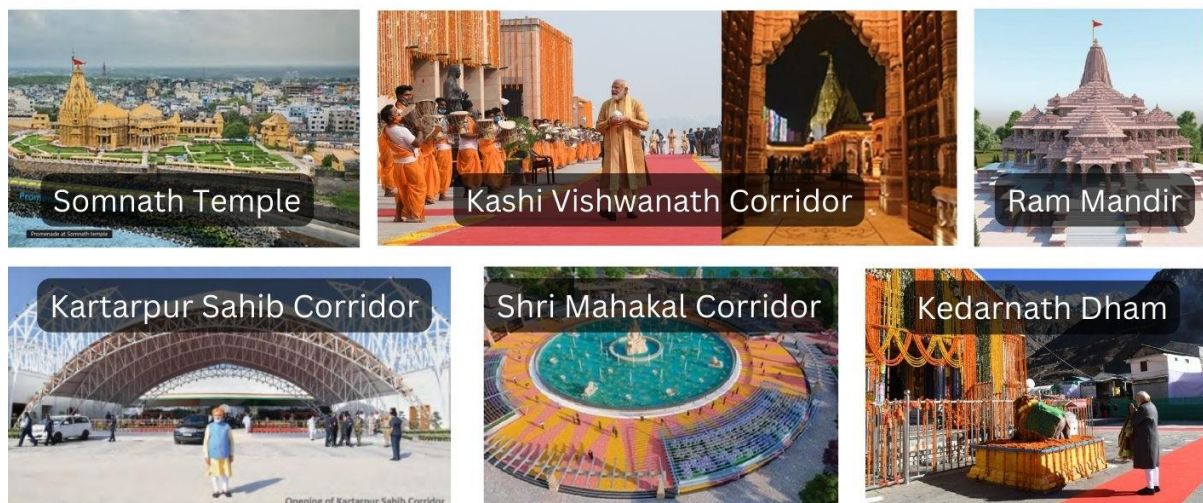


# Preserving India's Rich Heritage

## Government Initiatives and Cultural Revival

India, with its vast history and cultural diversity, is home to numerous ancient sites and heritage monuments that are of immense significance. The government of India has acknowledged the importance of preserving the nation's timeless and rich cultural heritage. The government's effort has been led from the front by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi under the slogan he gave, 'Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi'. The Prime Minister has accorded pivotal importance to protecting and promoting Indian knowledge systems, traditions, and cultural ethos, both nationally and internationally.

One of the notable accomplishments is the redevelopment of neglected sites of civilizational significance. As of May 2023, a total number of 45 projects at a cost of Rs 1584.42 crore covering pilgrimage sites across the country have been approved under PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) scheme by the Government in its unwavering commitment to safeguarding India's ancient civilizational heritage.



After decades of neglect, various sites with India's long civilisational history etched on them have been revived through conservation, restoration and development projects. The **Kashi Vishwanath Corridor** and various other projects in Varanasi have transformed the bylanes, ghats, and temple complexes in the city. Similarly, projects like the **Mahakaal Lok Project** in Ujjain and the **Ma Kamakhya corridor** in Guwahati are expected to enrich the experience of pilgrims visiting the temple, provide them with world-class amenities, as well as boost tourism and the local economy. In a historic moment, Bhoomipujan for the **Ram Mandir** in Ayodhya was held in August 2020 and construction of a grand temple is in full swing.

Another remarkable endeavour is the 825 km long **Chardham Road Project**, providing seamless all-weather road connectivity to the four holy Dhams. The Prime Minister had earlier laid the foundation stones for reconstruction and development projects in **Kedarnath** in 2017 including Shri Adi Shankaracharya's samadhi which was devastated in the catastrophic flash floods of 2013. In November 2021, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the statue of Shri Adi Shankaracharya Samadhi at Kedarnath. Additionally, two ropeway projects

connecting Gaurikund to Kedarnath and Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib are set to further enhance accessibility and facilitate the spiritual journey of the devotees.

In yet another instance of dedication to preserving cultural heritage, Prime Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for several projects in **Somnath**, Gujarat, including the Somnath Promenade, Somnath Exhibition Centre, and the reconstructed temple precinct of Old (Juna) Somnath. Similarly, the opening of the **Kartarpur Corridor** and Integrated Check Post was a momentous occasion, enabling easier access for devotees to pay their respects at the revered Gurudwara Kartapur Sahib in Pakistan.

Preservation of the **Himalayan and Buddhist cultural heritage** also holds a special place in the government's efforts. As part of the Swadesh Darshan scheme, the government has initiated 76 projects aimed at developing thematic circuits that showcase the diverse cultural heritage of India. The focus extends to the development of world-class infrastructure for the Buddhist circuit, thereby enhancing the spiritual experience for devotees. In 2021, the **Kushinagar International Airport** was inaugurated, facilitating easy access to the Mahaparinirvana Temple. The Ministry of Tourism is actively developing destinations under the Buddhist circuit in various states including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh. In addition, the foundation stone for the technologically advanced **India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage** in Lumbini, Nepal, was laid in May 2022 by Shri Narendra Modi, further highlighting the government's commitment to the preservation and promotion of Buddhist heritage and India's cultural diversity.

India's cultural heritage also received a significant boost through the **repatriation of antiquities**. As on April 24, 2023, 251 invaluable antiquities of Indian origin have been retrieved back from different countries, out of which 238 have been brought back since 2014. These repatriations stand as a testament to the government's commitment to safeguarding and reclaiming India's cultural treasures.

The development of 12 heritage cities under the HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme showcases the commitment of the government to establish itself as a custodian of an extraordinary heritage. India boasts of an impressive **40 World Heritage sites**, out of which 32 are cultural, 7 are natural, and 1 is under the mixed category, showcasing the diversity and richness of India's heritage. In the last nine years alone, 10 new sites have been added to the World Heritage list. Additionally, India's Tentative List has expanded from 15 sites in 2014 to 52 in 2022, indicating global recognition of India's cultural heritage and its potential to attract a large number of foreign travellers.

The cultural richness of India was also exhibited through the month-long '**Kashi Tamil Sangamam**' –organised in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, with the objective to celebrate, reaffirm and rediscover the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi – two of the country's most important and ancient seats of learning. Through such programmes, the government emphatically promotes the idea of **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**, which aims to celebrate the culture of the country. Recently, the decision to celebrate Statehood Days by all the Raj Bhawans of all the States across the country also highlights the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

Through all these ambitious projects and initiatives, the Government of India, guided by the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has taken significant strides to promote and

preserve India's cultural heritage. They reflect a deep awareness of the nation's rich culture and a steadfast commitment to preserving its heritage. By safeguarding and promoting India's cultural and spiritual treasures, the government aims to enrich the present and future generations' understanding of Indian history and culture. With the potential to attract a growing number of international tourists and ongoing efforts to revitalize the heritage sites, India's ancient civilization and cultural traditions will continue to shine on the global stage.

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