

# Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism on the Socio-Economic Profile of a Temple Town- A Case of Ambaji, Gujarat

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**Abstract** - Tourism is playing a major role in the economic development of India. Tourism has impacts on environment, economic and sociocultural aspects within the country. India's pilgrimage tourism industry has grown at an incredible rate. Ambaji is located in Banaskantha district of Gujarat region. Lakhs of tourist/ pilgrims visit the site from various corners of Gujarat at the holy shrine of Mata Ambaji. The aim of the present research paper is to examine & analyse the socio-economic impacts of pilgrimage tourism at Ambaji and its surrounding area. Qualitative research methodology was adopted to conduct the study. The present research paper states that there has been a positive and negative socio-economic impact of pilgrimage tourism on Ambaji.

**Key Words:** Tourism, Pilgrimage, socio-economic, Ambaji

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ambaji town is located within taluka district Banaskantha, North Gujarat, India. It is situated at a distance of 65 km from Palanpur & 280 km from Vadodara. It is located at 24.33°N 72.85°E. It is at an altitude of 480 meters (1,570 ft). Ambaji is within the Aravalli Range, a mountain range in western India that stretches for about 800 kilometers across the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi in a north-eastern direction.

Considering geographical features of town, Ambaji is hot and humid and the temperature remains between 26°C - 46°C with hot winds in summer. In winter, the temperature ranges between 6°C - 36°C. Average rainfall is about 700-800 mm in monsoon season.

The major tourist spots in Ambaji Area Development Authority Boundary are Ambaji Temple, Gabbar hill, Mansarovar, Kailash Tekri, Mangalya Van, Jain temple, Kumbheshwar temple, Rinchhdi Mahadev temple, Kamakshi temple, Koteswar Mahadev temple, Balaram Wild life sanctuary.

### Fairs and Festivals in Town:

Posh Sud Poonam (January), Chaitra Navratri (April), Bhadrapad Sud Poonam Mela (August-September), Ashwin Sud Navratri (September-October), Diwali (October-November), every month Poonam, weekends are the important days in Ambaji when one can observe high influx of tourists. The local transportation available in Ambaji is Taxis and Auto-rickshaws.

### Historical Significance of Town:

Ambaji is one of India's 51 ancient Shakti Peetha Tirth. It is said that the Heart of Sati Devi has fallen here. Ambaji from the name of goddess Amba was established about 100 years ago. Rana Shri Bhavani Singh of Danta questioned Ambaji

and built the temple by keeping Shri Yantra given by Amba mata and the village was formed. In the temple, there is no Goddess idol. **Source:** (Primary Survey, 2020; Ambaji Gram Panchayat)

### Objective:

The main aim of the study was to formulate strategies for tourism & socio-economic development of a temple town. The following are the objectives:

- To study tourism growth & pattern in town.
- To identify problems existing related to tourism.
- To examine the impact of tourism development on local infrastructure.
- To find the development changes of Ambaji due to tourism.
- To access socio-economic impact of tourism due to seasonal tourist inflow.
- To prepare strategies for socio-economic development for tourists and locals.

### Methodology:

A qualitative research method was adopted for data collection in a form of primary and secondary data. Initially, the socio-economic indicators and variables were identified. The secondary data sources included demographic data, physical features, etc. through census of India. The primary data sources included interviews, surveys and questionnaire survey amongst local residents and local authorities. In order to further analyze the socio-economic factors affecting the locals and development trend of Ambaji, indicators like tourist inflow, land use, employment of locals, accommodation, etc. were taken into consideration. The data collected was tabulated, analyzed and based on the analysis the suggestions and conclusions were drawn.

## 2. DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

### 1. Social Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism on Ambaji

#### a. Demographic Data

Ambaji Census Town in 1991 had a population 10673 with 2331 households. This growth of population increased to 13702 with 2817 HH in 2001, the population of AADA villages was 5482. The total population was 19184. And in 2011, the population of Ambaji town was 17753 with 3612 HH, while the population of the villages was 8179 leading to 25932 of total population. HH in 2001, in villages of Jetvas, Chikhla, Jharivav & Kumbhariya was 224,223,87 & 401 while in 2011 it was 347,265,120 & 671. During the decade 2001-2011, the resident population of Ambaji CT increased by 29.5%. According to census definitions, the town is classified as a Class IV town.

Kumbhariya village has the maximum population of 3482 among the 4 villages falling under old AADA boundary. The decadal growth rate for this village has been of 66.2% in 2001-2011. Jetvas village has the second highest population of 2359 in 2011 with a decadal decrease of 38.2% in 2001-2011 as compared to 1991-2001. Chikhla village has a population of 1611 in 2011 & had decadal decrease of 37.5% in 2001-2011 as compared to 1991-2001. Jharivav village has the lowest population of 727 in 2011 but has a decadal growth of 42.8% in 2001-2011.

**Table -1: Population & Decadal Growth of AADA Boundary**

Name	Population Details & Decadal Growth						
	1991	2001	2011	2021	1991-2001	2001-2011	2011-2021
Ambaji (CT)	10673	13702	17753	21293	28.4%	29.5%	19.9%
Jetvas	1111	1706	2359	3309	53.6%	38.2%	40.2%
Chikhla	760	1172	1611	1736	54.2%	37.5%	7.7%
Jharivav	376	509	727	902	35.4%	42.8%	24%
Kumbhariya	1736	2095	3482	4355	20.7%	66.2%	25%
Total Population	14656	19184	25932	31595			

Source: (Census of India, 1991, 2001 & 2011)

## b. Land use Pattern

The increase in the number of tourists visiting Ambaji has led to change in the land use pattern.

The land use scenario of Ambaji town has changed during the last few years. Since Ambaji town receives a large number of tourists every year, the State Government had initiated Town Planning Scheme for developing the town in an organized manner.

**Table -2: Shows Land use details of AADA Boundary**

Land use	Area (HA) 2009	Develop area %	Total area %	Area (HA) 2021	Develop area %	Total area %
Gamtal	35.86	12.5	0.67	35.86	8.56	0.67
Residential	40.34	14.06	0.8	115.30	27.52	2.2
Commercial	5.62	1.96	0.10	39.00	9.31	0.73
Industry	79.06	27.55	1.5	87.35	20.85	1.65
Public purpose	99.74	34.75	1.9	101.06	24.12	2
Existing road	26.33	9.18	0.5	40.3	9.62	0.8
<b>Total area developed</b>	<b>286.98</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>418.8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-</b>
River, ditch & lake	36.08		0.68	36.08		0.68
Agricultural	572.53		10.85	522.2		9.8
Forest/padtar/hill	4387.8		83	4306.3		81.5
<b>Total area</b>	<b>5283.48</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>5283.48</b>		<b>100</b>

Source: (Development Plan Report of Ambaji)

The analysis of the table clearly indicates that the Agricultural land has declined from 10.85% in 2009 to 9.8% in 2021 along with the reduction in forest area from 83% to 81.5%. The reduction in agricultural and forest area has been found to be due to an increase in residential area, commercial area, industrial area, etc. The residential area shows a significant increase from 0.8% in 2009 to 2.2% in 2021.

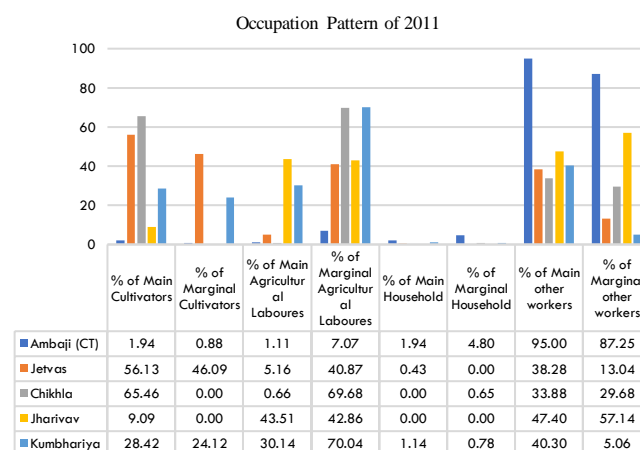
The commercial area has also increased with hotels, Dharamshala, shops from 0.10% to 0.73%. Along with increase in public purpose category from 1.9% to 2% &

increase in industrial area from 1.5% to 1.65% is observed. Increase in all other land use have resulted in a reduction in open space.

## c. Occupational Details

In 1991, 2001 and 2011 Ambaji CT reflects decrease in cultivator from 2.02 % (1991) to 0.23% (2001), which increased in the year 2011 to 1.94 %. As it is a pilgrimage center an increase has been noticed in other services which has been increased from 91.53% (1991) to 99.07% (2001), which decreased in the year 2011 to 95 %.

**Chart- 1: Shows Occupational Pattern of AADA Boundary**



Source: (Census of India 2011)

At village level, on an average 39.97% population is engaged into other workers in 2011. The main agricultural labors & household workers are 16.11% & 0.70%, which is less as compared to cultivators & other workers. The villages having more of cultivator's population is Chikhla & Jetvas, & agricultural labors are found more in Jharivav & kumbhariya. Kumbhariya & Chikhla has more of marginal agricultural labors.

The total worker participation is found 32.28% which can be further strengthened, which will give high level of economic activity in town. Main other workers & marginal agricultural labors occupy large percentage of occupation in town & villages.

## d. Types of Establishments

The details about the establishments & revenue generated is shown in the table as follows:

**Table -3: Shows Nature of Establishments in Ambaji Town**

Nature of Establishment	Establishment Surveyed	Workers per establishment	Income/ Unit/Day (Rs)	Total Income/Unit/ Month (Rs)	Total No. of Establishment
Tea Stalls & Allied Business	5	1	500	15000	22
Shops	12	2	700	21000	490
Hotels/ Dharamshala	20(430 Rooms)	5	1200	2 Lac 80 thousand	150
Labors	200		200	6000	
Tours & Travel	2	5	1000	50000-60000	4
Rickshaw	5	1	600	15000	100
Taxi/ Jeep	5	1	700	18000	170
Eatery	8	5		15000-20000	140
Marble Industry	5	10		20000	40
Miscellaneous	5	2		5000	50

Source: (Primary Survey, 2020)

The Pilgrimage Tourism industry generates a lot of jobs opportunities & income generation in Ambaji. As a result, it is expected that an increase in tourist inflows in the future, it will provide tremendous opportunities for the generation of additional income and employment in the local area, thereby improving the economic and social status of local people. Due to tourism in Ambaji, many people gave up their traditional occupations and took over some tourism related activities.

## 2. Economic Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism on Ambaji

### a. Tourist Population

**Table -4:** Shows Average annual & daily tourist population

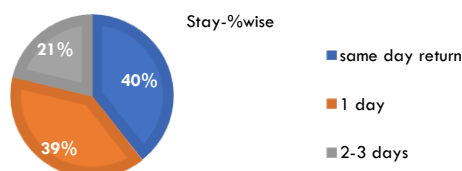
Year	Average Annual Tourist	Average Daily Population	Decadal Growth
2001	15-17 lakh	4383	
2002	18-19 lakh	5068	6.25%
2003	20-21 lakh	5616	20.6%
2004	21-22 lakh	5890	4.9%
2005	22 lakh	6027	2.32%
2006	22-23 lakh	6164	2.3%
2007	25-28 lakh	7260	17.8%
2008	28-30 lakh	7945	9.5%
2009	30-32 lakh	8493	6.9%
2010	35-38 lakh	10000	17.8%
2011	39-41 lakh	10959	9.6%
2012	41-43 lakh	11506	5%
2013	44-46 lakh	12328	7.2%
2014	47-49 lakh	13150	6.7%
2015	50-60 lakh	15068	14.6%
2016	60-70 lakh	17808	18.2%
2017	70-80 lakh	20548	15.4%
2018	80-90 lakh	23288	13.33%
2019	1 crore	27397	17.65%
2020	50 -51 lakh	13836	-45%
2021 (Jan)	3.60 lakh	11613	

**Source:** (Temple Authorities- Shri Arasuri Ambaji Mata Devasthan Trust)

The average decadal growth rate as 7.5%. Yearly information about the tourist arrival is collected from the temple trust. Annual tourist flow in Ambaji has increased since 2001. Year 2019 shows the highest tourist inflow in Ambaji. The flow of tourists varies throughout the year. It changes according to the seasons.

### b. Stay of Tourist

**Chart- 2:** Shows Average stay of Tourist



**Source:**(Primary Survey, 2020)

40% tourist return on the same day followed by 39% tourist staying for 1 day, because of lack of recreational activities for tourist.

Whereas 21% tourist stays for 2-3 days those who have come for major religious purposes.

### c. Expenditure of Tourist

Average duration of stay =1.5 day,

Average expenditure= 2770\*1.5=Rs. 4155/-

Considering Rs.4155/- as an average expenditure of tourist for 1.5 day, a total of Rs.5360 crore would be tourist expenditure in 2021 for 1.30 crore of tourist population.

**Table -5:** Shows Average expenditure during stays in Ambaji per head per day

Average expenditure during stays in Ambaji per head per day		
Accommodation	1200/-	45%
Food	350/-	13%
Shopping	320/-	12%
Religious activity	550/-	20%
Local Transportation (if opted)	175/-	5%
Miscellaneous	175/-	5%
Total	2770/-	

**Source:** (Primary Survey, 2020)

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted states that pilgrimage tourism plays a significant role in socio-economic growth of Ambaji. Pilgrimage tourism observes both positive and negative socio-economic impact on Ambaji. Some of the positive economic impacts observed are direct and indirect job opportunities, enhanced standard of living, employment generation, infrastructural development. Some of negative economic impacts are increased land price, increased transportation cost, seasonality in tourist inflow, lack of tourism resources ownership, etc. some positive social impacts are increased internal migration and less outward migration, change in attitude and behavior of locals, enhancement in role of women, etc. and negative social impacts are displacement of poor from their land, social inequality and language. Town observes a significant shift in spatial patterns, demographic characteristics, occupational structure, tourist flow, etc. the research reveal than an increase in tourist flow, will increase income generation simultaneously.

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## BIOGRAPHIES



Mrunali Patel is an Architect, Urban Planner, Academician and a Freelancer. Her interest lies in Urban Planning along with Tourism.