

## **THE DEMOLITION OF BABRI-MASJID AND COMMUNALISATION OF INDIAN POLITICS**

Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi issue is the most complicated and tension provoking in India, as whole of the country was in the grip of communal tension and hatred for the last three decades. It was a matter of grief that Ramjanmabhumi i.e. the birth place of Ram (according to Hindu community), which ought to be a sacred place of worship, took the shape of battle-field for both, the Hindus and the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The communal fire lit from here spread to the whole country. Ayodhya is now in every one's mind, not due to its affiliation with Ram the God, but due to the fact that communal forces in various political parties made it their main political agenda for obvious electoral gains. This dispute, in recent years has become the most important reason for a deep deterioration of inter-communal relationship and communalisation of Indian political process.

This dispute, undoubtedly one of the most sensitive communal issues after partition and biggest controversy after the Shah Bano case. In the year 1986, the doors of the disputed shrine (Babri Masjid) were opened for the Hindus, so that they may be enabled to perform worship of deities, enshrined there, on the order of Faizabad court,<sup>2</sup> emotions were aroused on both the sides. The Hindus felt a new courage for they had won a long fight, fought to regain their lost heritage, while the Muslims considered it, their defeat, as they were forced to lose control over a place of worship, they claimed to belonged to them.

During the year 1992, the dispute took the form of a national crisis, when the Masjid was demolished with an intention to build a temple at that very site. Still it did not conclude the controversy, whether the mosque was constructed first or the temple was already present there. There are also conflicting records put fourth, by different groups about the question of Mandir or Masjid. The situation became more curious and multi dimensional because of the involvement of different actors like, state, political parties, religious leaders, media and intelligentsia.

The identification of present Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh) with Ramjanmabhumi is based upon the faith of the Hindu community and has no solid evidence. There is no conclusive proof that the mosque build at the time of Babar, was on a temple site or that a temple had been destroyed to build it.<sup>3</sup> Outwardly, it was a dispute fought for mere ownership of a piece of land, but in a deeper sense, it was related with the right to freedom of religion, guaranteed in Article-25 of the constitution. Compared to Shah Bano case, and the discussion on Uniform or separate Civil Codes, this controversy is not a clear cut matter of legislation on the minority rights, rather, it deals with the legal practices of supposedly secular state India and the need to practically secure the minority rights.<sup>4</sup> Because the Ramjanmabhumi movement lays emphasis on myths and beliefs, rather than facts and democratic decisions, the issue also includes confrontation between religious and secular ideals within politics.

The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi dispute of Ayodhya brought in existence a new political infrastructure, which was not there before. It has been instrumental in the downfall of the two ruling parties at the centre (V.P.Singh and Chandra Shekhar's governments). The 1989 and 1991 elections were fought on this particular plank and political parties, especially the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress party took issues on their platforms and tried to attain the political power. The BJP was able to influence the Hindu voters on this issue and won more seats in the Lok Sabha as well as in numerous state assemblies and the Congress party, known for its secular stance, and for its traditional support base among the Muslim voters, got badly defeated. The loss of the Congress Party became a gain for the BJP. It is mainly a political issue rather than religious.<sup>5</sup>

In order to follow the issue more clearly, it is important to recount the historical facts, judicial functioning and political aspects, step by step. The historical, judicial and political aspects to controversy, have an inter-relationship. The present study in hand is an effort to go through the various aspects from the political perspective. First of all, we deeply analyse the controversies, related to the historical and the mythological background of this issue.

### MAP OF INDIA



Source: [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)

### MAP OF UTTAR PRADESH



Source: [www.mapsofindia.com/maps/uttarpradesh](http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/uttarpradesh)

## **I. CONTROVERSY OVER HISTORICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF DISPUTE**

The referred mosque was constructed in 1528, by the nobleman Mir Baqi, at the request of Babar, the first Moghul Emperor, hence the name Babri Masjid. The under mentioned inscriptions in Persian script were written on the gate of the mosque:

Ba formuda-i-shah Babur Ki adilash  
Banaist ta Kakh-i-gardun mulaqi.  
Bana Kard in Muhbit-i-qudsiyam ra  
Amir-i-Saadat-nishan Mir Baqi.  
Buvad khair baqi Chu sal-i-banaish  
Iyan shud Ki guftam-Buvad Khair Baqi. (935)

The English version of these lines are :

By the command of Emperor Babar, whose justice is an edifice reaching up to the very height of the heaven; the good-hearted Mir Baqi built this alighting-place of angles Buvad Khair Baqi ! (may this goodness last forever) the year of building made clear likewise, when I said Buvad khair Baqi (935 A.H) (i.e. 1528).<sup>6</sup>

Another inscription on outside of the gate followed:

In the name of one who is wisest of all, who is the creator of the universe, but himself has no abode; in thanksgiving to the prophet of all prophets in the two worlds, in the celebration of the glory of Babar Qualander (the recluse), who has achieved great success in the world.<sup>7</sup>

The statement revealed in the above inscriptions does not clarify the mosque was built by demolishing the Ram Temple. Undoubtedly, there were some pillars which had non-Islamic symptoms. For that it can be possible that there were some Hindu craftsmen employed in the construction work or some material from the vicinal or derelict Hindu building might have been brought in use. In fact, the style of these pillars is thought by some to be more Jaina than Hindu, and it is possible that the parts of the mosque may have been picked up from Jaina buildings. The ancient historical records convey that Ayodhya had been a Buddhist centre and then a Jaina centre, before the followers of

Rama cult started settling there in large numbers in the eighteenth century and building temples under the patronage of Muslim *Nawabs* of Avadh.<sup>8</sup>

Some people retrace the history of Ayodhya from the very ancient time. They think that King Vikramaditya had renovated the temple during the reign of Gupta dynasty in the fifth century. It means that the temple itself was constructed much earlier. The proponents of this theory state the existence of Ramjanmabhumi shrine at Ramkot, which was believed to be the birth place of Ram, the holiest spot on earth in 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries and it is well attested by its description in the Ayodhya Mahatmya, of Vaishnava Khanda of *Skanda Purana*, narrating the glory of this shrine. They also hold that Babar instructed his Minister Mir Baqi to alter/replace the temple by a mosque in 1528 A.D on the advice of Sufi Sant Jalal Shah. Since that very time, the Hindus had desired to have a glance at the site which they considered sacred in their religion and some others recount history of Ayodhya from 1528.<sup>9</sup> But it is believed popularly that Babar personally got it built after demolishing the Hindu temple. No doubt, it is a controversial issue. The main question is that if Ram was born in Ayodhya, was Ram born at the same spot, where the mosque had been erected? But there is no evidence to reinforce the claim about the same spot of mosque. Some more temples in Ayodhya claim that Lord Rama was born on the sites of these temples and the priests of these temples make that claim.<sup>10</sup>

The history of Ramjanmabhumi was originally based on Valmiki's *Ramayana*, which revolves around several myths; the myth of Ayodhya's sacredness and its pre-historic character, the myth of rediscovery of Ayodhya to the myth of destruction of temple and construction of a mosque in its place. Actually, *Ramayana* also known as *Ramkatha*, consists of multiple versions and each of these versions carry a different story and the narratives have also contradictions with each other and these narratives or meanings make it impossible to give a coherent religious expression.<sup>11</sup> Some narratives create the situation of doubt whether this Ayodhya is the same Ayodhya as mentioned in Valmiki's *Ramayana* where Ram was born in the *Tretayuga*, thousands of year before the present day *Kaliyuga*. The Ayodhya of *Ramayana* was described as a big town, capital of a king with luxurious material life and facilities. It was described as a developed town, which differs from the archaeological evidences of the present day Ayodhya.<sup>12</sup> The Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu

University, under Prof A.K. Narain, assisted by T.N Roy and Dr. Puroshotam Singh, conducted excavation at Ayodhya. The results of these excavations concluded, “it would seem reasonable to ascribe the first occupation of *Janmabhumi* area to circa seventh century B.C.”<sup>13</sup> Since there was no settlement in the region prior to this, it was argued by some historians that Ayodhya of Valmiki could not have existed at the present day site.<sup>14</sup> Even Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, a Bengali historian, also supported this by concluding, “The *Ramayana* is basically a literary creation by some single poet, who has named Valmiki. There is evidently no historical core below the surface.”<sup>15</sup> Besides it, no evidence of religious bigotry is found during the life of Babar. Had Babar demolished Ramjanmasthan temple, it would have found mention, either in *Tuzk-i-Babri* (i.e. the memoirs of Babar). The other historical works, emerged during the reign of Babar, also left no evidence, denoting some examples of religious bigotry. Infact, Babar had no reason to fear anyone by mentioning the demolition of the temple. Even Mrs. Beveridge could not produce any proof on this subject. All historical studies that emerged about Babar did not prove that he had iconoclastic zeal. On the contrary several recorded instances recall Babar visiting temples, in the cities, he visited.<sup>16</sup>

Conclusively, no historical records could evince that Babri Masjid was constructed on the remains of Ram Temple. Most historians agree the present day Ayodhya was actually Saketa, a Buddhist place of pilgrimage. The British archaeologist Cunningham also in his research, held in the year 1862-63, evinced the existence of the old Buddhist structures, found on the site of the mosque. The Hindu scriptures did not mention Ayodhya as a pilgrimage centre of the Hindus. Even Tulsi Das, the keenly devotee of Rama, did not write even a single line in his *Ramcharita Manas* (1574), which may support the Hindu claim, even though, he lived just a quarter of a century after Babar. If Babar or any of his court official had demolished the Rama temple, it could not have gone unnoticed by his contemporary Hindus.<sup>17</sup> Only during the reign of Jahangir, did Ram’s association with Ayodhya became popularly accepted. William French a European traveller visited Ayodhya in 1608-11. He, in his travellogue has narrated several Ram myths, but he also did not write anything about referred Ram temple. Abdul Fazal noted that city was also called Ramjanmabhumi, but he has not mentioned about the fact that mosque was structured after demolishing any temple. Nor we get any

reference to it in any of the medieval historical or literary works, whether the author was a Hindu or a Muslim, an orthodox or a liberal.<sup>18</sup> It was only in the nineteenth century or during the British period when the legend of demolition of temple and construction of mosque begins to get into the records. We know fully that the British government to 'divide' the Hindus and the Muslims made many tricks under the policy of divide and rule and it was also the same conspiracy of the Britishers over Ayodhya.<sup>19</sup> The administrators in pursuance of this policy, assiduously invented history, to keep the Hindu-Muslims both permanently divided. The British officer, H.R Nevill, was the first man who fabricated the story about the Babri Masjid and said:

In 1528 AD, Babar came to Ayodhya (Aud) and halted for a week. He destroyed the ancient temple (marking the birth place of Rama) and on its site built a mosque, still known as Babar's mosque..... It has two inscriptions, one on the outside, one on the pulpit; both are Persian, and bear the date 935 AH.<sup>20</sup>

Besides many visitors visited Ayodhya. Such as Australian traveler, Tieffenthaler, in the last decades of eighteenth century, recorded that Ramjanmabhumi temple was demolished by Babar or Aurangzeb and the mosque was constructed on the site.<sup>21</sup> From the historians account it can be concluded that probably around 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century, Rama was well associated with Ayodhya town and people do have many stories about Rama as *Avtar* of Vishnu, had taken birth in the same town. Those travellers who were carried by these local stories (whether fact or fiction) have mentioned them as facts. So they had collected information from mythic stories provided by the priests and the *sadhus* and they had also gone through popular history books and the devotee is able to realise the internality and holiness of the place.<sup>22</sup> In this way, factual histories are not relevant in understanding the historicity of Ayodhya. As Peter Van der Veer has put it, "A pilgrim, at least, is not interested in proof. He comes only for few days to Ayodhya and want to hear its *mahima*, its greatness, its power and not its real history."<sup>23</sup>

According to Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) historians, "It is in the nineteenth century that the story circulates and enters official records. These records were then cited by others as valid historical evidence on the issue."<sup>24</sup> In the same way in A.G Noorani's categorical words, "The myth is a 19<sup>th</sup> century creation by the Britishers."<sup>25</sup>

The narratives about destruction of temple and construction of mosque are found in the British records like P.Carnegy's, *Historical Sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad, Zillah Fyzabad Lucknow*, 1870 or H.R Nevill's, *Faizabad District Gazetteer Allahabad*, 1905 and footnotes of Mrs. Beveridge's English translation of *Baburnama* (Babar's memoirs 1922).<sup>26</sup>

In fact the very first trouble between the Hindus and the Muslims on the issue emerged in 1855. It has been reported in *Mirza Jan's Hadigah-al-Shudhada*, which was published in 1956. According to him, the Hindus captured Masjid Fidai Khan, demolished it, took over the mosque inside the fort and also razed to the ground the *Hanuman Garih* mosque.<sup>27</sup> The Muslims were greatly disturbed on the happenings and united themselves under the leadership of Shah Ghulam Hussain and waged a war against the Hindus and made Babri Masjid as their base. The British officials with a view to create hatred between the two, supported the Hindu Bairagis. The Bairagis thus, on seeing the British forces, attacked the Muslims in Babri Masjid, but the Muslims found a way to arrive at *Hanumangadi* door, fighting against the Hindus and killed a large number of Bairagis. Afterwards, Bairagis attacked the Babri Masjid and killed a large number of Muslims, who were resting inside.<sup>28</sup> After this trouble, decision between the representatives of both communities was made. According to the decision, both the communities were allowed to perform their worship. But the Hindus were not allowed to enter into the mosque but were permitted to perform their prayers on the *chabutra* (a kind of platform, later also referred to as the *chabutra Janmasthan*) near the mosque. The division was formalized by the British and a fence was erected between the Masjid and the *chabutra*. Separate gates were managed for each community to enter into the site.<sup>29</sup>

The whole incidence took a systematic way for confrontation between the two communities. The Britishers succeeded in driving a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims. It did not stop there. In 1858, the Muslims filed a complaint in District Court and blamed that the Hindus had constructed a clay *chabutra* near the pulpit of mosque and were performing prayer there.<sup>30</sup> In 1885, the first formal legal request on the matter was filed. The *Mahant* of *chabutra Janmasthan* claimed land on which *chabutra* was constructed and asked for permission for the construction of a temple.<sup>31</sup> The request was dismissed. Then again in 1934 some Muslims slaughtered a cow in a nearby village and

the Hindus considered it a mischief of the Muslims and severe riots took place between the two communities. A group of the Hindus tried to breakdown the mosque but the Britishers controlled them, repaired the damaged part of it and imposed a fine on the local Hindus.<sup>32</sup> In this way, in 1885 alongwith the appeal, submitted by *Mahant Raghubar Dass*, a legal contest between both the communities began. This legal battle will be analyzed in the next part of this chapter.

After independence, a debate between the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) was held. The VHP claimed that Hindus have been for a long time worshipping a particular sacred place in Ayodhya, known as Ramjanmabhumi even before the construction of Babri Masjid. Therefore, the Masjid was erected after the demolition of temple. In this context, VHP submitted many historical and literary sources, archaeological evidences and revenue records for which we have already discussed earlier.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, AIBMAC also propounded their documents to respond to the deponents. They propounded documents of mythological history of Ayodhya, documents of construction of Masjid in 1528, documents of exclusive possession of the Muslims over Masjid from 1528 to 1885, documents of judicial verdicts from the successive decisions in favour of the Muslims etc.<sup>34</sup> The AIBMAC stresses specially on the historicity of Ram, rejects the thesis that temple was replaced by Babri Masjid and claims judicial judgments in favour of Muslim possession. On the other hand, the VHP marshalled out evidences in support of its claim. What is evident from the controversy of historical evidences and dialogue between the rival parties, the dispute has undeniably been vitiated into a question of sentiments and faith of the majority community and threat to identity of minority. The claims of VHP are based on questionable historical evidences.<sup>35</sup>

The historicity of present day Ayodhya is debatable, no historical record notes the exact spot of Ram's birth, nor is there any evidence that Babri Masjid was built on the ruins of a Rama temple. Interestingly, the BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpae in his reply to the open letter of Hiren Mukherjee and said that "It is not possible to pin point the exact spot where Ram was born."<sup>36</sup> So, it is a matter of faith, since a century this belief has become the centre of this controversy and politicians are using this faith for their own benefits. As the British government tried to remain in power, dividing the people on this

issue before partition and these same efforts are being made by Indian politicians after independence to obtain political gains out of this never ending controversy. For instance, this is indeed difficult to prove, but the statements coming from both the BJP and the VHP are very clear on this issue: there is undeniable proof that a temple existed which was destroyed and replaced by a mosque. According to Neeladri Bhattacharya,

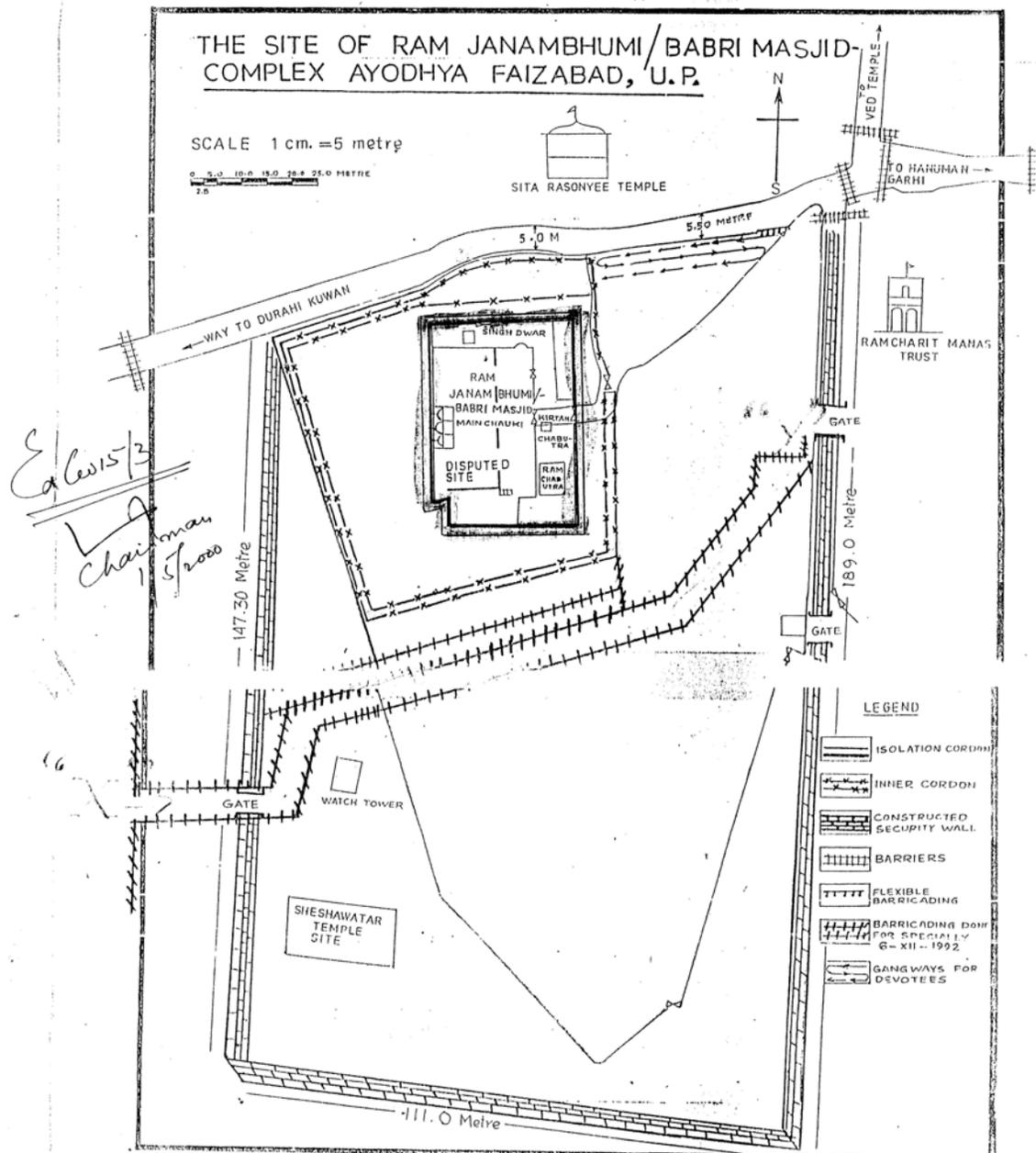
The battle for Ramjanamabhumi is part of a wider political struggle for a constitution of 'Hindu' consciousness and identity, for the construction of a unified Hindu tradition and for the assertions of Hindu power over all other communities in India.<sup>37</sup>

## **II. LEGAL BATTLE**

The communal fire of Hindu-Muslim communities, on the matter of Babri Masjid has been burning since centuries to eliminate the communal harmony of India. The legal file subjected to the matter is alive in the judiciary and on the other hand, the declarations of Hindu political and religious organizations for Mandir construction, from time to time, *Rath yatras* of the BJP, provocative speeches of RSS, VHP etc. and opposition of Babri Masjid Action Committee, have spoiled the peace of Indian public for long time. This controversy regularly checked the secularism and law infrastructure of the country as well as brought out a basis of danger to distort the national unity of India. If we want to study deeply, it is necessary to go through and analyze legal history of dispute, to estimate, what had been the role of judiciary? The legal history of dispute are deeply rooted in pre-independence period.

The legal history of Babri Masjid shows that in the beginning, the *chabutra* (Platform) constituted on 23 February 1857, inside the boundary wall of the Babri Masjid, was known as the *Janamsthan* (birth place). In 1857 the *Nawab* of Avadh proclaimed that *namaz* in the mosque by the Muslims and the worship on the *chabutra* by the Hindus, be performed at different times or hours. The legal dispute emerged in 1885 during the British rule, when *Mahant* (the chief priest), Raghubar Das of Ramjanmsthan, filed a civil suit in the court of Sub-Judge, of Faizabad on 15 January 1885, seeking permission to build a temple on *chabutra* (area of 17 feet by 21 feet situated on the outer enclosure of disputed mosque). Pt. Hari Kishan Singh, the Sub Judge, having heard from the plaintiff that government of U.P and the defendant are undertaking an inquiry, on the

MAP OF DISPUTED SITE



Source: <http://mha.gov.in/pdfs/cac.maps.pdf>.

spot, in the presence of the parties to the dispute rejected the plea on the ground of threat to public law and order situation. He considered that if a temple will be allowed to be constructed on the *chabutra* which is so close to Masjid, then it would 'lay the foundation of death and murder.'<sup>38</sup> The referred *Mahant* then submitted an appeal to the District Court of Faizabad, Colonel J.E.A Chamber, who after an inspection of disputed land on March 17, 1886, dismissed the appeal. He judged that a temple could not be built without

inflaming communal passions. A railing was then built to separate the *chabuttra* from the Masjid. This imposed a physical boundary between Hindu and Muslim religious space.<sup>39</sup>

Recording the judgment, the official made a very important statement:

I found that the Masjid built by Emperor Babar, stands on the border of the town of Ayodhya. It is most unfortunate that a mosque should have been built on the land specially held sacred by the Hindus. But, as that occurred 356 years ago, it is too late now to remedy the grievance. All that can be done is to maintain the parties in *status quo*.<sup>40</sup>

Raghubar Das, then on 25 May 1886 filed his suit in the highest court of the province to seek remedy for his motif, but was dismissed by the Judicial Commissioner of Oudh. And in his judgment, dated 1 November 1886, he observed that:

This spot is situated within the precinct of the grounds, surrounding the mosque erected some 350 years ago, owing to the bigotry and tyranny of the Emperor, who purposely chose this holy spot which according to Hindu legend was the site of the temple. The Hindus seemed to have very limited right of access to certain spots, within the precincts adjoining the mosque and they have, from a series of years, been persistently trying to increase those rights and to erect buildings on two spots, namely Sita-Ki-Rasoi and Ramchandra –Ki- Janmabhumi.<sup>41</sup>

He, however, said that the plaintiff's earlier suits had been dismissed, on the ground that the plaintiff had no evidence to support his claim, that the place belonged to Hindus. In this way the first legal battle by the Hindus to claim the right to build a temple on the *chabuttra*, ended in a fiasco. Their claim did not provide them remedy in their above mentioned legal action. Afterwards, in March 1934, communal riots took place over the issue of mosque. The cause of action was the slaughtering of a cow in the village, Shahjahanpur, the adjoining region of Ayodhya. The Hindus tried to ravage the mosque and damaged it, but it was repaired by the funds collected through the fine imposed on Hindu rioters.<sup>42</sup> In 1936, an enquiry was made from the Commissioner of Waqf Boards about the history of mosque. The Commissioner expressed in response to

enquiry, that mosque was built in 1528, by Babar, the emperor and a *Sunni* Muslim. There was another litigation concerning this mosque in 1945, but in it there was involvement of two sects of Muslims, *Shia* and *Sunni*. Both sects claimed the mosque. The local Civil Judge, S.A Ahsan, declared in his pronouncement on 23 March 1946, although mosque was built by Babar who was a *Sunni*, yet there is evidence that it was used by both the sects. Moreover, both *Shia's* and *Sunni's* Wakf Boards litigated over its possession and no challenge to Muslims, right to offer *namaz* had been thrown by the Hindus.<sup>43</sup>

After partition of India, later on in December 1949, this controversy gained momentum and again the legal battle started. Some of Hindu people, kept the statues of *Rama*, *Sita* and *Laxman* during the night of 22-23 December 1949.<sup>44</sup> In the morning, they began to preach on loudspeakers about the arrival of Lord Rama and called the Hindu mob to assemble there for having a sacred look of deity for *darshans*. The incidence put the Muslims in tension and they were very much disturbed. That led to communal confrontation. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India at that time, ordered the Chief Minister of U.P, Shri Govind Ballabh Pant to remove the referred statues. K.K Nayar, the District Magistrate, denied to take out the idols out of mosque when Sham Sunder Lal Das, Commissioner of the District, ordered him, because he asserted that removing the idols will flare up the communal riots. The court then decided to maintain the *status quo* till the finalisation of decision of ownership. The gates of disputed place were locked.<sup>45</sup> The Additional Magistrate of Faizabad and Ayodhya, Markendey Singh, appointed the Chairman of Municipal Board of Faizabad-Cum- Ayodhya, Priya Dutt Ram, as receiver, to arrange for case of property on dispute.<sup>46</sup> Later on, a *Sanatan* Hindu, Gopal Singh Vishared, who was an inhabitant of the Ayodhya city, filed a suit on January 16, 1950 in the Civil Court. He urged entitlement of worship, and visit without obstruction on idols, installed in *Janmabhumi* and seeking a perpetual injunction, restraining the defendants from removing the idols.<sup>47</sup> In this case, there were eight defendants. The Civil Judge, V.N Chadha, adjudged the matter and pronounced on 19 February, 1950:

The parties are hereby restrained by means of the temporary injunction to refrain from removing the idols in question from the

site in dispute and from interfering with the puja etc. as at present carried on.<sup>48</sup>

The interim injunction was later on confirmed by the Civil Judge, in his judgment on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1951, but with an important observation:

The undisputed fact remains that on the date of this suit, the idols of Shri Bhagwan Ram Chandra and others, did exist on the site and that worship was being performed by Hindus, including the plaintiff though under some restrictions put by the executive authorities.<sup>49</sup>

At this time, once again judiciary did not keep in mind and knowingly ignored the crucial issue of the forcible dispossession of mosque and through maintaining *status quo*, judiciary implicitly approves the illegal occupation of mosque.

Along with the suit number 2, of the year 1950, filed by Gopal Singh Visharad, three more suits were filed by other parties, regarding receivership and waqfs of site. In 1959, Nirmohi Akhara<sup>50</sup> also filed a suit for ownership of the disputed land. All those suits continued to be justified. On April 26, 1955, Allahabad High Court, confirmed the *status quo* order, issued by the Civil Judge V.N Chadha in 1950. The Muslim community also arose to seek legal help in the matter. The Sunni Waqf Board filed their suit No. 12 on 18 December 1961 in the court of Civil Judge Faizabad. The Board sought that court should help to declare that the site indicated in the sketch map in ABCD letters is a public mosque, commonly known as “Babri Masjid” while in the letters EFGH beyond referred mosque, was a graveyard of Muslim public, as specified in para 2 of the plaintiff may be decreed. The second relief was sought for the delivery of mosque and graveyard in suit and removal of the Hindu idols and other articles of worship from the mosque and a decree be passed in plaintiff’s favour, against the defendants Gopal Singh Visharad and others.<sup>51</sup> On behalf of Uttar Pradesh government, Deputy Commissioner of Faizabad, J.N Ugra filed a written statement on 24 April 1950, which said in paragraph 14 that, “The property in suit is known as Babri Masjid and it has been for long time in use, as a mosque for the purpose of worship of the Muslims. It has not been in use as a temple of Shri Ram Chandraji.” The next para of the statement pronounced by Deputy Commissioner added that, “On the night of 22 December 1949, the idols of Shri Ram

Chandra ji were surreptitiously and wrongly put inside.” In the paragraph 16 it added that, “That as a result of the said wrongful act, a situation imperiling public peace and tranquility was created and public authorities had to intervene in order to prevent the breach of peace and tranquility.”<sup>52</sup> The statement of J.N Ugra also did not approve the claim of Justice Deoki Nandan Aggarwal (Retd.), who was also a VHP leader, revealing that there is no evidence of Muslims offering *namaz* during *Mughal* times or during reign of the *Nawabs* of Avadh.<sup>53</sup>

From 1951 to 1986, Faizabad and Ayodhya remained tension free. During this time, no legal activity was undertaken by either of the communities. During the aforesaid time of 36 years, the decisions pronounced by District and High Courts, i.e. the maintenance of *status quo*, prevailed. The Hindus continued the *Akhand Kirtan* in front of mosque to ‘liberate’ the ‘Shri Ramjanmabhumi’ since 23 December 1949, without any disruption. On 25 January 1986, a young advocate Umesh Chandra Pandey, submitted a new application within the case no. 2/1950 filed by Gopal Singh Virasad and demanded that the locks which were put on 1949, be opened and the Hindus be allowed to worship the idols, lying inside it.<sup>54</sup> It was a matter of astonishment that all claimants or defenders of case no. 2/1950, had died and case also, was barred according to law or judiciary. So, no new claimant could be entered without permission of the court. But it had happened and without permission of the court, the application of Umesh Chandra Pandey, was accepted under the old case and the judiciary refused this demand on 28 January. Umesh Chandra Pandey, then filed an appeal against the referred order, before District Judge, K.M Pandey on January 31, 1986. Even a copy of the appeal was not provided to Muslim defendants. Within a day of this appeal, 1 February 1986 was fixed for the final hearing. The District Judge ordered on the same day directing the state of Uttar Pradesh, the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, Faizabad to open the locks and not to impose any restriction or cause hurdle in the *darshans* of applicant and other members of the Hindu community. The statement revealed:

It is clear that it is not necessary to keep the locks at the gates for the purpose of maintaining law and order for the safety of the idols. This appears to be an unnecessary irritant to the applicant and other members of the community. There does not appear to be

any necessity to create an artificial barrier between the idols and the devotees.<sup>55</sup>

Quickly after the pronouncement of this statement, the gates of Babri Masjid were opened amidst the police security. The Hindu fundamentalists felt jubilant and the Muslim fundamentalists reacted to the situation by causing a Muslim backlash. This situation proved a cause of communal fire throughout India. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1986, Mohammad Hashim filed a case in High Court, seeking the stay ordered of District Judge Faizabad. The court gave an order on the same day to the maintenance of *status quo* “as existing today” till the further order. The Sunni Waqf Board also put a petition on 12 May 1986, against the orders to District Judge, who had pronounced the above mentioned statement to open locks.<sup>56</sup>

The state of U.P, applied in Allahabd High Court, on the plea that the two petitions filed by the Muslims should be rejected and also four civil suits were withdrawn from the court of Munsif Sadar, Faizabad which were being tried by court.<sup>57</sup> The Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court clubbed together all cases pending over Mandir-Masjid dispute on 14 August, 1989, and issued an interim direction to maintain *status quo* regarding the disputed property.<sup>58</sup> The leaders of VHP promised with Home Minister, Buta Singh, that they will act upon the directions of Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court, given on August 14, 1989, to the effect that, “Parties to the suit shall not change the nature of property in question and ensure that the peace and communal harmony are maintained.”

After this, the foundation stone of Mandir was laid on November 9, 1989, quite near the Babri Masjid and *Kar Seva* began, but the *Kar Seva* was stopped the next day by the order of District Magistrate. The VHP claimed that *Shilanyas* was laid on the undisputed land. But it was done at plot no. 586, claimed by Sunni Waqf Board. The Sunni Waqf Board has claimed that, this plot has been used for long as a Muslim burial ground. On November 2, 1989 Bajrang Dal hoisted a saffron flag on the disputed plot no. 586 in clear violation of High Court’s order of August 14, 1986. So all the land in Ayodhya is *Nazul* land and no *Nazul* land can be utilized for any purpose by any one without the permission of state government.<sup>59</sup>

In this way, all legal suits related with Ayodhya were allotted by Supreme Court to Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1989. At present the cases are being dealt by the referred Bench which has pronounced to maintain the *status quo*. Despite this legal situation, Babri Masjid was demolished on December 6, 1992. After this, the then Prime Minister, Narsimha Rao, by the permission of the Parliament, vide Act 1993, took whole piece of land of 67 acres in its possession on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1993, on the same day, the President of India vide the Parliament Act 143 (1) allotted the whole case to Supreme Court but Supreme Court again sent the case to Allahabad High Court. As according to the Indian Constitution, Supreme Court cannot put aside the decision pronounced by High Court, while providing its own decision with referred legal action on 24 October 1994, the Supreme Court restricted any construction of any kind on 67 acres of land. Moreover, it announced to maintain *status quo* till the further orders.<sup>60</sup>

The case remained pending further for six years and in 2002 a Muslim, Aslam Bhoora, proceeded to the court, when threats were made by VHP to worship *shila* and then to *shiladaan*. The court clinged to its previous decision of 24 October 1994 and pronounced again on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2002 to maintain *status quo* about ownership of 67 acres land.<sup>61</sup> On March 2003, Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court (Coram Narain, Alam and Singh, J.J) ordered Archaeological Survey of India to dig land around the Babri Masjid site. The report of Archaeology was submitted on August 2003, but this report could not help the court to find a firm resolution.<sup>62</sup>

Beside the above mentioned civil suits, pending in the court, here are some more legal cases which are under process in various commissions and judicial agencies. These cases are the outcome of incidence of sixth December 1992, when the Hindus motivated by their political leaders, pulled down the Babri Masjid. For example, CBI dispatched a charge sheet on 13 December 1993 against 49 leaders including Lal Krishan Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharati, who were blamed for conspiracy leading to the demolition. The total number of 50 FIR's were registered on 6 December which were directed against the politicians. Moreover, it is the matter of defamation of Supreme Court. But all these cases are still pending now.

It was hoped that Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court would finalize this story of Mandir-Masjid but it did not happen like this. On September 30, 2010 Allahabad

High Court, delivered a decision and declared that disputed land will be divided in three parts. The court was directed that the portion below the central dome where the idols are kept would go to the Hindus, Nirmohi Akhara would be allotted land including *Ram chabutra* and *Sita ki Rasoi* and one the third land would be allotted to Suni Waqf Board and if minor adjustments are required, the land acquired by central government could be allotted.<sup>63</sup> No doubt this judgment was in favour of the Hindus. The Hindus (VHP, RSS and BJP activists) were happy, but the Muslims were shocked and they felt that the verdict was against them.<sup>64</sup> After this, the judgment was criticized by different scholars, historians, political commentators and lawyers because it was based on 'faith' not on 'facts'.<sup>65</sup> It is implied in the verdict that the court finally accepted the sanctity of the idols placed in 1949, demolition of mosque in 1992, and the demolished site as a birthplace of Ram. The main slogans of Hindu zealots, *Mandir Vahi Banyenge* had been reinforced by the verdict.<sup>66</sup>

After this, against this judgment, many parties which appealed in Supreme Court, included the Suni Waqf Board, Nirmohi Akhara, All India Hindu Maha Sabha and Bhagwan Shri Ram Virajman. On May 2011, Supreme Court stayed the verdict on Ayodhya of Allahabad High Court. Justice R.M. Lodha of the Supreme Court Bench declared, that High Court verdict to be "strange". He said, "The decree of partition was not sought by the parties. How can a decree for partition be passed when none of parties had prayed for it?"<sup>67</sup> The Bench said that the *status quo* at the disputed site would remain as directed by the 1994 constituted Bench and order passed on March 13-14, 2002. The Bench while directing the *status quo* to continue, made it clear that the existing *puja* in the make-shift Ram Lala temple at the disputed site, would go on as usual. Now, this case is in Supreme Court and it is hoped that the decision of Supreme Court might finalize the story of mosque-temple dispute.

Conclusively, it is said, in this whole crucial issue, judiciary played a rather passive role. The legal battle fought in the court in this case is a typical example of delay, harassment and successful dilatory tactics. The judiciary as well as government have utterly failed to solve the controversy. The state government of Uttar Pradesh also failed to clarify its stand with regard to Babri Masjid dispute. The judiciary has set the communal ball rolling by attacking the mosque, and giving frequent orders to maintain

the *status quo* after the 22-23 December 1949 incident and decision of 30 September 2010, has also failed to solve the dispute.

### **III. POLITICALIZATION OF BABRI MASJID-RAMJANMABHUMI DISPUTE**

The Babri-Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi dispute, since its emergence has been closely linked with the Indian politics. After the independence, for a long time it had been undertaken in legal strategies and politics has crept in it, from time to time in different ways and with various motives. But politics is mere politics, especially in India, where for politicians, every issue social, religious, economic and spiritual is a political game and a significant means of gaining votes and power. The dispute emerged as a religious matter and later on took the shape of a legal controversy. When judiciary failed to settle the issue for a long period of time and could not resolve it, then this legal issue turned into a political. After independence, till seventh decade of last century, it did not attain much political ground among the major political parties. It has attracted the political parties to make it a source for getting votes since the beginning of eighties, and this issue got converted into a political battle mainly between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress. It is also a notable fact that the Mandir-Masjid issue proved a cause of downfall of the two ruling parties at the centre (V.P Singh and Chandra Shekhar's government).

The Ayodhya issue was conveniently revived and a meeting held in Ayodhya in April 1984, where leaders of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) came to discuss their programs about Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi controversy and where their political role and stand became quite clear.<sup>68</sup> The new feature of this program was the introduction of religious pilgrimage and processions as an instrument of socio-political mobilization. The VHP processions implied a strong demarcation between the Hindus and the Muslims, and became abundantly clear after the VHP launched its project to 'liberate' Ramjanmabhumi.<sup>69</sup> Its aim was not just to take over the disputed site, but to create antagonism between the two communities. Many Congress leaders also adopted the Ayodhya strategy, when VHP announced its programs.<sup>70</sup> The Congress party quietly backed the Ramjanmabhumi idea with an eye firmly on political gains. Many local leaders of the Congress were also members of the

VHP. The Congress government at centre was clearly in a dilemma at that time. On the other hand, for BJP it was a part of a long term project of capturing power at the centre through control of Uttar Pradesh and in this project it benefited from the support of the Congress, as it had done in the first decade after independence, when it received support from Hindu traditionalists like Tandon and Sampurnanand. During the elections of 1989 and 1991, the Ayodhya issue proved the most effective, to mobilize the Hindu-Muslim communities on communal lines by political parties like the BJP and the Congress .

The actual political story had begun when a young Congress leader and lawyer of Faizabad, Umesh Chandra Pandey, moved the District Courts seeking the permission to open the locks of the disputed shrine for worship by the Hindus. He argued that the locks were put by the District Administration and not by the court.<sup>71</sup> But while Congress party made efforts to please the Hindus by opening the locks of the disputed shrine, the Muslims got annoyed. Similarly when Congress tried to appease the Muslims by taking a sympathetic attitude towards the demand to protect Muslim Personal Law, by enactment of Muslims Women's Bill, conservative Hindus got anxious to ensue a Uniform Civil Code. These appeasement tactics of the Congress could not prove fruitful for it.

The then Chief Minister of U.P, convened many crucial meetings, between the Congress and the VHP leaders, before the opening of the gates. He proclaimed that none of the Brahmin Chief Ministers had the guts to do it. He, himself, being a Thakur would do so, but not without bothering about the active support of the Congress leaders, local judges and bureaucracy, most of whom were Brahmins.<sup>72</sup> The gates were opened by a court order.<sup>73</sup> The state police and PAC were deployed for the security purpose before pronouncement of court orders. The action of a referred Thakur proved a cause of curious events, which took place quite before and after the pronouncement of judgment. As an eyewitness recorded:

The (Congress-I) Uttar Pradesh Government .....precipitated the confrontation. It deliberately stepped into ..... controversy, and ..... actually took sides.... The Congress Chief Minister visited Ayodhya, a few days before judgment .... and met VHP members..... on February 1, shortly before the order..... was announced, a crowd ..... of VHP supporters .....collected at

the site ..... this was as an indication by persons living there that they had advance knowledge of verdict. A Doordarshan team too was present at the site, as if government wished to publicize the entire event. The victory celebrations were filmed and telecast on national channel the same evening.<sup>74</sup>

After the opening of gates, the Muslim organizations and individuals protested against the order. The Babri Masjid Action committee (BMAC) was formed. The committee decided to boycott the Republic Day celebrations (26 January 1987) and also called a national Bandh on 1 February 1987 and managed a rally on 30 March 1987.<sup>75</sup> The Hindu organizations (RSS, VHP etc.) as a counter move to the former, started preparations for U.P Bandh on 29 March, to protest against the communal hatred being preached by the Muslims in the name of Babri Masjid and demanded the transfer of Ayodhya shrine to Ramjanmabhumi Trust.<sup>76</sup> Both the (BMAC and VHP) organizations started mobilizing the masses on this issue. On 30<sup>th</sup> March, a large rally was organized by BMAC, held at the Boat Club in Delhi, in which highly provocative speeches were made by some leaders, particularly Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid in Delhi. A resolution adopted here was given to the Speaker of Lok Sabha, it read as:

The rally regards the Babri Masjid as national heritage and as a historic monument but above all, a place of Islamic worship whose sanctity must be universally respected by all right-minded persons whatever their religion. The violation of its divine sanctity should be regarded not only as an offence to religious sentiments of the Muslims but also the secular order. The rally reiterated its determination and resolve of the Muslims of India to regain their Masjid, however, long and hard the struggle may be.<sup>77</sup>

The above rally held at Delhi ended in a success. It convinced the Muslims for more confrontational and harder posture on Masjid, which can force the government to take part in Babri Masjid dispute and hand over the Masjid to the Muslims. The VHP responded to Delhi rally of BMAC, by organizing a mammoth rally of the Hindus on 5 April, 1987, on the banks of Sarayu river in Ayodhya and there they pledged to liberate the birthplace of Ram, which was used as a mosque.<sup>78</sup>

In this way, actions and reactions of both communities led to communal riots and terrible incidents took place in country. Despite these communal mobilizations, Rajiv Gandhi's Central government and U.P State government, turned a blind eye to the matter and did not show an impartial sincerity. The Muslim leaders of Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee were encouraged much by Delhi rally and then it was decided to stage a march to Ayodhya on 14 October 1988 to offer *namaz* at Babri Masjid. They were opposed and challenged by Bajrang Dal, who announced that they would lead a procession to Jama Masjid in Delhi for offering prayers to *Hanuman*. The Union Government noted that the situation had become more precarious and government intervened at this stage to avert the crisis. It assured, both the parties that it would soon activate the judicial process for speedy settlement of the dispute. On that assurance, the BMAC called off the march to Ayodhya and Bajrang Dal also dropped its plan to read *Hanuman Chalisa* at Delhi Jama Masjid.<sup>79</sup>

Communal feelings were getting greatly intensified, government's efforts for dialogue with both parties failed. The VHP and Shiv Sena used every opportunity to aggravate the crisis. Moreover, general elections were also drawing near. The communalists in both communities became more vocal and even violent. The VHP decided to hold a three days conference in Allahabad from 27 to 29 January 1989, coinciding with *Kumbh Mela* (the big religious congregation of the Hindus held every twelfth years) at one of the four religious places by rotation.<sup>80</sup> The Allahabad *Kumbh Mela* provided a big platform to VHP, Bajrang Dal and RSS, the biggest Hindu religio-political organizations. These organizations spearheaded the Ayodhya agitation and decided on *Shilanyas* on November 9, 1989.

These were efforts of the three major Hindu organizations, which mobilized Hindu community throughout the country. Their rival 'All India Babri Masjid Action Committee' also noticed their decision and threatened that it would manage a *Hifazati Dasta* (protection squads) to resist the Hindus to arrive at proposed temple site and *Shilanyas* would be stopped.<sup>81</sup> Related to this, in June 1989, the BJP called a national executive meeting at Palampur in Himachal Pradesh. The BJP adopted a resolution regarding the Babri Masjid- Ramjanmabhumi conflict in the meeting. This resolution by all means was intended to support the demand of VHP, based on the assumption that a

Hindu temple existed on the premises before construction of the mosque, and that the area should be returned to the Hindus. The BJP passed the resolution which stated:

The BJP holds that the nature of this controversy is such that it just cannot be sorted out by a court of law. The court of law cannot adjudicate as to whether Babar did actually invade Ayodhya, destroyed a temple and build a mosque in its place. Even where a court does not pronounce on such facts it cannot suggest remedies to undo the vandalism of history.<sup>82</sup>

It further called upon the Rajiv Government:

to adopt same positive approach on Ayodhya that the Nehru Government did with regard to the Somnath temple. The sentiments of the people must be respected and the Ramjanmabhumi be handed over to the Hindus, if possible through a negotiated settlement or else by legislation.<sup>83</sup>

In November 1989, the ninth general elections were held. All the major political parties like the BJP, the Congress and the Janata Dal, threw the communal card, to win votes. Due to the polarization, caused by Ayodhya dispute, the BJP had no option but to concentrate on Hindu votes. Other parties, particularly the Congress, could not ignore the Hindu votes either, because the Muslim voters alone were not enough for it to win. Keeping in view the vote bank, the central as well as state government, made an agreement with VHP on 27 September 1989. The agreement was based upon the conditions that the VHP maintained peace as well as communal harmony under the High Court decision to maintain the *status quo* and government, in turn, would support and protect *Ramshila Pujan*. Thus, the Congress permitted the VHP that it might perform *Shilanyas* ceremony on November 9, 1989. It did not bother about the objections raised by Muslims, because the Congress I leaders wanted to garner Hindu votes.<sup>84</sup> It had become the need of the day for the Congress to take the above referred action since it needed to earn more Hindu votes. The VHP leaders hardly could believe when they were informed by Buta Singh, the then Home Minister that the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had allowed them to lay the *Shilanyas* of the temple on 9 November, which they haughtily rejected. The fact clarified that the Congress party was playing 'Hindu Card' as

well as the 'Muslim Card' It was also clear from the attitude of Congress ruled state governments to *shila* processions. Interestingly, processions led to riots in several parts of the country and most of communal riots took place in the Congress ruled states.

On the other hand, the BJP infused the emotions of the Hindus on this emotional issue for elections and propagated slogans as under:

- *Sougandh Ram Ki Khaate Hai, Hum Mandir Wahi Banayenge.*
- *Bachcha, Bachcha Ram Ka, Janmabhumi Ke Kam Ka.*
- *Chahe Panth Anek Hai, Hindu Hum Sab Ek Hai etc.*<sup>85</sup>

When the question arose, whether the *Shilanyas* land was disputed or undisputed, the then Congress government took the view that the proposed site for *Shilanyas* ceremony was undisputed.<sup>86</sup> As the 1989 elections approached, the central government touched the emotions of Hindu mob on the issue of the *Shilanyas*, under pressure of VHP activists. This was a major political achievement of VHP and by a strategic way, the Congress had also surrendered before it. For them *Shilanyas*, was a move to out-manoeuvre the BJP by roping in the VHP on the Congress side.<sup>87</sup> When the Congress government allowed *Shilanyas*, the AIBMAC called upon all Muslims to withdraw support for the Congress in the forthcoming elections.<sup>88</sup> This double edge policy of the Congress resulted in a miserable experience for the party. As Rajiv Gandhi allowed the *Shilanyas*, but restricted *kar seva*, he lost heavily, both the Hindu and Muslim votes. If Rajiv was smart, the next Prime Minister V.P. Singh, was too clever. Before the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, he had seat adjustment with the BJP, but did not hold public meetings with the BJP, so as not to ruffle Muslim feelings. But he privately told Sangh Parivar: *Arre Bhai Masjid hai hi Kahan, Aap usse Masjid hi Kyon Kehte ho, who to Ram Lalla Ka Mandir hi hai, Demolition Ki Zarroorat hi kahan hai Bhai, Ek dhakka doge to woh gir Jayega.*<sup>89</sup> The main beneficiaries of the dispute in the ninth elections (1989), were the BJP and the Janata Dal. The BJP held the *Shilanyas*, two weeks before the elections, could increase their number of Lok Sabha seats from only 2 to 85.<sup>90</sup> The National Front (NF) government, got power at the centre with the support of the BJP and V.P Singh became the Prime Minister. In Uttar Pradesh, socialist leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, became the Chief Minister of a coalition government. With the fall of Rajiv

Gandhi government at the centre and the defeat of Congress I in the assembly elections in North India, the Ayodhya issue took a new turn.

After National Front government (1989) took over, the VHP demanded an early solution to the problem. And since Vidhan Sabha elections were due in February 1990, they decided to start the construction of the temple on 14 February 1990. The government pleaded with the VHP for some more time to arrive at an acceptable solution for all the parties concerned. The VHP postponed the program for four months. But this time only one meeting could be held between central government and contending parties and that too without any success.<sup>91</sup> The issue moved to a dangerous drift. In the meantime, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, set 30 October 1990 for the construction of the temple. While supporting the NF government from the outside, the BJP also joined VHP on this issue.<sup>92</sup>

When NF government could not succeed in its efforts to find a suitable solution, then in a desperate bid to consolidate his position, the Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, announced to implement Mandal Commission report. He, through this point could attract the votes of OBC and minorities. This decision enraged BJP leadership because the Report's recommendations went contrary to the interests of upper caste Hindus. The lower castes viewed the BJP as the party of upper caste Hindus, which had continuously oppressed them as untouchables and inferior for centuries.<sup>93</sup> The Hindus got divided and ruling party got hold of a vote bank, that traditionally belonged to the Congress. Both the Congress and the BJP, suffered losses at the hands of V.P. Singh. The leaders of BJP withdrew its attention towards the Mandal Commission report and moved to avail the support of lower caste Hindus. L.K. Advani, President of BJP, decided to take over the leadership from VHP and announced 10,000 kilometers long *Rath Yatra* to consolidate the Hindu votes.<sup>94</sup> He started *Rath yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya, on 25 September and this *yatra* was totally aggressive and of communally surcharged nature. Provocative slogans moved to all sides like: *Babar ki Santan Jayegi Kabarsthan. Ek Dhakka Do aur Babri Masjid Tor Do* etc.<sup>95</sup> But this *Rath yatra* was stopped in Bihar, on 23 October 1990, when at Samastipur, Advani was arrested by the Bihar government.<sup>96</sup> Numerous riots broke out in several states and nearly about fifty people lost their lives in the communal violence and police firing. After the arrest of Advani, the BJP withdrew its support from V.P. Singh and the government fell like a pack of cards. Now, he claimed

that he had sacrificed his office for Mandal and Muslims. He had infact become a victim of his own double dealings.

Despite Advani's arrest, the leaders of RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena moved towards Ayodhya to perform *Kar Seva* as per their pre-planned programmes on 30 October, 1990. On the other hand, the CM of Uttar Pradesh Mulayam Singh Yadav, was determined not to allow the *Kar Seva*. After this, it is a matter of wonder that despite multi-layered security arrangements, *Kar Sevaks* managed to enter the mosque, damage its domes and raised the saffron coloured flag at the top of building. The security forces opened fire and a number of *Kar Sevaks* were killed. This led to a new wave of communal riots. On 2 November 1990, *Kar Sevaks* again tried to demolish the mosque and again a number of *Kar Sevaks* were killed.<sup>97</sup> Generally, in multi-religious country there is a need for secular government to maintain a delicate balance between different religious communities, but both V.P Singh and Malayam Singh Yadav, failed to maintain this delicate balance.

After the incidents of 30 October and 2 November, the VHP and the RSS decided to take the *asthi kalash* (urns containing ashes of dead *Kar Sevaks*) to various parts of country. It was another powerful act of VHP for igniting communal flames between the Hindus and the Muslims and a strong symbol for mobilizing the Hindus.<sup>98</sup> In this way, the BJP and the VHP left no stone, unturned to exploit the Hindu sentiments for gaining maximum political mileage. The reporting of these incidents by local Hindi and Urdu press was so biased and provocative, that it further aggravated the situation and deepened the communal divide.<sup>99</sup>

Mulayam Singh Yadav, prominently, played pro-Muslim role. His speeches were further more provocative and made political atmosphere more communalized. The overriding message in these speeches was that the Muslims were under attack from the Hindus and that there was nothing wrong in their taking up arms in self defence.<sup>100</sup> The impact of these speeches was electric. Even the Hindus living in rural and distant regions, who were not so aware about this controversy, became aware about the Ram Temple and began to think that their government was willing to please Muslims, by hurting the Hindus. Actually during that time, secularism of Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh proved

most deleterious for Muslims who had to pay a heavy price in subsequent riots, that occurred in entire state of Uttar Pradesh.<sup>101</sup>

The Chandra Shekhar government, which got power after the fall of V.P Singh, with the support of the Congress party, tried to negotiate with both the rival communal parties (VHP and BMAC) and asked them to put forth some reliable evidence in support of their claims. But both parties rejected each other's claims. The leaders of Mandir movement were convinced that this (temple construction) would not be possible, without changing the government both at centre and state. The VHP became firm in its belief after the incident of 30 October 1990, that symbol of Ram had potential to provide more votes of Hindu community and it would be helpful to the BJP in attaining political power.<sup>102</sup> The government of Chandra Shekhar lost its majority support and bound to resign from power. The Lok Sabha was dissolved and 10<sup>th</sup> general elections were announced. On 4 April 1991, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Sangh held a joint rally at New Delhi and asked Hindus to translate their *Ram Bhakati* into votes for the BJP.<sup>103</sup> In this way, during the tenth general elections, the Ram Temple and Masjid became the main issue. The BJP promised the voters that it would make possible the construction of Ram Temple after getting power. In these elections, the new BJP President, Murli Manohar Joshi, an RSS man, strongly revealed in the party manifesto, "BJP firmly believes that the construction of Shri Ram Janmabhumi Mandir is symbol of the vindication of our cultural heritage and national self respect."<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the Congress Party election manifesto had similar positions like National Front and Left Front. In the manifesto, the Congress mentioned that the party was committed to find a negotiated settlement of controversy, which fully respected the sentiments of both communities involved. The Congress Party, it must be said, was in favour of construction of temple at Ayodhya but was against the demolition of the mosque.<sup>105</sup> It was a double speak of the Congress as usual.

In this way, the political parties took this issue and used openly for their own motives. For the first time in the political history of independent India, a religious dispute dominated the electoral process. But in these elections, once again the Congress failed to get absolute majority and so also the BJP could not avail. The appeal of Janata Dal for social justice bore no sufficient fruit. The Congress party could win 232 seats with 37.57

percent of votes and the BJP improved its position by securing 119 seats with 19.9 percent of votes in 1991, Lok Sabha elections.<sup>106</sup> As a result, none of the political party could avail clear majority at the centre and the Congress party for the first time formed a minority government headed by P.V Narsimha Rao. The BJP got power in four states and Kalyan Singh, became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. He declared that the temple matter was connected with national pride. The party invited all communities and sections of Indian society to come forward in favour of the temple.<sup>107</sup> On 7 October 1991, state government of the BJP, acquired 2.77 acres of the disputed land. The Chief Minister of U.P, Kalyan Singh declared that the temple would be constructed as promised by the BJP. However, on 15 November 1991, the Supreme Court directed Uttar Pradesh government to maintain the *status quo* at the acquired land till a court judgment was passed on the issue.<sup>108</sup> Even the then Prime Minister, declared in Lok Sabha that his government will not allow the demolition of Babri Masjid. The Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court also warned the state government to restrain from any construction on the disputed land.<sup>109</sup> But *Dharam Sansad*, sponsored by VHP decided in its two days meeting held on 30 October 1992, that *Kar Seva* at Ayodhya would be started on December 6, 1992. This *Sansad* blamed the Prime Minister that he has favoured the Muslims at the cost of Hindu interests.<sup>110</sup> Even the President of VHP, Ashok Singhal warned the Prime Minister, that if central government tried to stop the *Kar Seva*, he would be ousted from the Prime Ministership.<sup>111</sup> Following this, the central government called a meeting of National Integration Council (NIC) on 23 November 1992. The NIC decided unanimously, to authorise the Prime Minister, to take steps to implement court orders for maintaining the rule of law and *status quo* about Ayodhya dispute.<sup>112</sup> The under mentioned suggestions were finalized by NIC:

- (a) Dismiss the Uttar Pradesh Government;
- (b) suspend the Uttar Pradesh State Assembly;
- (c) take over 2.77 acre of land, acquired by the state government;
- (d) protect the site with the posting of central troops; and
- (e) refer the dispute to the Supreme Court.

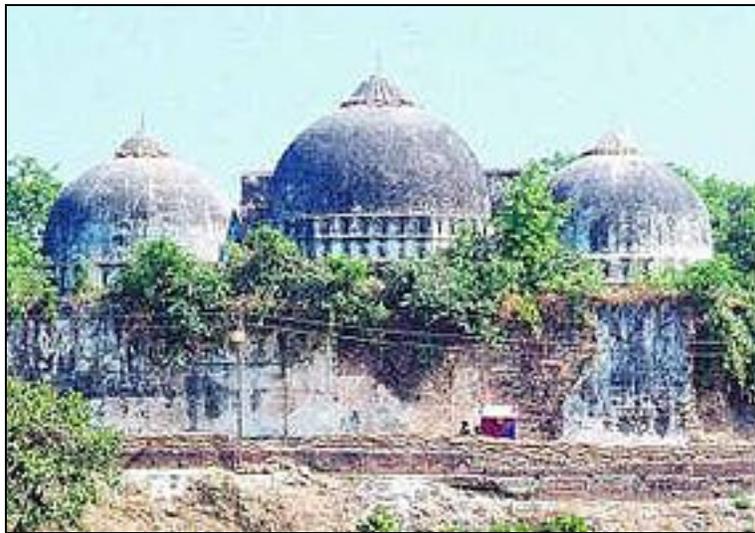
The Congress was assured that the Muslim leaders would maintain a moderate and non-threatening posture. The Prime Minister speaks clearly to the Muslims that, “I

am to fight the BJP but cannot, and no one else for that matter can, fight Lord Ram.”<sup>113</sup> The Muslims agreed to accept the verdict of Supreme Court on Ayodhya and said that “they would give up their claim on Babri Masjid if the court held the view that it was built after demolishing the temple in 1528A.D.”<sup>114</sup> This was not acceptable to the other party. The VHP leader retorted, “The birthplace of Ram is a matter of faith and it cannot be determined in a court of law”. Sensing the imminent dismissal of its government in a swift last moment manoeuvre, the BJP made a tactical retreat. On the evening of 28 November 1992, the Supreme Court allowed the Ram *Sevaks* to sing devotional songs at the disputed site. It was done on the recommendation of Uttar Pradesh BJP government. Moreover, it stipulated that a special Judge would maintain scrutinee at the site and file daily report to the Supreme Court.<sup>115</sup> The Uttar Pradesh government assured the Central government and the Supreme Court, that the *Kar Seva* would be only symbolic. It would not effect the existing position of the site by destruction or construction. In another dramatic event, the party leaders, L.K Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, joined the *Kar Seva* by declaring the movement as not culmination, but commencement of the national assertion.<sup>116</sup> As a large number of *Kar Sevaks* began to reach Ayodhya, it cannot be adjudged, whether the BJP leadership was really serious about its promises for a controlled and peaceful *Kar Seva*. The Congress government of Narsimha Rao at the centre felt that the BJP would maintain peace and abide by its legal assurance of symbolic *Kar Seva*. But this was a misjudgment and the Congress had to pay a price for it. Because despite assurances given by state government, in an operation led by *Kar Sevaks*, Babri Masjid was demolished on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1992.<sup>117</sup> The *Kar Sevaks* specially trained for the task, stormed the mosque pulled down the structure, removed the rubbles, erected a makeshift shrine, quickly installed an idol of Ram and began worshipping. All the incidents took place within some hours.<sup>118</sup> The police and paramilitary forces looked on. The central and state governments witnessed the action helplessly.<sup>119</sup> The incident denoted a signal, that there was a nationwide attack on the Muslim community, which occurred at many places, with the tacit and active support of the police force. T.P. Jindal explains this situation as tennis game, he says,

No one made sincere efforts to solve the problem. Now it became like a tennis game. Players were just interested in throwing the ball

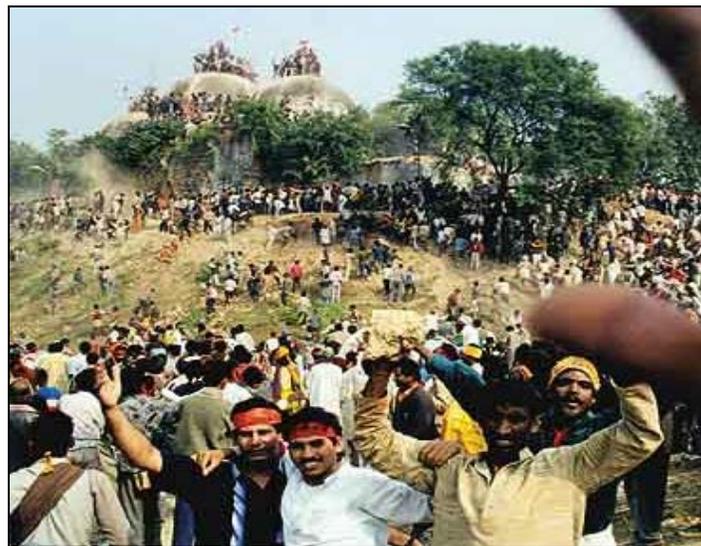
to the other side, somehow, prior to 6th December 1992, it was exactly like a rally of tennis game and whole nation was watching it with fun. Players in the field were the Congress and the Sangh Parivar. Two ends of this court were Delhi end and Ayodhya end. But alas ! the ball they were playing with, was not an ordinary ball, it was something like a bomb because when the rally ended and the ball fell on the ground, disputed structure was demolished, almost vanished from the sight.<sup>120</sup>

**BEFORE DEMOLITION BABRI MASJID**



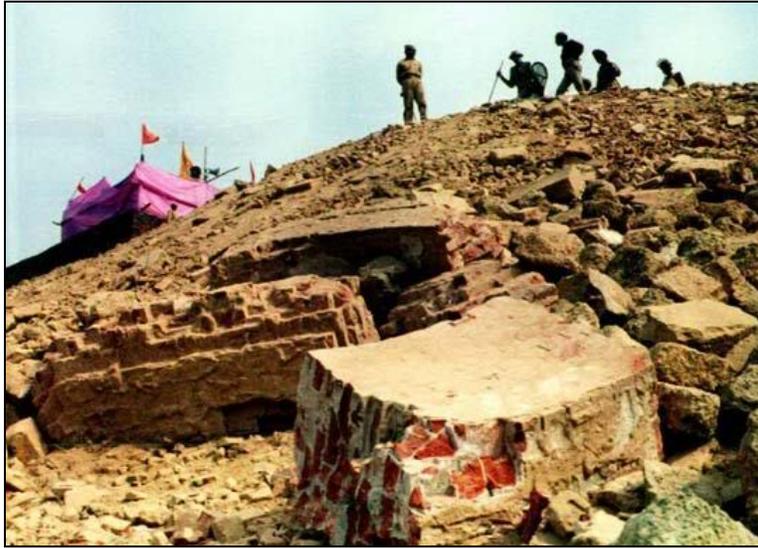
*Source: <http://babrimasjid.info/reports>*

**DURING DEMOLITION**



*Source: [http://iuthfispace.blogspot.in/2010/09/babri\\_masjid\\_demolition\\_was\\_preplanned.html](http://iuthfispace.blogspot.in/2010/09/babri_masjid_demolition_was_preplanned.html)*

**AFTER DEMOLITION**



**Source:** <http://babrimasjid.info/reports>

The news of demolition spread like fire throughout the country and whole country was shocked and surprised. As a result, the government of Uttar Pradesh and three other state governments, where BJP was in power were dismissed. On 7 December 1992, the Supreme Court during the emergency hearing, on an application, seeking the appointment of centre as a receiver of the disputed property said:

It is a great pity that a constitutionally elected government could not discharge its sensitive duties, in a matter of this magnitude. This is the first time that a assurance by the state government, that it will protect the structure and carry out the court orders, has been violated.<sup>121</sup>

On 10 December 1992, the central government headed by P.V Narsimha Rao, issued a notification, considering them (fanatic religious organizations), involved in unlawful activities under the Act 1967 (prevention Act). It banned the VHP, RSS, Bajrang Dal and two Muslim organizations “Jamaite-e-Islami-Hind” and the “Islamic Sevak Sangh.”<sup>122</sup> From the events of the day, it was also clear that the government of U.P had not made any effort to stop all this, rather it appeared that it collaborated with *Kar Sevaks*. These are some points that raise doubts about Kalyan Singh having prior inkling about the plan of demolition. He probably wishfully ignored or innocently helped it.<sup>123</sup>

Quite after demolition of Babri Masjid, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, senior BJP leader said that, “the Ayodhya action was BJP’s worst miscalculation and a misadventure.”<sup>124</sup> L.K Advani also said that, “I am unhappy.” The Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, pretended that, “I was kept in the dark.” The statements of all these leaders, were mere pretensions and had no reality. It became quite clear when centre government announced that it will rebuild the Babri Masjid. Then BJP changed its stance quickly and called a *Bharat bandh* on 10 December 1992, and warned that they will not allow anyone to rebuild the mosque at any cost. These statements made people believe that the BJP also was all the time indulging in double talk.<sup>125</sup>

Moreover, the part played by the Prime Minister and central government was also interactive and questioned. Did nobody warn him of the VHP intentions? Why did he keep on believing the assurances of Kalyan Singh government? In two Cabinet committees on political affairs, meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December and 22<sup>nd</sup> November, the intelligence Bureau reported that the Sangh Parivar intended to demolish the structure and that Kalyan Singh should be dismissed. But Prime Minister Narsimha Rao kept up the legal angle.<sup>126</sup> Undoubtedly, Narsimha Rao was capable of preventing the vandalism. He ignored repeated written messages from district authorities, that hundreds of thousands of vagabonds were descending on Ayodhya in an angry mood over several days and seeking orders to stop them and turn back. But orders never came. Even, the dissidents group of the Congress Party, blamed the Prime Minister that he might have joined hands with the BJP on the Mandir-Masjid issue, because he did not take any action against demolition at the appropriate time.<sup>127</sup> After demolition, around 1100 people lost their lives in violent communal riots in the entire country. Due to this fact the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims widened and the state was thrown on the defensive. The editorial of the *The Hindustan Times* commented that, “the nation must hang its head in shame over what has happened in Ayodhya.”<sup>128</sup>

In this way, the government thus not only failed to resolve the Ayodhya issue, but it also failed to evolve any long term measures to tackle, such occurrences in the future. Coupled with this inability to combat communalism, the members of ruling party have themselves been associating with religious programs. For instance, top leaders of the

Congress party patronised Chandraswami's *Som Yagya* in Ayodhya, on June 6 and 7, 1993.<sup>129</sup>

Even though good sense of Indians has since asserted itself and communal passions have abated, but Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi issue, continued to foster, like a running sore and the communal forces continue to grow politically. In 1996 elections to the Lok Sabha, the BJP won seats, while in 1998, it succeeded in winning large number of seats and forming a government with the help of its allies.

Nearly about thirteen years after the demolition of Babri Masjid, once again there was a terrorist attack on disputed site on July 5, 2005, and L.K. Advani watching the opportunity, immediately tried to misguide the people by the slogan that, *Mandir Vahin Banayenga*. The Ayodhya case not only influenced the political environment of state of Uttar Pradesh but also whole political infrastructure of the country. It added a new dimension to communalism. It also proved to be a central point of political rallies and put a question mark on secularism and renewed the debate on it. Ayodhya has entered the political vocabulary of India. It brought religion into politics and politics into religion.<sup>130</sup>

The battle for Ramjanmabhumi is part of a wider political struggle for constitution of Hindu consciousness and identity, for construction of a unified Hindu tradition and for assertion of Hindu power over all other communities. For the BJP and the Congress, they had no concern with the question of temple or mosque, but indirectly it was a question of political power. It was notable that none of the party was free from the blame for throwing communal card and all major parties were equally responsible for this. V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav were examples of playing the minority game. Even the Congress I, covertly supported this because it could not afford to ignore the concerns of majority community. The Congress was in disguise responsible for unlocking gates of the mosque, it allowed *Shilanyas* and it turned a blind eye to the demolition of Babri Masjid and finally it allowed the makeshift temple at the disputed land site.

In September 2010, when the Allahabad High Court delivered a decision upon Ayodhya, then fascist Hindu elements like RSS and VHP activists were very happy. Uma Bharti, one of the hatemonger's against the Muslims and the one who was giving highly emotionally charged speeches before the mosque demolition on December 1992, described September 30 as the happiest day of her life. Similarly, L.K Advani called the

judgment as the most important contribution to national integration.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, the Congress Party resorted to the dual morality approach as always, by appreciating the judgement and at the same time condemning the act of demolition

Actually, it is not a religious problem and not a conflict of faiths. Both communities were using the site to perform their prayers, one on the Ram *chabutra* and the other in the mosque. But political parties turned the matter towards communal lines and aroused the feelings and sentiments of the Hindus and the Muslims for political power. In this way, it became a political tangle for major political parties like the Congress, the BJP, the Janata Dal etc. Sushma Swaraj said on April 14, 2000, that Ramjanmabhumi was “purely political in nature and had nothing to do with religion.”<sup>132</sup>

Now, at present, 19 years have passed since the demolition of Babri Masjid. Undoubtedly, it was a major event, which seriously denied our commitment to secularism. It has not only created crisis of Indian Muslims identity, but also hurt the image of modern Hinduism throughout the world.

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