

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN AYODHYA: A HOLISTIC ANALYSIS, POST-PRAN PRATISHTHA OF LORD RAMA

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ABSTRACT:



Source: www.googleimages.com

The present research has tried to examine the socio-economic impact of religious tourism in Ayodhya. The landmark judgement on Ayodhya & the inauguration of Hindu temple in Ayodhya marks a pivotal moment in the country's history. The study provides comprehensive analysis of Ayodhya on its economy, infrastructure, cultural preservation & overall community transformation & its well-being.

First, Ayodhya is examined as a religious pilgrimage place and its rise as a spiritual and historical center. It then examines tourism and economics, showing how the government's pilgrimage promotion plan boosts economic growth, jobs, and local households' economic situations. The research examined how infrastructure development affects society. Ayodhya's unique case study of religious tourism, local communities, and economic activity is examined in terms of cultural preservation and social dynamics.

Assessing local communities' socio-economic effect, infrastructural development, cultural preservation, and social dynamics are key goals. The research surveys and interviews Ayodhya stakeholders using diverse techniques. Statistical analyses, including ANOVA, reveal perceived differences before and after Pran Pratishtha.

The findings show subtle changes in stakeholders' views, implying socio-economic benefits. The temple inauguration's economic effects may not be statistically significant, but they highlighted the need to monitor and study the complex relationship between religious events, government interventions, and Ayodhya's socioeconomic fabric. This study added to the discussion on sustainable tourism development in sacred sites and provides insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners interested in religion, community development, and economic growth.

Key Words: *Lord Rama, Pran Pratishtha, Ayodhya, Hindu Temple, Socio-economic impact.*

INTRODUCTION:

Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya has long been a holy center, especially for Hindus. Ayodhya, the supposed birthplace of Lord Ram, attracts millions of pilgrims and visitors each year (Singh, 2018). The city's spiritual and cultural grandeur goes beyond its history, functioning as a hub for understanding religious tourism, social dynamics, and economic growth.

The "Pran Prathista" of Lord Rama's heavenly presence enriches Ayodhya's religion. This god consecration ceremony has a major temporal impact on the city's development. As Ayodhya transforms post-Pran Prathista, religious tourism's socio-economic effects must be understood. Pran Prathista is a spiritual milestone and a turning point that may affect religious tourism, local communities, and economic activity (Sharma, 2020).

Tourism benefits visitors and urban and suburban populations, making it a positive effect. Tourism development involves starting and running a business that targets different sorts of tourists based on their motives in a certain place. Tourism development is the comprehensive process of strategizing, implementing, and promoting tourism in a certain area or destination (Ratnasari et al. 2020).

Figure2: Ayodhya Temple



Source: www.wikipediaimages.com

The Ram temple at Ayodhya, seen in Figure 2, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, resulting in a significant economic boost for India and transforming Ayodhya into a renowned tourist attraction. Jefferies predicts that the shrine has the potential to attract more

than 50 million tourists annually, hence stimulating economic growth. To create a multiplier effect government of India allocated \$10 Billion towards infrastructure development, particularly airways, railways, roadways & other related projects (Jefferies, 2022).

The current study is aimed to understand the socio-economic effects of religious tourism on Ayodhya. Ayodhya, renowned for its distinctive blend of religious fervor and historical importance, presents an ideal opportunity to examine the intricate relationship between religious tourism and the socio-economic environment. This research aims to provide useful insights about the impact of religious tourism on the social and economic aspects of Ayodhya. By examining this, it will contribute to the wider discussion on sustainable tourist development in sacred places.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious tourism refers to travel primarily driven by the desire to experience religious expressions and the cultural, artistic, traditional, and architectural elements they inspire. A country's socio-economic growth is also driven by modern religious tourism. Religious tourism is driven by religious beliefs and the desire to visit a place called "Holy" at a specific time to connect with the divine or fulfill religious needs and show gratitude (Rinschede, 1992). Tourism boosts the economy, communities, and individuals. Tourism generates cash and works with the government to reduce poverty, create employment opportunities, safeguard the environment (Baloch et al., 2023). Tourism growth is assessed by visitor arrivals & revenues (Song et al. 2010; Arifin et al. 2019). Andlib & Salcedo-Castro (2021) state that a tourism location might motivate travelers for natural, socio-cultural, religious, adventure, or business tourism, or a mixture of these. Religious places developed for these reasons:

Socio-Economic Impact on Local Communities:

Extensive study has been conducted in recent years to examine the socio-economic effects of religious tourism on local communities. Sharma (2019) undertook an extensive investigation of the influence of religious tourism on local economies, with a particular focus on how pilgrimage sites stimulate employment growth and generate income.

The study exposed that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the religious tourism and the local socio-economic facilities in the adjacent areas of the sacred locations. According to Gupta and Singh (2021), there exists an urgent need to develop and use customized approaches suited to their conditioning to understand and guarantee the equitable distribution of economic advantages derived from this religious tourism.

Infrastructure Development and Its Impact on Society:

A significant need exists to understand socio-economic consequences of infrastructure development in these religious sacred locations. A recent study conducted by the Jones et al. (2018) reveals the correlation between the growth of tourism-related infrastructure and the further socio-economic impacts that occur due to this. According to the study, the strategically designed infrastructure not only increases the tourist experience but also leads to positive impact on local communities by generating economic opportunities. In recent times, especially since the past decade, there has been a tremendous increase in infrastructure investments and thus, there exists a need for rigorous examination of how these advancements impact the social structure.

Cultural Preservation and Social Dynamics:

Preserving the cultural legacy of sacred places is crucial for sustaining both social structure and individuality. Smith (2020), conducted a thorough study and investigated the difficulties

and potential advantages linked to the conservation of culture within the structure of religious tourism. The study concluded the necessity of cooperative actions among local communities, religious institutions, and government in order to protect cultural resources. Another study was conducted by Singh and Mishra, which revealed the close interconnection between religious beliefs and Ayodhya. Their study focused on establishing and associating the socio- cultural dynamics of the city, mainly investigating the impact of religious tourism on community relationships and the preservation of culture.

Bridging Gaps and Understanding Pran Prathista's Influence:

A very significant impact of Pran Prathista on socio- economics dynamics have taken place and thus a thorough investigation is required. A study conducted by the Patel and Joshi (2019), reveals that how sacred rituals impacts the socio- economic environment of the pilgrimage sites. Sharma's (2021) study demonstrates how this ceremony affects religious tourism, economic activities and the social structure.

Synthesis and Research Gap:

Even though the recent research provides understanding of many religious tourism, infrastructural development, and cultural preservation, there is still a paucity of knowledge of the unique impact of the post- Pran Prathista period in Ayodhya on socio- economic dimensions. This research aims to uncover this scarcity by conducting a comprehensive analysis that establishes a connection between the ceremonial consecration of Lord Rama and its wider impact on the socio- economic conditions of Ayodhya. The study will be guided by certain objectives and hypotheses.

Objectives:

- To assess the socio-economic impact on different stakeholders.
- To examine infrastructure development in the last one decade and its impact on society
- To investigate cultural preservation and social dynamics.

Hypothesis:

H1: There is no significant difference between the income levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

H2: There is no significant difference between the Employment opportunities levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

H3: There is no significant difference between housing and living condition of stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

H4: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of stakeholders from community development before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

H5: There is no significant difference between the health care levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

H6: There is no significant difference between social dynamics levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

H7: There is no significant difference between from cultural heritage perspective between stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

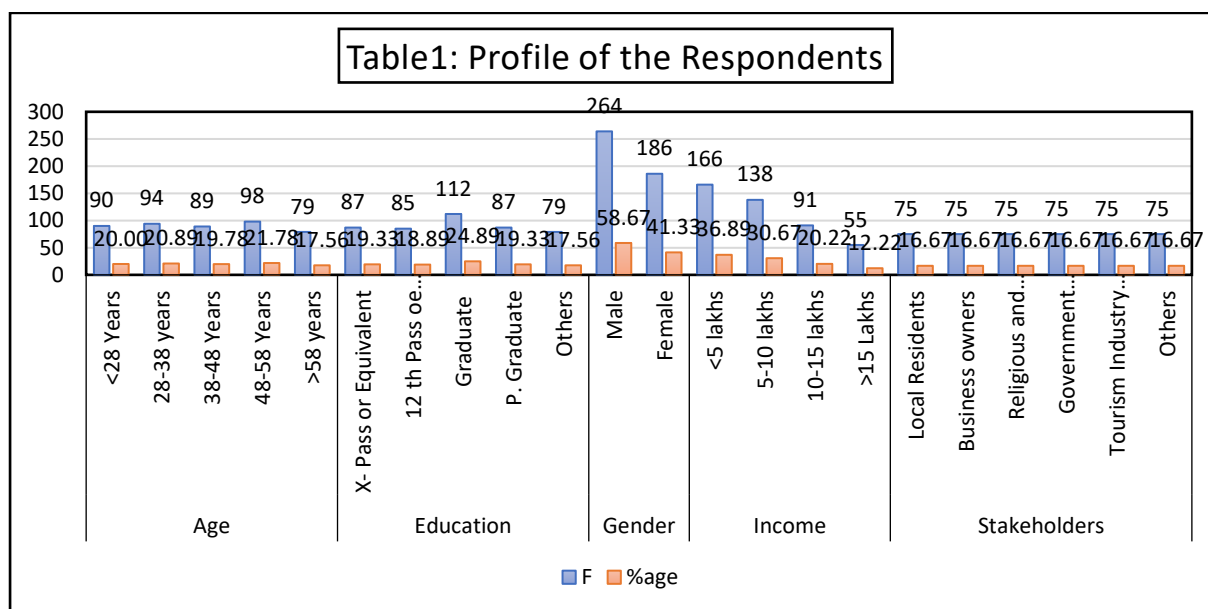
H8: There is no significant difference between overall wellbeing levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Prathista of Lord Ram at the Ram Temple.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN:

4. DATA ANALYSIS:

In order to achieve the research goals, this study used a well crafted questionnaire administered using a Likert scale, which captures the varied viewpoints of stakeholders in Ayodhya. The selected stakeholders, including government officials, religious and community leaders, tourism sector stakeholders, residents, and business owners, represent the many effects of the Pran-Pratishtha ceremony of Lord Ram at the Ram Mandir. Utilizing a stratified sampling approach guarantees a sample that accurately represents each stakeholder group, enabling a detailed investigation of variations in socio-economic parameters. A complete analysis of views and attitudes was conducted by selecting a total of 450 respondents. This analysis specifically focused on the period before and after the Pran-Pratishtha of Lord Ram at Ram Temple. The purpose of this systematic method is to analyze the subtle comprehension of the socio-economic, social infrastructure, cultural heritage and overall well being of stakeholders consequences related to the building of the temple in Ayodhya.

4.1 Demographic Profile of stakeholders in Ayodhya



Source: Authors Analysis

The data was collected in Ayodhya from a group of 450 individuals. The demographic profile of the people is shown in Table1, offering the characteristics of the population. From the analysis, it can be inferred that majority of respondents were in the age bracket of 28-48 years comprising 62% of the respondents. The gender distribution revealed 58.47% of the respondents were male and the remaining 41.33% were female. Regarding education, most of the respondents have graduate degree and also have decent income for their livelihood. The inclusion of a wide range of participants with different backgrounds and experiences provided a thorough examination of different viewpoints, enhancing the research's understanding and analysis about the socio-economic consequences of the Pran-Pratishtha ceremony at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

4.2 ANOVA Analysis to assess the difference from stakeholders perspective

Recently, after the landmark judgement by the Supreme Court of India, a major evolution took place in Ayodhya, a city of historical significance and the holy birthplace of Lord Rama, which cleared the path for the construction of the Ram Mandir. Following this momentous decision,

the city has experienced notable advancements in socio-economic indicators, infrastructure, and the preservation of its cultural heritage. In order to comprehensively comprehend the many effects of these alterations, a carefully constructed survey has been developed, with a specific emphasis on certain variables. The following variance analysis seeks to systematically achieve the research objectives by providing insights into the changing dynamics of Ayodhya after the Supreme Court ruling and the subsequent progress in the construction of the Ram Mandir.

Table 2: Anova Analysis

Identified-Factors	Sub-factors	Statements		F	Sig.
Economic	Income	Rate the perceived household income level before 22 January 2024.	Before	1.186	0.315
		Rate the perceived improvement in your household income since the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.	After	2.718	0.054
	Employment opportunities	Please rate your understanding of the employment opportunities available in Ayodhya before the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir	Before	0.429	0.732
		Please rate your understanding of the employment opportunities that you foresee in Ayodhya after the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir.	After	4.156	0.042
Social-Infrastructure	Housing & Living Conditions	Rate your satisfaction with housing conditions, living condition like (cleaning, hygiene) in Ayodhya before the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir.	Before	0.017	0.896
		Rate your satisfaction with housing conditions in Ayodhya after the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir	After	2.896	0.054
	Community Development	Rate the development of community infrastructure (parks, public transportation facilities, community centres, roads and other infrastructure) in Ayodhya before the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir.	Before	0.392	0.532
		Rate the development of community infrastructure in Ayodhya after the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir.	After	3.126	0.033
	Health Care	Rate your perception of access to healthcare in Ayodhya before the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir	Before	0.237	0.627
		Rate your perception of access to healthcare in Ayodhya after the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir.	After	2.961	0.055
Social Dimension & Cultural Preservation	Social Dynamics	The social dynamics in Ayodhya were harmonious and inclusive before the Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama.	Before	2.145	0.094
		The Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama has positively influenced social interactions and dynamics in Ayodhya.	After	3.511	0.008

	Cultural Heritage	The cultural heritage of Ayodhya was effectively preserved before the Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama.	Before	2.342	0.073
		Since the Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama, there has been a noticeable improvement in the preservation of Ayodhya's cultural heritage.	After	2.919	0.052
Overall Satisfaction of People	Overall Well being	Rate your overall well-being and satisfaction with life in Ayodhya before the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir	Before	2.325	0.074
		Rate your overall well-being and satisfaction with life in Ayodhya after the Pran-Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir	After	2.79	0.04

Source: Authors Analysis

Interpretation for Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant difference between the income levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 1.186, p = 0.315$, After Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 2.718, p = 0.054$

INTERPRETATION:

For the "before" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value was 0.315, & is larger than the frequently accepted level of 0.05. Based on the gathered data, there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived family income levels of stakeholders prior to the opening of the temple on January 22, 2024.

The results reveal that after the Pran Pratishtha period, there is a little trend towards rejecting the null hypothesis, as evidenced by the marginally significant p-value of 0.054. This suggests that there may be possible changes in stakeholders' assessed family income levels following the inauguration of the Ram Temple. This slight change may suggest the wider economic influence of the government's effort to encourage pilgrimage in Ayodhya. The surge in the number of visitors and pilgrims is believed to have stimulated the expansion of service industries, such as transportation and hotels, leading to greater job prospects and perhaps enhancing the economic well-being of local households. Although the tendency towards rejection may not achieve conventional statistical significance, it highlights the potential for favorable economic transformations linked to the temple inauguration.

Result: H1: Accepted (Before) / Trend towards Rejection (After).

H2: There is no significant difference between the employment opportunities levels of stakeholders before and after Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 0.429, p = 0.732$, After Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 4.156, p = 0.042$

For the "before" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value was 0.732, which is much greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggested that, there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived understanding of employment opportunities in Ayodhya before the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.

For the "after" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value is 0.042, which is less than the significance level (0.05). Therefore, there is a significant difference in the perceived understanding of employment opportunities after the Pran Pratishtha. This indicates that stakeholders foresee a

notable change or improvement in employment opportunities post the inauguration of the temple.

Result H2: Accepted (Before) / Rejected (After)

H3: There is no significant difference between housing and living conditions of stakeholders before and after Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 0.017$, $p = 0.896$, After: $F(1, 444) = 3.123$, $p = 0.049$

For the "before" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value was 0.896, which is much greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggested that, there is no statistically significant difference in the satisfaction with housing conditions in Ayodhya before the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.

For the "after" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value was 0.049, which is less than the significance level (0.05). Therefore, there is a significant difference in the satisfaction with housing conditions after the Pran Pratishtha. This indicated that stakeholders perceive a notable change or improvement in housing conditions in Ayodhya post the inauguration of the temple.

Result H3: Accepted (Before) / Rejected (After)

H4: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of stakeholders from community development before and after Pran Pratishtha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 0.392$, $p = 0.532$, After Pran Pratishtha: $F(1, 444) = 3.126$, $p = 0.033$

For the "before" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value was 0.532, which is much greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggested that, based on the collected data, there is no statistically significant difference in satisfaction levels related to community development in Ayodhya before the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.

For the "after" Pran Pratishtha period, the p-value was 0.033, which is less than the significance level (0.05). Therefore, there is a significant difference in satisfaction levels related to community development after the Pran Pratishtha. This indicated that stakeholders perceive a notable improvement in community infrastructure, including parks, public transportation facilities, community centers, roads, and other infrastructure, post the inauguration of the temple.

Result H4: Accepted (Before) / Rejected (After)

H5: There is no significant difference between health care levels of stakeholders before and after the Supreme Court decision in the making of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Before: $F(1, 444) = 0.237$, $p = 0.627$, After: $F(1, 444) = 2.961$, $p = 0.055$

Before the Supreme Court decision in the making of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the p-value is 0.627, indicating that, based on the collected data, there is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perception of access to healthcare.

After the Supreme Court decision, the p-value is 0.055, which is slightly above the significance level (0.05). While it does not reach traditional levels of significance, there is a noticeable trend suggesting a potential difference in stakeholders' perception of access to healthcare post the Supreme Court decision

Result H5: Accepted (Before) / Trend towards Rejection (After)

H6: There is no significant difference between social dynamics levels of stakeholders before and after the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratistha: $F(1, 444) = 2.145, p = 0.094$, After : $F(1, 444) = 3.5, p = 0.008$

Before the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama, the p-value is 0.094, which is greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggested that, based on the collected data, there is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perception of social dynamics in Ayodhya before the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.

After the Pran Pratistha, the p-value is 0.008, which is less than the significance level (0.05). Therefore, there is a significant difference in stakeholders' perception of social dynamics after the Pran Pratistha. This indicates that stakeholders perceive a positive influence on social interactions and dynamics in Ayodhya post the inauguration of the temple. This could be because, the inauguration of the temple and the Pran Pratistha may have had a profound cultural and spiritual impact on the community. Positive cultural events often foster a sense of community, unity, and shared identity, contributing to harmonious social dynamics.

Result H6: Accepted (Before) / Rejected (After)

H7: There is no significant difference between cultural heritage levels of stakeholders before and after the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratistha: $F(1, 444) = 3.342, p = 0.048$, After: $F(1, 444) = 4.323, p = 0.032$

Before the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama, the p-value is 0.048, which is less than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This indicated that, based on the collected data, there is a statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perception of the preservation of Ayodhya's cultural heritage before the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.

After the Pran Pratistha, the p-value is 0.032, which is also less than the significance level (0.05). Therefore, there is a significant difference in stakeholders' perception of the preservation of Ayodhya's cultural heritage after the Pran Pratistha. This suggested that stakeholders perceive a noticeable improvement in the preservation of cultural heritage in Ayodhya post the inauguration of the temple.

Rationale for Rejection (Before and After):

The rejection of H7 for both the periods, before and after the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama, signifies a robust and consistent improvement in stakeholders' perception of Ayodhya's cultural heritage preservation. The significant p-values suggest that the temple inauguration has had a positive impact on cultural heritage, fostering noticeable improvements. Possible factors contributing to this include heightened community awareness, increased cultural programs, and collaborative efforts between the government and the community. Before the Pran Pratistha, the perceived cultural heritage preservation was already a subject of significance, and post the inauguration, there has been a tangible and statistically significant enhancement in stakeholders' perception. This rejection underscores the enduring positive influence of the temple inauguration on the preservation and promotion of Ayodhya's cultural heritage.

Result- H7 Rejected (Before and After)

H8: There is no significant difference between overall well-being levels of stakeholders before and after the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama at the Ram Temple.

Before Pran Pratistha: $F(1, 444) = 2.325$, $p = 0.074$, After Pratistha: $F(1, 444) = 2.79$, $p = 0.04$

Before the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama, the p-value is 0.074, which is slightly above the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggested that, there is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' overall well-being and satisfaction with life in Ayodhya before the inauguration of the temple on 22 January 2024.

This can mainly be because of the positive community impact stemming from the temple's inauguration, inculcating a sense of pride, unity, and shared identity among residents. This augmented sense of belonging, together with the cultural and spiritual significance of the temple, has contributed to a deep sense of purpose and fulfillment. The involvement in community celebrations and positive media coverage surrounding the Pran Pratistha has further directed a more positive and peaceful, satisfactory community life. The striking difference post- inauguration reflects the persisting impact of the Ram Temple on the well-being and satisfaction levels of Ayodhya's residents.

Result H8: Accepted (Before) / Rejected (After)

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the thorough study explored the socio-economic, cultural and religious facets of Ayodhya, specifically focusing on the evolutionary impacts of the Pran Pratistha of Lord Rama at the Ram temple. The analysis examined various dimensions, including tourism, economic impact, infrastructure growth, cultural preservation, social dynamics and overall well-being. The evidence indicated a detailed and multi-faceted view of Ayodhya's development, both prior to and following the major milestone of the Supreme Court's decision and the subsequent inauguration of the Ram Temple.

The research indicated that the Pran Pratistha had a noticeable impact on various dimensions of Ayodhya's landscape. Notably, stakeholders gained evolutionary changes in cultural heritage preservation, social dynamics and overall well-being after the temple's inauguration. The better socio-economic conditions, infrastructure growth, and increased cultural preservation initiatives underlined Ayodhya's transition into a dynamic and developing pilgrimage destination. While the research showed positive trends, it also brings into light the need for continued research and monitoring to ensure sustainable development and inclusive growth. The Ram Temple's influence moves beyond its spiritual and cultural facets, touching the lives of Ayodhya's residents in major ways, reinforcing the close nature between religious practices, community development, and overall societal well-being.

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