

RESEARCH ARTICLE**HERITAGE PRESERVATION THROUGH TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF SULTANPUR LODHI, PUNJAB, INDIA****Gurkirat Kaur¹, Yatin Mittal¹, Gursharan Kaur^{*2} and Ritu Raj Kaur²**¹Urban and Regional Planning Department,

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Abstract:

India's rich heritage stretches from Dal Lake in the north to the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas in the south. The Punjab region has witnessed various historical eras, from Indo-Aryan and Vedic to Mauryan, Buddhist, Hindu, Mughal, and British rule. Each period has left behind significant historical landmarks, including palaces, forts, museums, and shrines. Beyond these, Punjab is also home to culturally and environmentally significant sites, such as wetlands that attract numerous tourists. The region's diverse ethnic influences have contributed to its local knowledge systems, encompassing architecture, handicrafts, traditional attire, music, and dance. This fusion has created a vibrant and multicultural heritage, demonstrating the inseparable link between heritage and tourism. However, many historical sites are not being properly preserved across the country, leading to the loss of valuable history.

Tourism plays a crucial role in urban and regional development, preserving historical significance while boosting the economy. The National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) aims to develop pilgrimage tourism by improving infrastructure, cleanliness, connectivity, and visitor experience at religious sites across India (Government of India, 2017). Sultanpur Lodhi, a city in Punjab's Kapurthala district, is a significant Sikh pilgrimage site, known for its association with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who spent 14 years of his life there. With a population of 16,877 (Census of India, 2011), the city reflects influences from four distinct historical eras. Despite this rich heritage, tourism in Sultanpur Lodhi primarily revolves around Sikh religious precincts, particularly the gurudwaras. Other historical structures, many of which represent different phases of the city's development, remain neglected or in a state of deterioration. This paper aims to evaluate potential heritage sites in Sultanpur Lodhi, analyze tourism patterns including visitor inflow, footfall, and tourist circuits and provide recommendations for enhancing tourism beyond its religious significance.

Keywords: Heritage, Preservation, Tourism, Infrastructure, Culture.

1. Introduction

India's rich heritage stretches from Dal Lake in the north to the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas in the south. The Punjab region has witnessed various historical eras, including the Indo-Aryan, Vedic, Mauryan, Buddhist, Hindu, Mughal, and British periods. Each era has left significant historical landmarks, such as palaces, forts, museums, and shrines. Additionally, the region is rich in culturally and environmentally significant areas that attract a large number of tourists. Punjab's diverse ethnic influences have contributed to various local knowledge disciplines, including architecture, handicrafts, traditional attire, music, and dance. This fusion has created a vibrant and multicultural heritage, reinforcing the inseparable link between heritage and tourism. Sultanpur Lodhi, a city in Punjab's Kapurthala district, is a significant Sikh pilgrimage site. It is closely associated with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, who spent 14 years there with his family (Anand, 2021). With a population of 16,877 (Census of India, 2011), the city has witnessed four distinct historical eras, each leaving a lasting imprint on its cultural identity.

2. Methodology

The present study aims to explore the city's history and rich heritage across different eras since its inception. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data on heritage sites and the threats they are facing were gathered through site surveys and public opinion. Secondary data, including historical records and the city's transformation over time, were analyzed from books and official departmental reports. Additionally, key tourism factors such as tourist inflow, footfall, tourist circuits, trends, and infrastructure were examined.

3. Discussion

3.1 Tourism around the Sikh heritage: The city draws tourists annually, particularly during

religious events such as Guru Nanak Jayanti, Sangrad, and Masaya. Six Gurudwaras are significant in attracting tourists, each with a unique historical connection to Guru Ji's life (Anand, 2021). Gurudwara Ber Sahib is prominent as the site where Guru Ji meditated and imparted his teachings under a tree known as "Ber Sahib" (refer to Figure 1).



Figure 1: Ber Sahib

Gurudwara Hatt Sahib stands where Guru Ji once worked in the Modi Khana, weighing grains and distributing them to the people, with the stone weights still preserved "Bebe Nanaki ka Ghar" marks the dwelling of Guru Ji's sister, Bebe Nanki, and her family. "Gurudwara Guru Ka Bagh" served as Guru Ji's residence with his family, including his wife and children. Gurudwara Kohtri Sahib derives significance from Guru Ji's detainment in the "kohtri" due to accounting issues in the Modi Khana. Sant Ghat, another Gurudwara, commemorates Guru Ji's emergence after three days of learning "No Hindu, No Muslim," following a dip in the holy waters of "Kali Bein" at Gurudwara Ber Sahib. Lastly, Gurudwara Antaryamta Sahib marks the site where Daulat Khan and Qazi prostrated themselves at Guru Ji's feet after he revealed their thoughts during prayer (Anand, 2021). The existing tourist spots and heritage sites of Sultanpur Lodhi are shown in Figure 2.

3.2 Existing Infrastructure: Infrastructure at heritage sites, including amenities such as streetlights, benches, dustbins, parking areas, information centers, banks, and ATMs, plays a crucial role in enhancing the visitor experience. In Sultanpur Lodhi, Gurudwaras provide some

facilities like benches, streetlights, and parking, however, their maintenance remains inadequate. Accommodation is another major challenge, as religious sentiments lead most visitors to prefer staying near Gurudwaras. Although six "Sarai" and two guest houses are available, they are insufficient to meet the growing demand. The city requires 9,200 beds annually, yet only 4,250 are available, resulting in a shortfall of 4,950 beds. Managing the influx of tourists becomes particularly difficult during major events such as the 2019 "Guru Nanak Jayanti," which attracted

3.5 million visitors. Under these circumstances, addressing infrastructure gaps is essential to enhancing the tourism experience (Unpublished Report, 2023 & 2022).

3.3 Heritage Walk and Public Opinion:

Notably, Sultanpur Lodhi lacks a well-defined tourist route and public transportation options, with visitors often following an informal triangular path covering Gurudwaras over a 3 km stretch (refer to Figure 3). Unfortunately, this route overlooks other potential sites of interest.

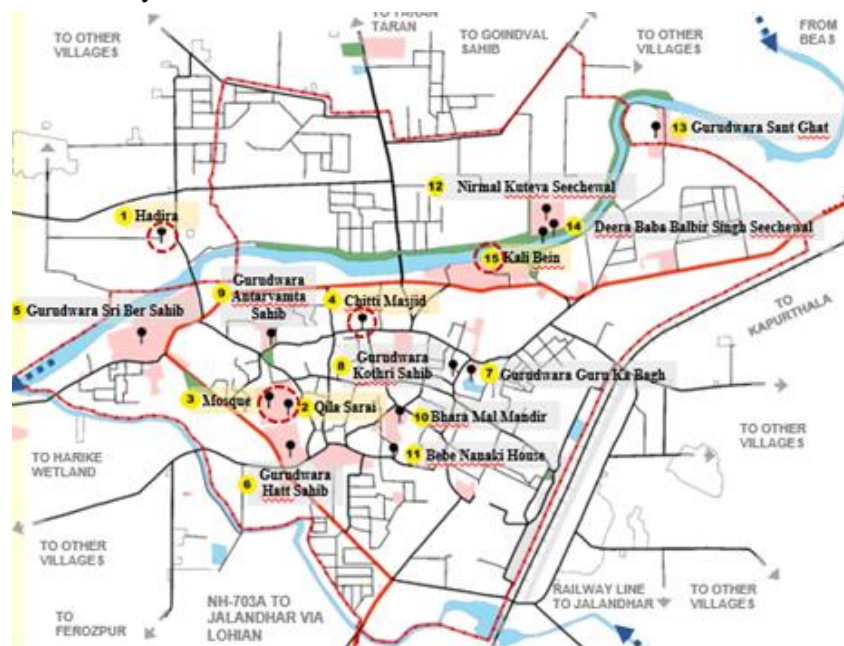


Figure 2: Existing Heritage Sites and Tourist Spots of Sultanpur Lodhi

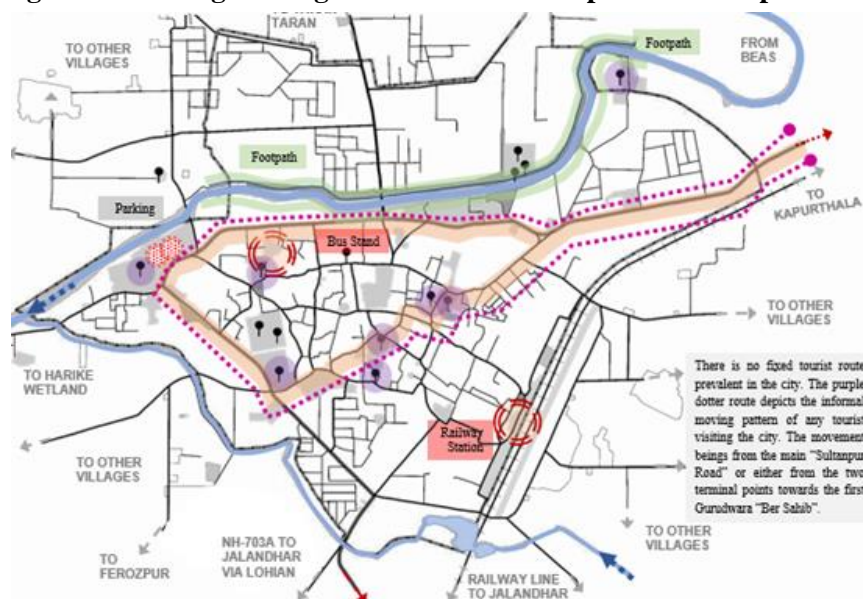


Figure 3: Existing Inorganic Tourist Circuit

Recognizing the importance of heritage sites, residents have initiated various conservation, awareness, and educational projects. This grassroots involvement is crucial in ensuring that preservation efforts are not imposed externally but are actively embraced by those who call Sultanpur Lodhi home. Two prominent examples of local engagement are the preservation of Kali Bein and Chitti Masjid.

Kali Bein, often affected by aquatic plant growth that obstructs water flow, is regularly cleaned by dedicated locals. Chitti Masjid, a revered symbol of the city's heritage, holds deep cultural significance for residents. During city fairs and festivals, community participation in planning and execution is particularly notable. Additionally, locals play a vital role in passing down the city's history to future generations, fostering a strong sense of identity and pride.

As natives of Sultanpur Lodhi, residents envision transforming their city into a renowned heritage destination. To achieve this, they stress the need for improved tourist infrastructure, emergency services, and the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage. They also urge relevant authorities to support and promote these initiatives, ensuring the city's historical and cultural wealth is recognized and celebrated.

Findings

A primary challenge in the city is the lack of recognition for its long-standing heritage. Sultanpur Lodhi preserves remnants from various historical periods, including structures such as Chitti Masjid and the Hadira building from the medieval era, as well as landmarks like Qila Sarai and the Lahori Gate from the British era (refer to Figure 4). However, due to neglect, these historically significant sites are deteriorating into a state of disrepair.



Figure 4: Dilapidated structure of Qila Sarai

Chitti Masjid stands as a testament to Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, while the Hadira building, another notable Mughal-era structure, once served as a platform for dancers, reflecting the empire's appreciation for the arts. Additionally, the Mughals constructed an underground tunnel connecting the fort, showcasing their architectural ingenuity. Out of the two bridges originally built, only one remains, with efforts underway to preserve it (Refer Figure 5). Unfortunately, attempts to conserve the gates of Qila Sarai have been unsuccessful.



Figure 5: Bridges in the Britishers era

The city's architectural diversity also includes Sikh-era havelis, which once epitomized its rich cultural and artistic heritage but have largely been lost over time. Identifying and appreciating these architectural styles along with the intricate details they embody is crucial for preserving the city's legacy. While the Sikh heritage, prominently represented by Gurudwaras, remains well-recognized, numerous other historical treasures deserve acknowledgment and conservation for future generations.

Conclusion:

When thoughtfully managed, tourism becomes a powerful tool for heritage preservation. Sultanpur Lodhi exemplifies this symbiotic relationship, where an influx of visitors brings attention and resources that can be directed toward maintaining and restoring historical sites. Tourism can raise awareness of the city's historical significance. However, the city must ensure that the growing number of tourists contributes positively to the community welfare and heritage conservation. Achieving this delicate balance requires careful planning, active community involvement, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices. Awareness campaigns and the promotion of responsible tourism are essential to this effort. The adaptive reuse of significant yet abandoned landmarks, such as Qila Sarai, presents a valuable opportunity for revitalization. Potential developments could include designated parking areas, government guest houses, museums, green spaces, and lounges. Additionally, proposals for temporary shelters, non-motorized transport (NMT) stands, and tourist infrastructure facilities outside each heritage site could further enhance the visitor experience while ensuring the preservation of these historic locations. Therefore, the city must delicately balance the influx of tourists with the imperative to protect its historical sites from overexposure and deterioration.

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