of this World Heritage Monument and its environment (Dayalan 2009a: 211–214). Air pollution in the ambiance of Taj Mahal has been monitored constantly

and effective actions have been taken to control it. However, over-visitation and security are some of the major issues affecting Taj Mahal. Generally, Taj Mahal is visited by 25,000 to 30,000 visitors every day. Further, the number increases on Saturday and Sunday due to holiday as well as closure of Taj on Friday. Tourist inflow is very high in winter seasons, i.e. 35,000 to 40,000 visitors per day. Due to heavy tourist rush long queues can be seen at the ticket booking counters; at the security checking points and at the entry of the main mausoleum. It is difficult to manage a large crowd in the main mausoleum. According to the existing practice, the visitors are allowed to enter and come out of the same entrance gate of the main mausoleum after visiting the upper cenotaph chamber. Excess tourist movement does cause wear and tear on the surface of the monument apart from many other hazards such as stampede, pollution and vandalism.

Necessary measures have been taken or proposed to regulate the visitor movement in the Taj Mahal complex and also to enhance visitor experience. The studies have been initiated to determine the carrying capacity of the Taj Mahal complex and appropriate action will be taken on the basis of that study. Visitor access and movement within the monument have been worked out in such a way that it should effectively serve crowd management without hindrance to the visitors. The congestion at the entrance of main mausoleum has been controlled to some extent by opening an exit on the other side of the mausoleum.

For a better understanding and appraisal of the monument by the visitors, efforts have been made to establish Visitors' Facilitation Centres at the courtyards located near the eastern and western gates of the monument in consultation with the international and Indian experts after conserving the historic buildings without altering or interfering with the original fabric of these historic buildings[2] (Fig. 4). Necessary provisions have been made in these buildings to provide facilities like drinking water, locker, toilet, souvenir shop, library, interpretation centre, ticket counter, rest room for senior citizens and differently abled

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2. The Visitors' Facilitation Centres were developed by the author when he was posted in the ASI, Agra circle.

Fig. 4. Proposed Interpretation Centre at Taj Mahal, Source: Author.

persons, security equipment for frisking the visitors and first-aid centre for the visitors. It is also proposed to provide all information about the monument such as history, architecture, all events associated with the monument, conservation efforts and other relevant details. If possible, screen play, demonstration and other audio-visual systems can also be arranged in the interpretation centres. The various do's and don'ts within the premises of the monument has been exhibited wherever possible for guiding the activities of the visitors in the heritage zone. Adequate amenities have been provided for the visit of the differently abled persons and senior citizens. The signages have been provided at appropriate locations in the monument without interrupting the view of the monument and the visitor's movement.

Taj Mahal and other monuments in Agra are not only the prime destination of tourism, but also the source of economic growth for the nation in general and for Agra in particular. These monuments are directly or indirectly responsible for the creation of many tourism-based jobs and establishments like hotel and restaurants, shopping complexes, handicraft industries, tourist operators, transport operators,

guides, photographers and hawkers. Hence, all efforts are being taken to promote tourism without any hindrance to the authenticity and integrity of Taj Mahal and other the cultural properties in Agra. The prime goal of sustainable tourism is to maintain a balance between tourism and cultural properties and also to maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction.

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