

Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 ]

[ July, 1994

पुराणम्  
PURĀṆA

(Half-yearly Bulletin of the Purāṇa-Department)

*Published with the financial assistance from the Ministry of Education,  
Government of India*

VYĀSA PŪRṆMĀ NUMBER

आत्मा पुराणं वेदानाम्



ALL-INDIA KASHIRAJ TRUST  
FORT, RAMNAGAR, VARANASI (INDIA)

Annual Sub.-Inland Rs. 200/-

Foreign \$ 30

## सम्पादक-मण्डल

डा. रामकरण शर्मा

भूतपूर्व कुलपति, सम्पूर्णानन्द संस्कृतविश्वविद्यालय, वाराणसी; नयी दिल्ली

डा. रामचन्द्र नारायण दाण्डेकर

भण्डारकर प्राच्यशोधसंस्थान, पुणे

डा. जोर्जो बोनाजोली

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. R.K. Sharma

Formerly Vice-Chancellor, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University,  
Varanasi; 63 Vigyan Vihar, New Delhi - 110092.

Dr. R.N. Dandekar

Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune

Dr. Giorgio Bonazzoli, M.A. (Milan); M. Th. (Rome)

## EDITOR

Professor Lallanji Gopal

## ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Ganga Sagar Rai, M.A., Ph.D.

-----

लेखेषु प्रतिपादितानि मतानि लेखकैरेवाभ्युपगतानि; न पुनस्तानि  
सम्पादकैर्न्यासेन वाभ्युपगतानीति विज्ञेयम् ।

Authors are responsible for their views, which do not bind the Editors and the Trust.

Authors are requested to use Devanāgarī characters while writing Sanskrit ślokas and prose passages. They are also requested to follow the system of transliteration adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 [ ऋ = r; च् = c; छ् = ch; द् = t; श् = ś; ष् = ṣ; ण् = ṅ ].

Traditional Sanskrit scholars are requested to send us articles in Sanskrit (i) dealing with the religious & philosophical matters in the Purāṇas and (ii) explaining the obscure & difficult passages in the Purāṇas.

# पुराणम्—PURĀṆA

Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 ]

[ July 22, 1994

व्यासपूर्णिमाङ्कः

Vyāsa-Pūrṇimā Number

CONTENTS—लेखसूची

	<b>Pages</b>
व्यासमहिमा	1-2
शिवस्तोत्रम्	3-4
Notes on the Stotra	
1. Divinity of Rāma as Revealed in Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa [ वाल्मीकीये रामायणे रामस्य देवत्वविवृतिः ] — <i>Prof. S.P. Singh</i> Deptt. of Sanskrit Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh (U.P.)	195-207
2. Rāma and his divinity in Indian Sculpture. [ भारतीय-शिल्पशास्त्रे रामस्तस्य देवत्वं च ] — <i>Sri Krishna Deva</i> American Institute For Indian Studies Ramnagar, Varanasi.	208-211
3. Rāma in history and Archaeology [ इतिहासे पुरातत्त्वे च रामः ] — <i>Prof. B.P. Sinha</i> 68, Pataliputra Colony, Patna (Bihar)	212-240
4. Historicity of Śri Rāma [ श्रीरामस्यैतिहासिकता ] — <i>Prof. K.D. Bajpai</i> H/15 Padmakar Nagar Sagar-(M.P.)-47004	241-246

5. Rāma and his Early Images 247-252  
 [ रामस्तस्य प्राक्तना मूर्तयश्च ]  
 —*Prof. Sheo Bahadur Singh*  
 Deptt. of A.I.H.C. & Arch.  
 Kurukshetra University  
 Kurukshetra.
6. The Earliest known depiction of Rāvaṇa-  
 Śiraḥ-Kṛnttana in Indian Sculpture. 253-258  
 [ भारतीय वास्तुशास्त्रे रावणशिरःकृन्तनस्य प्राचीनतमज्ञातप्रस्तुतिः ]  
 —*Dr. Prithvi Kumar Agrawala*  
 Deptt. of A.I.H.C. & Arch.  
 Banaras Hindu University  
 Varanasi-5
7. The Rāma Janmabhoomi-Babari Masjid Dispute:  
 Evidence from Medieval India. 259-265  
 [ रामजन्मभूमि-बावरीमस्जिदविवादः—मध्यकालीनभारतीयसाक्ष्यम् ]  
 —*Prof. Harbans Mukhia*  
 Deptt. of History  
 Jawaharlal Nehru University  
 New Delhi.
8. Some Historical and Archaeological issues concerning  
 Ayodhyā's Rāma Janmabhūmi 266-281  
 [ अयोध्यायाः रामजन्मभूमिसम्बन्धिन्यः काश्चित् ऐतिहासिक-  
 पुरातत्त्वसमस्याः ]  
 —*Dr. S.P. Gupta*  
 148, Vigyan Vihar  
 New Delhi
9. Rama-Janmbhūmi Bhavana-The testimony of  
 the Ayodhyā-Māhātmya. 282-296  
 [ रामजन्मभूमिभवनम् अयोध्या-माहात्म्यस्य प्रामाण्यम् ]  
 —*Prof. V.S. Pathak and Prof. J.N. Tiwari*  
 Deptt. of A.I.H.C. & Arch.  
 B.H.U., Varanasi.

10. The Ayodhyā Temple-Mosque dispute;  
Focus on Urdu and Persian sources. 297-337  
[ अयोध्यायाः मन्दिर-मस्जिद् विवादः-उर्दू-फारसी-साक्ष्याणां विमर्शः ]  
—*Dr. Harsh Narain*  
42/59, Ram Ratna Bajpeyi Marg,  
Narhi, Lucknow-226001
11. An Analysis of the Revenue Documents relating to  
Janmsthan (Ram Janm Bhoomi) verses Baburi Masjid  
at Kot Ram Chandra, Awadh (Ayodhya) in Historical  
Perspective. 338-354  
[ रामजन्मस्थान-बावरीमस्जिदसम्बन्धि-राजस्व-  
अभिलेखानां विवेचनम् ]  
—*Dr. B.R. Grover*  
4 a/10 East Patel Nagar  
New Delhi-110008.
12. Ayodhyā in the Sultnate Period. 355-360  
[ सल्तनतकाले अयोध्या ]  
—*Dr. (Miss) Lalitavati*  
Baikunthi Devi Kanya Mahavidyalaya  
Agra University, Agra.
13. Commercial activities in Ayodhyā during  
Mughal Period. 361-365  
[ मुगलकाले अयोध्यायां वाणिज्यसंबन्धिकार्याणि ]  
—*Dr. Chandra Shekher Pandey*  
Deptt. of History  
Krishak Degree College,  
Gaur, Basti.
14. Ayodhyā: As depicted in the Medieval Oriya Literature. 366-369  
[ मध्यकालीन उड़ियासाहित्ये वर्णिता अयोध्या ]  
—*Dr. Smt. Renu Mishra*  
Reader  
Department of Oriya  
Govt. Women's College  
Sambalpur (Orissa)

15. The Begums of Awadh, Asaf-ud-daulah and  
warren Hastings. 370-378  
[ अवधप्रदेशस्य वेगमाः, आसफुद्दौला, वारेनहेस्टिंग्सश्च ]  
—*Dr. Madhavi Yasin*  
M-1 Jalyu Vihar  
Sector-25  
Noida-201301.
16. British Policy towards the cow protection  
movement in Ayodhyā, 1910-1916. 379-385  
[ अयोध्यायां गोरक्षासम्बन्धिनी ब्रिटिशनीतिः ]  
—*Prof. J.P. Misra*  
Deptt. of History  
Banaras Hindu University  
Varanasi-5
17. Rāma and Ayodhyā in Bhojpuri Folk songs. 386-391  
[ भोजपुरीलोकगीतिषु रामः अयोध्या च ]  
—*Dr. Hari S. Upadhyaya*  
3, Gurudham Colony,  
Durgakund, Varanasi.
18. Activities of the All-India Kashi Raj Trust 1-3  
(January-June 1994)
19. सर्वभारतीयकाशिराजन्यासस्य कार्यविवरणम् 4-6  
(जनवरी-जून १४)

## व्यासमहिमा

[ विशिष्टं व्यासकर्तृक-वेदविभाग-विवरणम् ]

अवतीर्णो महायोगी सत्यवत्यां पराशरात् ।  
उत्सन्नान् भगवान् वेदानुज्जहार हरिः स्वयम् ॥  
चतुर्धा व्यभजत् तांश्च चतुर्विंशतिधा पुनः ।  
शतधा चैकधा चैव सप्तविंशतिधा तथा ।  
नवधा पञ्चदशधा भित्त्वा शाखा अचीकृपत् ॥

(Skanda-p. quoted in the Kanakāvalī of Nārāyaṇācārya; published in Brahmadevī XXX. 1-4; ed. by Dr. V. Raghavan).

The author has explained these verses as follows. It is to be noted here that the views expressed in these verses are not in full agreement with the views of other Purāṇas on Vedic recensions.

अत्र 'चतुर्धेति' एक आसीदित्यादि विष्णुपुराणानुसारेण वृक्षान्तर्गतवेदं कृष्ण-यजुस्तैत्तिरीयं वाजसनेयं चाधिकृत्य ।

'चतुर्विंशतिधेति' कृष्णयजुःशाखाद्वयम्, तैत्तिरीयशाखासप्तकम्, वाजसनेयाः पञ्चदशशाखाश्चाधिकृत्य ।

'शतधा चैकधा च' इति तु पूर्वोक्तचतुर्विंशतिभेदं वृक्षान्तर्गतसप्तसप्तति-शाखाश्चाधिकृत्य ।

'सप्तविंशतिधेति' तु वृक्षान्तर्गतासु सनामकाष्टादश शाखाः कृष्णयजुस्तैत्तिरीयं चाधिकृत्य ।

पञ्चधेति तु वाजसनेयाः पञ्चदशशाखाश्चाधिकृत्य कथितम् इत्यनुसन्धेयम् ।

The Kanakāvalī deals with the four-fold division of the Veda (with related incidents) and the ramfication of Vedic recensions.

The work is important as it quotes from a few unpublished or little known Puranic works, namely the Kālikā Purāṇa Śaṅkara-saṁhitā and Saura-saṁhitā of the Skanda-purāṇa, Āditya-purāṇa (not identical with the printed Saurapurana) and Āgneya-Purāṇa (not the printed Agni Purāṇa, but most probably the older Āgneya-purāṇa, see Dr. R. C. Hazra Commemoration Volume ).

The author often mentions the subdivisions and chapters of the texts while he quotes from them. It is needless to say that some of the verses quoted in the present work are not found in the printed editions of these texts.

The editor (Dr. V. Raghavan) is silent about the date of the work. It seems to have been written in the 15th or the 16th century.

—R. S. Bhattacharya



## शिवस्तोत्रम् (मृत्युञ्जयनामकम्)

रत्नसानुशरासनं रजताद्रिशृङ्गनिकेतनं  
शिञ्जिनीकृत-पन्नगेश्वरमच्युतानलसायकम् ।  
क्षिप्रदग्धपुरत्रयं त्रिदशालयैरभिवन्दितं  
चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ७५

पञ्चपादपपुष्पगन्धिपदाम्बुजद्वयशोभितं  
भाललोचनजातपावकदग्धमन्मथविग्रहम् ।  
भस्मदिग्धकलेवरं भवनाशिनं भवमव्ययं  
चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ७६

मत्तवारणमुख्यचर्मकृतोत्तरीयमनोहरं  
पङ्कजासनपद्मलोचनपूजिताङ्घ्रिसरोरुहम् ।  
देवसिन्धु(सिद्ध)तरङ्गिणीकरसिक्ताशीतजटाधरं  
चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ७७

कुण्डलीकृतकुण्डलीश्वरकुण्डलं वृषवाहनं  
नारदादिमुनीश्वरस्तुतवैभवं भुवनेश्वरम् ।  
अन्धकान्तकमाश्रितामरपादपं शमनान्तकं  
चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ७८

यक्षराजसखं भगाक्षिहरं भुजङ्गविभूषणं  
शैलराजसुतापरिष्कृतचारुवामकलेवरम् ।  
क्ष्वेडनीलगलं परश्वधधारिणं मृगधारिणं  
चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ७९

भेषजं भवरोगिणामखिलापदामपहारिणं  
दक्षयज्ञविनाशिनं त्रिगुणात्मकं त्रिविलोचनम् ।  
भुक्तिमुक्तिफलप्रदं निखिलाघसंघनिबर्हणं  
चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ८०

भक्तवत्सलमर्चतां निधिमक्षयं हरिदम्बरं  
 सर्वभूतपतिं परात्परमप्रमेयमनूपम् ।  
 सोम(भूमि)वारिनभोहुताशनसोमपालितस्वाकृतिं  
 चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ८१

विश्वसृष्टिविधायिनं पुनरेव पालनतत्परं  
 संहरन्तमथप्रपञ्चमशेषलोकनिवासिनम् ।  
 क्रीडयन्तमहर्निशं गणनाथयूथसमावृतं  
 चन्द्रशेखरमाश्रये मम किं करिष्यति वै यमः ॥ ८२

(पद्मपु. ६।२३६।७५-८२)

### NOTES ON THE STOTRA

This eulogy, uttered by the sage Markandeya, is called Mṛtyuñjaya stotra (see the words इति मृत्युञ्जयस्तोत्रम् given as a remark after the verse 93).

The long ū in the word *anūpamam* (in verse 81) has been deliberately used in order to keep the metre faultless. In the last part of the third foot (सोमपालितस्वाकृतिं) the metre is defective—the last but 2nd letter (i.e. स्वा) must not be a conjunct letter as this renders the preceding letter त *guru*, which is required to be *laghu* here.

The Bengali edition of the Padma-p. (edited by Kedāranātha Bhaktivinoda) contains this eulogy in its chapter 84 which is more or less the same as the chapters 235-237 of the Anandashram edition. The Beng. ed. does not however read the verse 77.

It appears that the editor of the Ananda. ed. has corrected सिन्धु to सिद्ध in the 3rd foot of verse 77 and सोम to भूमि in the 3rd foot of the verse 81.

After these verses there are eight more verses (83-90) in the Anuṣṭubh metre, each having the second half as नमामि शिरसा देवं किं नो मृत्युः करिष्यति. These verses are left here as they describe Śiva in a very general way.

—R. S. Bhattacharya

# DIVINITY OF RĀMA AS REVEALED IN VĀLMĪKI'S RĀMĀYAṆA

By

S. P. SINGH

Normally it is held today that Rāma in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa is simply a human being who due to his great heroic accomplishments happened to be posed as an incarnation beginning from the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa and getting fully developed much later in Tulasi's Rāma Carita Mānasa. There is no doubt about it that he acts mostly as a human being in the Rāmāyaṇa and has been characterized literally as such several times there. He is born and brought up as a human being. His behaviour as son, brother, disciple, friend, husband, prince etc. is full of human feelings and attachments. People depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa mostly take him as a human being, though as a human being *par excellence*. Rāvaṇa in particular looks down upon him invariably as just a human. In his very first encounter with Rāma in connection with the humiliation of his sister Śūrpaṅkhā he, while contriving to kidnap Sītā, talks to Mārīca though with a sense of bewilderment, that as many as fourteen thousand of his ferocious fellow Rākṣasas were killed by Rāma, a human being fighting with arrows and just on foot.<sup>1</sup> Similarly while trying to prevail over Sītā later on in Laṅkā, he asks her to dissociate herself from Rāma who besides being removed from his kingship and rendered a helpless recluse with a short life to live, is simply a human being with all its limitations.<sup>2</sup> Not to say of Rāvaṇa, who obviously had a vested interest in calling him a human being, Rāma himself while talking to Sītā after her release in Laṅkā, observes that he, even as a human being got her won back from the demon who with all the fickleness of his mind had kidnapped her in his absence; he accomplished the feat even as a human being though the ordeal was of Divine making.<sup>3</sup>

But, on the other hand, he is also regarded in the Rāmāyaṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In fact, the promise of Viṣṇu given to gods to incarnate himself as a human being forms the corner-stone of the edifice of the Rāmāyaṇa. Rāvaṇa as the story goes, was granted a boon by Brahmā to render him incapable of being killed by any sort of being except man, who, of course was ignored just out of his obvious

incapability.<sup>4</sup> This loop-hole in the boon was discovered by gods while trying to find out the way the devastating demon, as Rāvaṇa had turned to be, could be disposed of. This way out was suggested to Viṣṇu by them who readily accepted to be born as a human being and that also in the house of Daśaratha who out of his desire to have a son was performing the relevant sacrifice under the priesthood of R̥ṣyaśṛṅga. Lord Viṣṇu's birth as a human being in the form of Rāma was in fulfilment of his promise given to the gods. Reference to this story occurs in the beginning as well as at the end of the epic.

But the Western Orientalists took these parts of the epic as a later addition not to have come from the pen of Vālmīki. This view, once advanced, is reigning supreme today. Scholars, not familiar with Sanskrit in particular, have taken it as a dogma to be stuck to in any case. This has resulted in the divinity of Rāma being regarded as a post-Vālmīkian phenomenon having come to have been attributed to him falsely at a much later date.

This viewpoint loses its ground on a closer examination of the text. Incidentally it is to be noted that the part of the Rāmāyaṇa having reference to Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, howsoever post-Vālmīkian otherwise, is pre-Kālidāsan in any case. For, the latter in his Raghuvamśam uses this part of the story also as an established fact. According to him Viṣṇu, when approached by gods for protection from the misdeeds of Rāvaṇa, condescends to be born as the son of Daśaratha and kill Rāvaṇa eventually in the battle-field.<sup>5</sup> Needless to point out the antiquity of Kālidāsa which by all means goes as far back as the fourth century A.D., if not earlier which too has an equal possibility. There are, however, very many indications in the remaining parts of the Rāmāyaṇa itself which bear out amply well the divinity of Rāma. That the latter has not been stated literally as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the common run of the story, is an essential requirement of the poetic delineation of his character. The main task taken up by the Divine on himself is to kill Rāvaṇa under the garb of a human being which otherwise was rendered impossible due to the boon granted to him by Brahmā. Vālmīki, therefore, had necessarily to confine himself to his role as the human being particularly in the run of the story, though at the same time he could very well cherish in the back of his mind that being's essential Divine character. The beauty of the story, in fact, lies in creating a perfectly human version of the Divine in the form of Rāma in such a way that the Divine, without being stated explicitly, is

made to peep through the human form artistically. The more the poet conforms to this requirement of exposition, the more dramatically poetic he is. On account of transgressing this barrier out of sheer devotional excitement, Tulasīdāsa, of course, lessens in the same measure the dramatic effect of the theme by stating clearly at intervals the essential divine character of Rāma. As distinct from him, Vālmīki portrays the whole thing in such a way that the fact of Rāma's divinity, without being explicitly stated, suggestively trickles down through the narration.

The most significant feature of the portrayal is the excellence of the character of Rāma. In fact, Vālmīki was basically a sage of the highest calibre, having himself been constantly absorbed in the Supreme Being through self-contemplation and study of the Vedas. By virtue of this, he had brought himself in a position where he could spontaneously communicate with the divine sage Nārada and the Creator Brahmā. Having established himself fully in this task of self-retreat, which is the characteristic feature of all great sages, he was now keen to make a transfiguration in the affairs of the world from a higher viewpoint. In this way he was keen to know if anybody on the earth was in a position to embody in him the divine attributes of truthfulness, gratitude, concordance with the Supernal Order, sublimity of character, benevolence towards one and all, understanding, self-enlightenment, control over his anger and other human passions, freedom from jealousy, handsomeness and fascination and yet fearfulness even to gods if the occasion so demanded.<sup>6</sup> It was in response to this that he was introduced to Rāma by Nārada. What Vālmīki out of his desire to see as a probability wanted to see in the world, Nārada initiated him of the same as an actuality in the form of Rāma who was characterized by him as the meeting ground of all sorts of nobility, imbued with equanimity like the ocean and forbearance like the Himalayas. In this context Nārada compares Rāma further to Viṣṇu in virility, to Soma in pleasantness, to the all-consuming fire in anger, to the earth in forbearance, to the god of wealth in charity and to the god of *dharma* itself in truthfulness.<sup>7</sup>

Embodiment of all such virtues in a single individual in such a high degree as to make him comparable to a number of gods together in their respective specialities, is humanly impossible. Reference to Rāma as imbued with these virtues, therefore, proves exciting to sage Vālmīki. The Divinity which he contemplated on so far in his inner

being, seemed to have embodied itself actually in the form of Rāma. The incident of the killing of the amorous bird serves as an occasion for the articulation of the sense of supernal harmony waiting for expression. The incident transforms the self-absorbed sage into the poet of the harmony. The Viṣṇu of his self-contemplation comes to assume the human form of Rāma in his narration of the victory of the good over the evil.

This is why Viṣṇu is introduced several times by the poet while seeking to bring out the corresponding features of the character of Rāma. For instance, after the kidnapping of Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa consoles Rāma that he would get her back in the same way as Viṣṇu got the earth back having kept Balī confined to a certain place.<sup>8</sup> Sītā's close connection with the earth unveils the special significance underlying this comparison. In the same spirit, while introducing Kausalyā to sage Bharadvāja, Bharata observes that it is she who has given birth to Rāma like Aditi to Viṣṇu.<sup>9</sup> Similarly while consoling Sītā in Laṅkā Hanumān tells her that she would see Rāma alongwith Lakṣmaṇa in the same way as Viṣṇu was seen after the killing of the demon.<sup>10</sup>

He happens to be compared with other gods also from time to time. For instance, at the time of the departure of Rāma from Ayodhyā, Kausalyā blesses him with the remark that he may attain to the same auspiciousness which was attained by Indra after the killing of Vṛtra. Similarly when Sītā was abducted by Virādhā, Lakṣmaṇa tried to console Rāma with the remark that being himself as lordly as Indra, he ought not to feel aggrieved like a helpless man.<sup>11</sup> While on his way to the forest, Rāma, observes the poet, showed Citrakūṭa to Sītā, his wife, in the same way as Indra might show the same to Śacī.<sup>12</sup> Hanumān in Laṅkā offers Sītā to carry her on his back to Rāma in the same way as the fire brings the offering to Indra.<sup>13</sup> Sītā herself confides to Hanumān that she knows the inner feelings of Rāma in the same way as the daughter of Puloma knows the same of Indra.<sup>14</sup> Not to say of others, even those who proved inimical to Rāma observe the divinity in him sometimes which they revealed through their comparisons. Mārīca, for instance, while trying to dissuade Rāvaṇa from his ill-conceived design, observes that he was planning to kidnap Sītā out of his ignorance of the valour and virtues of Rāma, who in this respect was comparable to great Indra and Varuṇa.<sup>15</sup> Even such a silly character as Śūrpaṇakhā while giving her account of Rāma to Rāvaṇa observes that Rāma was so quick in the battlefield that she could not see him either

taking out or shooting the arrow and yet she saw the army of the demons being killed by him like the crops by Indra through the rain of hail.<sup>16</sup>

In fact the comparison of Rāma with Indra and of Sītā with Śacī proved so impressive to the imagination of certain Orientalists as to lead them to think that the whole story of Rāma rescuing Sītā from the clutches of Rāvaṇa is simply an allegorical representation of the restoration of the fertility of the soil by Indra after removing the drought through rain, as figuratively recounted in the Veda in the form of the fighting between Indra and Vṛtra. This inference of theirs has, no doubt, some truth in it. It finds an incidental support in the Ṛgvedic usage of the word *sītā* for the drenched and furrowed land<sup>17</sup>. Still more important from this viewpoint is the closeness in the eventual message of the war between Rāma and Rāvaṇa on the one hand and Indra and Vṛtra on the other. While Rāma and Indra represent the truth, Rāvaṇa and Vṛtra stand for falsehood. But it would be too much to reduce Rāma to an allegorical representation of the Vedic Indra simply on the basis of these affinities. For, this is only one aspect of Rāma. Alongwith this he has also been compared to several other gods including Viṣṇu which has already been discussed. Besides, Viṣṇu and Indra, he has also been compared to Brahmā while advising Lakṣmaṇa.<sup>18</sup> Similarly while sitting alongwith Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa in Citrakūṭa, he is viewed as Brahmā, the eternal being, by Bharata.<sup>19</sup> He was seen by the subjects of Ayodhyā as equivalent to Bṛhaspati in wisdom, to Indra in virility, to Sūrya in brilliance and to the gods of the direction in his competence to rule over the earth.<sup>20</sup> He is also regarded as the vanquisher of all the gods besides being the subject of their worship.

These and kindred details instead of showing the possibility of identifying Rāma with this or that gods, suggest that he in fact represents that Supreme being which has manifested itself in the form of various gods. To try to trace in him vestiges of various Vedic gods, including the Ṛbhus, who are said to have attained to divinity through sheer excellence of their work, is as colossal a mistake as to take the Vedic religion as polytheistic. In the Vedas faith has been shown in several gods, no doubt, but on crucial occasions all of them are viewed as manifestations, nominal representation or epiphanies of the supreme being. In the well known Ṛgvedic mantra seen by Dīrghatamas, for instance, all the gods such as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa,

Agni, Suparṇa, Yama and Mātariśvan are regarded as various names and forms of one and the same Ultimate being conceived and called variously as such by different seers.<sup>21</sup> In the famous Ṛgvedic Hymn to Puruṣa, all the gods such as Indra, Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya, Candra etc. are said to have been born from the corresponding limbs and organs of the Supreme Puruṣa.<sup>22</sup> In one of the Hymns to Viśvakarman in the Ṛgvda, it indeed is curiously asked as to what was the supra-cosmic Embryo which lay beyond the heaven, beyond the earth, beyond the virility of gods which the primeval waters bore and where were seen all the gods together. As an answer to this query it is stated in the sequel that the Embryo which the Waters bore was the same where all the gods met together. It indeed is the oneness inherent in the navel of the Eternal wherein all the creations find the ultimate support.<sup>23</sup> Here it is important to note that by way of defining the nature of the ultimate Reality forming the root cause of the cosmos what is given is that the reality lies wherein all the gods meet together. This is what we find in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa explicitly in the first and the last Kāṇḍas and implicitly in the rest of the Kāṇḍas. Rāma's comparison with all the gods in turn, showing him as a terror to all the gods and as being worshipped by all of them together, details like these are unmistakably suggestive of his supremacy on the divine hierarchy. Abstractions apart, concretely this position in the Vedas is obviously held by Viṣṇu. According to the Brāhmaṇas, he is the supreme amongst the gods while Agni is the lowermost amongst them, the rest of the gods occupying the intermediate position. In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad also, while defining the ultimate destination of the journey of life, it is stated as the highest footstep of Viṣṇu.<sup>24</sup> Thus Viṣṇu being the original source as well as the ultimate resort of the cosmos, it is He who has to be commissioned to correct the dynamics of the cosmic existence whenever it goes astray and defies all other measures adopted for its correction. This is the secret of the doctrine of incarnation of Viṣṇu in the form of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa etc.

In fact impingement of the spirit on Matter is the obvious fundamental fact of cosmic existence. How this impingement is made possible, is a matter of difference of opinion. According to the Vedas, Brahman, as Spirit, is the creator of the Matter as well. Having created the latter out of itself it has entered into it obviously for transforming it again into the original spirit or at least for some sort of eventual fulfilment.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the final end, no matter whether transformation



or fulfilment, the world is designed in such a way as to move like an automation except for some occasions when it gets obstructed by certain hostile forces. It is on these ontinent occasions that the world needs personal interference of the Divine. If having created it out of himself he could enter into it in the beginning, he has every possibility of entering into it subsequently also. Amongst the Vedic gods this task suited Viṣṇu most. For, besides being regarded as the highest amongst all of them and thus capable of representing the Supreme Being in the most befitting and legitimate way, he is said to have set his footsteps on the earth and in the mid region before going back to the heaven. Now, if he could put his footstep on the earth by way of creating it, he can as well put the same on it again and again by way of redeeming it of the impediments coming in its way from time to time. This is what is intended in the famous verse of the *Bhagavadgītā* in which Kṛṣṇa as an Incarnation observes that he creates himself whenever there is declivity in the moral-spiritual order and acclivity in the disorder. Further he observes in the same continuation that he takes birth in aeons for the sake of protecting the right and eliminating the wrong and thus for restoring the moral-spiritual order.<sup>26</sup> He has to do all this not in his transcendental form but in a form conforming to the nature of the world. He corrects the aberrations in the process of the world by becoming himself something worldly. The agent of correction has to fall in line with the object or task which is to be corrected. When the earth is to be taken out from the filthy mire, the Divine has to assume the form of boar and when the living beings are to be saved from getting drowned in the deluge, he incarnates himself as the fish. If in the process of evolution the principle of life can adjust its forms, as Darwin maintains, in keeping with the needs of the situation, there is nothing illogical if the Divine also does the same in the choice of the form of its incarnation. Due to this self-adaptation of him in his form as per the need of the situation, however, cognizance of him as such becomes a mystique. This worldly shroud taken up by the Divine in course of the incarnation is termed by the *Bhagavadgītā* as *yoga-māyā*. Due to assumption of this shroud by him, the common man is scarcely in a position to recognize him in his real essence. It is but natural for them to take him as an individual like themselves, howsoever excellent otherwise.<sup>27</sup> But there are occasions when the divinity of the incarnate personage reveals itself on select persons. Such rare occasions may arise in the state of extreme distress, crisis, fear, surprise or any other

cognate state of mind when one becomes adequately sensitive to values, principles and entities other than the mundane. Such occasions arose in the life of Kṛṣṇa when he could be understood as an incarnate being by various persons including Arjuna.

The same happened in the case of Rāma. He took birth as a human being and grew along with his other brothers like the same. He was married, proposed to be enthroned, asked to live in the forest, and undergo the sad experience of abduction of his lovely wife Sītā. All this was experienced and suffered by him like a human being but with a sense of magnanimity and excellence which is just unique. In course of these events his divinity has been manifested on several persons in different degrees.

At the time of departure of Rāma along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa from Ayodhyā, people in general felt that the whole of nature had become full of devotion towards him. Being tied down by their roots, the trees finding themselves thus helpless in accompanying him were crying in their respective places.<sup>28</sup> So was the case with birds. Unable to leave their nests, they were praying to him not to proceed any further.<sup>29</sup> The air did not cool, the moon did not look soothing, the sun did not shine brightly and indeed the whole of the world had turned topsyturvy.<sup>30</sup> Thus the whole of the nature was moved by his departure, but Rāma himself did not evince any adverse mental modification whatever.<sup>31</sup> Divinity lies in the maintenance of sameness in the midst of the changing scenario of life and nature. Rāma himself observes in this context that even though the lustre of the moon may leave her, the Himalayas may be bereft of the snow or the sea may trespass its shore, he himself would not belie the words of his father.<sup>32</sup> He is visualized as such by his brothers also. Bharata, for instance tells him that a person like him who could remain completely undisturbed in the state of trouble and un-elated in the state of pleasure, must be a unique phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> Similarly at the time of the cremation of Daśaratha, Śatrughna characterizes Rāma as the final destination of all the beings and completely unmindful of his own miseries.<sup>34</sup>

Just as the woman-folk of Vraja was enamoured by Kṛṣṇa to the extent as to break all bonds of conjugal relationship vis-a-vis him, even so when the men-folk of Ayodhyā returned to their homes without being able to bring Rāma back to his capital, the housewives wept bitterly and reproached their husbands as to what they had to do

with their households, wives, sons, belongings and pleasures of life if they did not have Rāma amidst them to see.<sup>35</sup>

Sītā herself was convinced of the uniqueness of Rāma in several aspects including valour. She tells Hanumān in Laṅkā that by her own eyes she had seen and by her own ears heard that from amongst all species of beings including gods, gandharvas, bhujāṅgas and rākṣasas none was comparable to Rāma in valour in the battle-field.<sup>36</sup> On the same occasion, Hanumān describes Rāma to Sītā as comparable to the sun in brilliance, to the earth in endurance, to Bṛhaspati in wisdom and to Indra in glory.<sup>37</sup> A little later, as a prelude to the burning of Laṅkā when Hanumān observes that though his tail is inflamed there is no burning sensation felt by him in the least, the sense of wonder generated in him gets mitigated at the dawn of the idea that all this was due to Rāma who could make even big pieces of stone float on the sea.<sup>38</sup> These miraculous supernatural acts impressed upon him beyond doubt the divinity of Rāma and transformed him into the greatest devotee of the latter.

Rāma's being an incarnation of Viṣṇu is also manifest in the delivery of certain arms to him by sage Agastya when he reaches the latter's hermitage. The sage gave him a large bow bedecked with gold and diamond. It was said to have belonged to Viṣṇu and to have been made by Viśvakarman, the divine architect. The sage also tells him how it was by means of this bow that Viṣṇu killed the demons and eventually attracted the grace of gods to him.<sup>39</sup>

Death is one of the most revealing events in life. In certain cases, what remains a mystery during the whole of life, becomes suddenly explicit at the time of death. In the Rāmāyaṇa there are several cases which Rāma has been cognized as a divine personage by the dying one. The dying Kabandha reports to Rāma how he was already informed by Indra that he would attain to heaven eventually at last when Rāma alongwith Lakṣmaṇa would cut his both hands in the battle-field. This being destined as per the prediction of Indra, Kabandha could recognize him in his essential form when his both arms were cut down by Rāma.<sup>40</sup> Similarly it is he who sends Jaṭāyu to higher worlds at the time of the latter's death.<sup>41</sup> It is only the Lord of those higher worlds who can send one to them.

As has been indicated above, fear of death also makes one sensitive to the divine presence. When Rāvaṇa approached Mārīca to help him in his planning to kidnap Sītā., the latter recounted how he, after being

thrown away by Rāma's arrow, felt everything as haunted by him. "I see Rāma as indwelling each and every tree putting on tattered cloth and the skin of a black deer, wielding bow in his hand and looking like the god of death with the trap in his hand. O Rāvaṇa, under the spell of fear, I see Rāma numbering in thousands. To me the whole of this forest appears to be pervaded by Rāma".<sup>42</sup>

This is how he describes his mental condition vis-a-vis Rāma only the Divine can be so all-pervading.

His divinity gets also manifested in the state of the crisis of Sītā's entering into the fire in Laṅkā. To see the sternness of the Divine in punishing himself in the form of testing the chastity of Sītā, gods like Yama, Indra, Varuṇa, Śiva and Brahmā come to Laṅkā and entreat him not to be so harsh.<sup>43</sup> Who else but the Supreme Being can be the object of prayer of these gods?

When Rāma and Lākṣmana were lying hurt by Meghanāda, there appeared a mysterious bird and introduced itself as Suparṇa Garutmān and characterized itself as the breath of Rāma externalized.<sup>44</sup> This is obviously reminiscent of the Ṛgvedic account of the Supreme Being which is said to be named variously by seers as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan and Suparṇa Garutmān though in itself being but one.<sup>45</sup> In the Rāmāyaṇa, calling of the externalized breath of Rāma as 'Suparṇa Garutmāna' is therefore obviously suggestive of his Divinity.

That the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa is essentially an earthly scene of a heavenly drama is evident also from references suggesting how personages other than Rāma as well were incarnations of different celestial beings. For instance, if Kṛṣṇa in the Bhāgavadgītā claims to have assumed human form through his *yoga-māyā*, Sītā is characterized as *deva-māyā* in the Rāmāyaṇa due to his association with whom Rāma undergoes the entire drama of separation, fighting and re-union.<sup>46</sup> She herself on the occasion of entering into the fire in Laṅkā reveals that she in fact is child of the Earth and that her birth from Janaka is only a heresy.<sup>47</sup> She means to say that she indeed is the Divine Creativity manifesting itself through the fertility of the earth. Similarly the entire force of monkeys and bears fighting on the side of Rāma in Laṅkā is in fact incarnation of heavenly beings taking birth through female monkeys etc. who as a matter of fact are themselves incarnations of heavenly damsels, and daughter of Yakṣas, Pannagas and Kinnaras.<sup>48</sup> After Viṣṇu promises to assume the form of Rāma,

those heavenly beings are asked to go down to the earth and serve him variously in disguise. Hanumān, for instance, though apparently a monkey, is, as a matter of fact, the son of the heavenly damsel Puñjikasthalā assuming the form of Añjanā, the female monkey. His father also though actually Kesarī, is really the god Marut<sup>49</sup>.

In view of all this, what seems likely is that the archetypal Yakṣa of the Atharvaveda who is said to ensoul as self the Ayodhyā of gods having eight circles and nine doors in it, assumes the form of Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa not only poetically but also historically.<sup>50</sup> The archetypal Brahmā of the invincible Vedic city takes the form of Rāma of Ayodhyā. What is conceived as a spiritual principle in the Veda, becomes a historical verity in the Rāmāyaṇa. He is basically the Divine assuming the human form at the time of the epic and happens to be recounted as such in it. In the historical manifestation and the epic account, the human form becomes emphatic, so much indeed as to over-shadow the archetypal divine essence. But it is very much there cherished as the under-current by Vālmikī. The same, however, gets restored to its primeval prominence later on in the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa. Presentation of the characters of the Rāmāyaṇa, including Rāma and Sītā, as spiritual principles by the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa is, therefore, not a later innovation but simply a restoration of the original state of things as seen by the Vedic seer Nārāyaṇa and maintained throughout, though as an under-current, by Vālmikī.

- 
1. चतुर्दश सहस्राणि रक्षसामुग्रतेजसाम् ।  
निहतानि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैर्मानुषेण पदातिना ॥ Val. Rām. III. 34. 8. (Baroda Edn.)
  2. राज्यभ्रष्टेन दीनेन तापसेन गतायुषा ।  
किं करिष्यसि रामेण मानुषेणाल्पतेजसा ॥ Ibid., III. 53.31.
  3. या त्वं विरहिता नीता चलचित्तेन रक्षसा ।  
दैवसम्पादितो दोषो मानुषेण मया जितः ॥ Ibid., VI. 115.5. (Gita Press Edn.).
  4. न हि चिन्ता ममान्येषु प्राणिष्वमरपूजित ।  
तृणभूता हि ते मन्ये प्राणिनो मानुषादयः ॥ Ibid., VII. 10.20.
  5. सोऽहं दाशरथिर्भूत्वा रणभूमेर्बलिक्षमम् ।  
करिष्यामि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैस्ताच्छिरः कमलोच्चयम् ॥ Kālidāsa, Raghuvamśam, X. 44
  6. Val. Ram. I. 1. 1-5.
  7. समुद्र इव गाम्भीर्यं धैर्येण हिमवानिव ।  
विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्यं सोमवत्प्रियदर्शनः ।  
कालाग्निसदृशः क्रोधे क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ॥  
धनदेन समस्त्यागे सत्ये धर्म इवापरः । Ibid., I. 1. 17-19.
  8. प्राप्स्यसि त्वं महाप्राज्ञं मैथिलीं जनकात्मजाम् ।  
यथा विष्णुर्महाबाहुर्बलिं बद्ध्वा महीमिमाम् ॥ Ibid., III. 59. 22. (Baroda Edn.).

9. एषा तं पुरुषव्याघ्र सिंहविक्रान्तगामिनम् ।  
कौसल्या सुषुवे रामं धातारमदितिर्यथा ॥ Ibid., II. 86. 21.
10. द्रक्ष्यस्यचैव वैदेहि राघवं सहलक्ष्मणम् ।  
व्यवसायसमायुक्तं विष्णुं दैत्यवधे यथा ॥ Ibid., V. 35. 24.
11. अनाथ इव भूतानां नाथस्त्वं वासवोपमः ।  
मया प्रेष्येण काकुत्स्थ किमर्थं परितप्यसे ॥ Ibid., III. 2. 21.
12. अथ दाशरथिश्चित्रं चित्रकूटमदर्शयत् ।  
भार्याममरसंकाशः शचीमिव पुरन्दरः ॥ Ibid., II. 88. 2.
13. अहं प्रसन्नवणस्थाय राघवायाद्य मैथिलि ।  
प्रापयिष्यामि शक्राय हव्यं हुतभिवानलः ॥ Ibid., V. 35. 23.
14. अहं तस्यानुभावज्ञा शक्रस्येव पुलोमजा ॥ Ibid., V. 35. 17.
15. न नूनं बुध्यसे रामं महावीर्यं गुणोन्नतम् ।  
अयुक्तचारश्चपलो महेन्द्रवरुणोपमम् ॥ Ibid., III. 35. 3.
16. Ibid., III. 32. 7-8.
17. R̥gveda IV. 57. 6-7.
18. अथ भातरमव्यग्रं प्रियं रामः प्रियंवदः ।  
सौमित्रिं तमुवाचेदं ब्रह्मेव त्रिदशेश्वरम् ॥ Val. Ram. II. 29. 11. (Baroda Edn.).
19. उपविष्टं महाबाहुं ब्रह्माणमिव शाश्वतम् ।  
स्थण्डिले दर्भसंस्तीर्णे सीतया लक्ष्मणेन च ॥ Ibid., II. 93. 27.
20. Ibid., II. 1. 26-28.
21. इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।  
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदनत्वग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥ RV. I. 164. 46.
22. चन्द्रमा मनसो जातश्चक्षोः सूर्यो अजायत ।  
मुखाविन्द्रश्चाग्निश्च प्राणाद्वायुरजायत ॥ Ibid., X. 90. 13.
23. परो दिवा पर एना पृथिव्या परो देवेभिरसुरैर्यदस्ति ।  
कं स्विद गर्भं प्रथमं दध्न आपो यत्र देवाः समपश्यन्त विश्वे ॥  
तमिद् गर्भं प्रथमं दध्न आपो यत्र देवाः समगच्छन्त विश्वे ।  
अजस्य नाभावमध्येकमर्पितं यस्मिन्विश्वानि भुवनानि तस्थुः ॥ Ibid., X. 82. 5-6.
24. तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् । Kaṭha up. I. 3. 19.
25. तत्सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्राविशत् । Tait. up. II 6.
26. यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।  
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥  
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।  
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥ Bhagavadgītā IV. 7-8.
27. अव्यक्तं व्यक्तिमापन्नं मन्यन्ते मामबुद्धयः ।  
परं भवमजानन्तो ममाव्ययमनुत्तमम् ॥  
नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।  
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥ Ibid., VII. 24-25.
28. अनुगन्तुमशक्तास्त्वा मूलैरुद्धतवेगिभिः ।  
उन्नता वायुवेगेन विक्रोशन्तीव पादपाः ॥ Val. Ram. II. 40. 28.
29. निश्चेष्टा असंचारा वृक्षैकस्थानविष्टिताः ।  
पक्षिणोऽपि प्रयाचन्ते सर्वभूतानुकम्पिनम् ॥ Ibid., 29.
30. न वाति पवनः शीतो न शशी सौम्यदर्शनः ।  
न सूर्यस्तपते लोकं सर्वं पर्याकुलं जगत् ॥ Ibid., II. 36. 14.
31. न वनं गन्तुकामस्य त्यजतश्च वसुन्धराम् ।  
सर्वलोकातिगस्येव लक्ष्यते चित्तविक्रिया ॥ Ibid., II. 16. 59.

32. लक्ष्मीश्चन्द्रादपेयाद्वा हिमवान्वा हिमं त्यजेत् ।  
अतीयात्सागरो वेलान प्रतिज्ञामहं पितुः ॥ Ibid., II 104. 18.
33. को हि स्यादीदृशो लोके यादृशस्त्वमरिन्दम ।  
न त्वां प्रव्यथयेद् दुःखं प्रीतिर्वा न प्रहर्षयेत् ॥ Ibid., II. 98. 41.
34. गतिर्यः सर्वभूतानां दुःखे किं पुनरात्मनः । Ibid., II. 72. 2.
35. गृहे गृहे रुदन्त्यश्च भर्तारं गृहमागतम् ।  
व्यगर्हयन्त दुःखार्ता वाग्भिस्तोत्रैरिव द्विपान् ॥  
किं नु तेषां गृहैः कार्यं किं दारैः किं धनेन वा ।  
पुत्रैर्वा सुखैर्वापि ये न पश्यन्ति राघवम् ॥ Ibid., II. 42. 5-6.
36. श्रुता हि दृष्टाश्च मया पराक्रमा महात्मनस्तस्य रणावमर्दिनः ।  
न देवगन्धर्वभुजंगराक्षसा भवन्ति रामेण समा हि संयुगे ॥ Ibid., V. 35. 65.
37. तेजसादित्यसंकाशः क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ।  
बृहस्पतिसमो बुद्ध्या यशसा वासवोपमः ॥ Ibid., V. 33. 9.
38. दह्यमाने च लाङ्गुले चिन्तयामास वानरः । प्रदीप्तोऽग्निरयं कस्मान्नामं दहति सर्वतः ।  
दृश्यते च महाज्वालः करोति च न मे रुजम् । शिशिरस्येव संपातो लाङ्गुलाग्रे प्रतिष्ठितः ॥  
अथवा तदिदं व्यक्तं यद् दृष्टं प्लवता मया । रामप्रभावादाश्चर्यं पर्वतः सरितां पतौ ॥  
Ibid., V. 51. 29-31.
39. इदं दिव्यं महच्चापं हेमवज्रविभूषितम् । वैष्णवं पुरुषव्याघ्र निर्मितं विश्वकर्मणा ॥  
अनेन धनुषा राम हत्वा संख्ये महासुरान् । आजहार श्रियं दीप्तां पुरा विष्णुर्दिवौकसाम् ॥  
ibid., III. 11. 29, 32.
40. स तु मामब्रवीदिन्द्रो यदा रामः सलक्ष्मणः । छेत्स्यते समरे बाहू तदा स्वर्गं गमिष्यसि ॥  
स त्वं रामोऽसि भद्रं ते नाहमन्येन राघव । शक्यो हन्तुं यथातत्त्वमेवमुक्तं महर्षिणा ॥  
Ibid., III. 67. 15-16.
41. मया त्वं समनुज्ञातो गच्छ लोकाननुत्तमान् । गृध्रराज महासत्त्व संस्कृतश्च मया ब्रज ॥  
Ibid., III. 64. 30.
42. वृक्षे वृक्षे हि पश्यामि चीरकृष्णजिनाम्बरम् । गृहीतधनुषं रामं पाशहस्तमिवान्तकम् ॥  
अपि रामसहस्राणि भीतः पश्यामि रावण । रामभूतमिदं सर्वमरण्यं प्रतिभाति मे ॥  
Ibid., III. 37. 15-16.
43. कर्ता सर्वस्य लोकस्य श्रेष्ठो ज्ञानविदां विभुः ।  
उपेक्षसे कथं सीतां पतन्तीं हव्यवाहने ॥ Ibid., VI. 117. 6.
44. अहं सखा ते काकुत्स्थ प्रियः प्राणो बहिश्चरः ।  
गर्स्तमानिह सम्प्राप्तो युवयोः साह्यकारणात् ॥  
एवमुक्त्वा तदा रामं सुपर्णः स महाबलः ।  
परिष्वज्य च सुस्निग्धमाप्रष्टुमुपचक्रमे ॥ Ibid., VI. 117. 6.
45. R.V. I. 164. 46.
46. जनकस्य कुले जाता देवमायेव निर्मिता ।  
सर्वलक्षणसम्पन्ना नारीणामुत्तमा बधूः ॥ Val. Ram. I. 27.
47. अपदेशो मे जनकान्नोत्पत्तिर्वसुधातलात् । Ibid., VI. 116. 15.
48. Ibid., I. 17. 1-16.
49. Ibid., IV. 65. 8-18.
50. अष्टाचक्रा नवद्वारा देवानां पूरयोध्या ।  
तस्यां हिरण्ययः कोशः स्वर्गो ज्योतिषावृतः ॥  
तस्मिन् हिरण्यये कोशे त्र्यरे त्रिप्रतिष्ठिते ।  
तस्मिन् यद् यक्षमात्मन्वत् तद् वै ब्रह्मविदो विदुः ॥  
प्रभ्राजमानां हरिणीं यशसा संपरीवृताम् ।  
पुरं हिरण्ययीं ब्रह्मा विवेशापराजिताम् ॥ Atharva Veda, X. 2. 31-33.

# RĀMA AND HIS DIVINITY IN INDIAN SCULPTURE

By

KRISHNA DEVA

In the original Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa comprising five Kāṇḍas (Ayodhyā to Yuddha-kāṇḍa) Rāma is essentially treated as a thoroughly human Epic hero. Like distinguished Epic heroes, Rāma is invested with noblest physical and moral characteristics and superhuman qualities. For his martial prowess and invincibility in war and just and impartial performance of kingly functions of protection of the good and punishment of the evil he is frequently compared to gods like Indra, Varuna, Brahmā and Viṣṇu as e.g. :

विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्ये (I. 1. 18)

दिव्यैर्गुणैः शक्रसमो रामः सत्यपराक्रमः (II. 2. 19 ab)

महेंद्रवरुणोपमः (IV. 12. 10 d)

रामो धर्मभृतां श्रेष्ठो महेन्द्रसमविक्रमः (V. 56. 17 cd)

Rāma is also compared to other gods, such as Bṛihaspati Kubera, Yama and Parjanya. It is indeed quite significant that Rāma is compared to Viṣṇu 18 times and to Indra 77 times. This overwhelming comparison with Indra may signify that the religious ideology of that Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa was not far removed from the later vedic milieu and that the identity of Rāma with Viṣṇu was yet to be firmly formulated.

Scholars are now generally agreed that the Bālakāṇḍa was added earlier than the Uttarakāṇḍa. The initial Stanza of the Bālakāṇḍa expressly treat Rāma as just human (naraḥ) :-

महर्षे त्वं समर्थोसि ज्ञातुं एवविधं नरम् ॥ (I. 1. 5)

बहवो दुर्लभाश्चैव ये त्वया कीर्तिता गुणाः ।

मुने वक्षाम्यहं बुद्ध्वा तैर्युक्तः श्रूयतां नरः ॥ (I. 1. 7)

The same Kāṇḍa later affirms that Viṣṇu decided to incarnate himself as Rāma on a petition from the gods led by Brahmā for the destruction of Rāvaṇa (1.15). Further on Rāma is stated to be an *amśāvatāra* of Viṣṇu since the *pāyasa* from the Putreṣṭi sacrifice was apportioned among the three queens for the birth of four sons in unequal proportion, Rāma getting the major share (one-half) of the



total quantity. There is a further confirmation of Rāma's divinity when Parśurāma recognises Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu (1. 75. 17-20).

The Uttarakāṇḍa, which was the last to be added to the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, is even more forthright in declaring Rāma's identity with Viṣṇu in the following words of sage Agastya :—

Except for the Bālakāṇḍa and Uttarakāṇḍa the original corpus has references to Rāma varying from purely human to superhuman and semidivine to status.

That Rāma fulfilled a divine mission in being born for destroying the Rakṣasas led by Rāvaṇa is proved by numerous episodes, culminating in the assignment of Indra's chariot with his charioteer Mātali in the final battle of Rāma with Rāvaṇa. But the recurrent epithets linked with Rāma's exploits are largely human. The commonest is रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः (the everactive Rāma) which also characterises both kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the Mahābhārata. Next in frequency are the simple patronymic रामो दशरथात्मजः and राघवस्य महात्मनः (the high-sonled Rāma). Other recurring epithets are रामः सत्यपराक्रमः and रामो धर्मभृतां वरः which stress the kingly virtues of truth, valour and righteousness. Dharma anciently comprised a wide conspectus of social and traditional more to moral duties and obligations. Rāma's character is aptly summed up by the epithet. रामो धर्मभृतां वरः (Rāma, the noblest upholder of righteousness). He is indeed figured as a मर्यादापुरुषोत्तम, i.e. one unexcelled in the conduct of all obligations, private and public, Thus beside's being an ideal son, brother, husband, and friend and master, Rāma was an exemplary kṣatriya prince and was ever prepared to sacrifice his personal sentiments and comforts in the performance of his family obligations as well as public duties as a prince and a scion.

Father Bulcke<sup>1</sup> has critically examined the passages referring to Rāma as viṣṇu's incarnation in the five original Kāṇḍas and demonstrates that since these passages are not available in all the recensions and are out of context where available, they are invariably later inter-polations.

That Rāma was regarded as thoroughly human by his sonsort Sītā, his brother and shadow Lakṣmaṇa, and his devotee and envoy Hanūmān, is attested by numerous references. Thus, Sītā blames her suffering to her own acts of previous lives in passages after passages (v. 25, 18; VI, 113, 36-37)

Lakṣmaṇa consoles Rāma in regard to the recovery of Sītā in purely human terms :-

प्राप्यसे त्वं महाप्राज्ञ मैथिलीं जनकात्मजाम् ।  
 यथा विष्णुर्महाबाहुर्बलिं बद्ध्वा महीभिमाम् ॥ (III. 61. 24)  
 विष्णुना नास्मि चोदितः ।  
 केन चिद्रामकार्येण आगतोऽस्मि तवान्तिकम् ॥ (V. 50, 13-18)

When Hanūmān confronts Rāvaṇa, he affirms that he was not sent by Viṣṇu but came as the envoy of Rāma. It is significant that Rāma, like Sītā, attributes his suffering to his own acts of previous lives (III. 63.4; VI, 101,18). Further, Rāma is quite emphatic in introducing himself to Brahmā as a mere human being.

आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम् ॥

Moreover, the very fact that Rāma is only compared to and not identified with Viṣṇu in passages after passages proves that Rāma's divinity was a later conceptual development.

Under the burgeoning influence of the Bhāgavata religion, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was identified with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa not later than c. 3rd century B.C. since we get copious epigraphic and archeological evidences of the worship of Vāsudeva from second century B.C. onwards. As the Rāma narrative was no less popular and Rāma's exploits in perfecting the virtuous and punishing the guilty squarely matched with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa's, Rāma also was admitted as one of Viṣṇu's incarnations certainly by the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier. Apart from the Bālakāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa, and the interpolated story passages in the other Kāṇḍas mentioning Rāma's affiliation with Viṣṇu, the cumulative evidence of the Ramopākhyāna in the Mahābhārata and the explicit references to Ramāvatāra in the early Purāṇas and the Harivaṁśa, corroborate an early date for the concept of Ramāvatāra.

Though the actual date of composition of the Rāmāyaṇa is highly controversial ranging from c. 5th century B.C. to c. 2nd century A. D., there is no doubt that the Rāmāyaṇa was well known to the poet Aśvaghōṣa, a contemporary of Kaniṣka, and to the coeval texts of the Kalpanāmaṇḍi tikā and the grammatical work Mahavibhāṣā. The last text is familiar with the kernel of the Rāmāyaṇa legend and specifically mentions that the text of the epic contained 12000 śloka<sup>2</sup>.

It remains now to examine how Rāma was figured in the Śilpe texts and actual sculptures. Although Rāma's identity as an *avatāra* was an

established fact by the age of Kālidāsa, c. 5th cent. (रामाभिधानो हरिरित्युवाच) he is figured in the Śilpa texts and sculptures as a thoroughly human figure with two arms, generally holding bow and arrow, and occasionally sword or dagger in addition. In the earliest known sculpture from Nagarjunakanda (c. 3rd century A.D.)<sup>3</sup>, Rāma is shown two armed seated on the back of flying Hanūmān carrying bow of an enormous size and weaning *channavīra*, a warrior's equipment, which henceforth becomes a sort of cognizance of Rāma. There are copious representations of similar nature in terracotta as well as some of Rāma from well known centres of Gupta art such as Bhitargaon, Sravasti, Nachna and Deogarh, as well as at the coeval Vākātaka site of Paūnar showing Rāma as a hero and even as a god. Rāma as relieving Ahalyā of her curse or threatening the presiding god of the sea when he ignored the entreaties of Rāma, etc.

Rāma continued to be depicted as a thoroughly human hero also in later periods and it is only rarely that he was portrayed as four-armed, holding in the two additional hands two of Viṣṇu's attributes besides bow and arrow from 11th. century onwards.

- 
1. Father K. Bulcke, *Rāma- Kathā* (Hindi), Allahabad 1962 (Second edition), pp. 129-137
  2. P. Banerjee, *Rāma in Indian Literature, Art and Thought* (Delhi, 1985), p. 4.
  3. P.K. Agrawala, Identification of Hanūmān and Rāma in a Nagarjunakonda Relief, *Journal of Oriental Institute of Baroda*, Vol. XXX (1980-81) pp. 105-111.

# RĀMA IN HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

By

B. P. SINHA

The one good, that has been the principal fall-out of the Rāmājanmabhūmi and Bābri-masjid dispute, is the keen and critical attention of Indian scholars to the problems of historicity of Rāma, the antiquity of Ayodhyā and secularism in the Indian Socio-Cultural ethos and polity.

Bipin Chandra<sup>1</sup> and his colleagues rejects the historicity of Rāma and the antiquity of Ayodhyā. Prof. R. S. Sharma<sup>2</sup> believes that Ayodhyā 'emerged as a place of (Hindu?) religious pilgrimage in medieval times', and 'there could be 'Śaiva or Jain or Buddhist places of worship in Ayodhyā, but not any temple of Rāma.' They do not find any contemporary epigraphic or archaeological evidence to support the historicity of Rāma or antiquity of Ayodhyā, and the fact that there are various versions of Rāma's story in early Brahmanical and Buddhist literature make them convinced that the story of Rāma is more imaginative than real.

At the outset we would like to point that if we were to depend on contemporary written records then Indian history cannot go earlier than Aśoka, or at best Candragupta Maurya, who is referred to by Megasthenes and other Greek writers. It is needless to observe that the entire Vedic, Upanashadic and early Buddhist times would then become unhistorical. If the Purāṇas were compiled much after the events, the Jātakas and even the Piṭakas could not have been put in black and white before 3rd Century B. C.<sup>3</sup> The absurdity of likely inferences following from such a stand is too obvious to be discussed. The value of traditions even in reconstructing history of not only ancient period but even of the medieval period in history of Europe has been well recognised. Pargiter has conclusively shown that the Pauranic accounts of the ruling dynasties are basically historical traditions containing facts. If the historians today draw upon the Puranic accounts of the dynasties from the advent of the Buddha for reconstructing the political history of India from 600 B. C.-400 A. D. for them to reject the entire accounts of the earlier period given in the same Purāṇas is hardly reasonable. It is true that for the period from

600 B.C. to 400 A.D., the historians have other literary data—Buddhist and Jain besides epigraphic to check and collate the puranic evidence. It is hardly the fault of the Epics and the Purāṇas that no contemporary supplementary literature is available. It is unexplicable that the same scholars who have drawn richly from the Buddha's life and early Buddhist literature for their scholarly works bearing on the period for which there is no other than exclusively early Buddhist traditions as their source, they deny to even seriously look upon the Puranic and Epic evidence, though their being exclusive group of sources on the history and antiquity of Rāma and Ayodhyā. Double standards in historical writing are to say the least indefensible. But it has been shown that the incidental references in the Vedic literature about kings, priests and places do render the Purāṇic data not just figments of imagination. Of course it needs much care and labour to distinguish between the facts and fiction, grains and chaff, mingled in the ever changing secular Kshatriya traditional literature—the Purāṇas and the Epics. But to deny wholesale the historicity of the pre-Buddha accounts of the Purāṇas, because of a few contradictions and incorporation of sectarian matters, incredible myths and fables, would be like throwing the baby with the bath-water. One should emulate the advice of Alberuni who when confronted with the nature of Hindu evidence sought to 'collect the pearls and discard the pebbles.' As a matter of fact no epic, even Homer's Illiad and Odyssey, has been proved to contain only fiction and fantasies. They have historical base with the superstructure often embellished with myths and extravagance; without this they would cease to be epics. As a matter of fact contemporary authentic written accounts are not available for even Christ and Muhammad. There are different versions of the Bible and crucial events of his life—like his birth place, crucifixion, and re-appearance have been subjects of fierce controversy. Earliest written account of Muhammad appear more than a century after his death. There are differences among Muslim theologians about some events in his life, and certainly about what he meant about many things which he said. Some of his actions as flying on wings and leaving his foot-print on the Rock of Jerusalem would appear to ordinary critic rather mythical than real. These events are comparatively recent when we compare to the time of Rāma but that does not lead to doubt the historicity of the life of Christ or events in Prophet's life. Traditions, beliefs, held by generations after generations do have historical truism.

There are some truths which can be demonstrated, some which can be proved logically on evidence, and many which are in course of march of time become what are called sociological truths believed by the society to have had been existing since times immemorial. It would be sheer foolhardiness to reject such truths which cannot be proved, because passage of time, and due to nature of the evidence being lost, blurred or embellished with myths. The myths, many of them certainly, have in actuality, been carved out of then living historical personalities' lives, and have by now become part and parcel of the community's historical traditions rooted in their cultural ethos. And a nation's history and culture will be much poorer, and will even be difficult to appreciate and understand if past historical traditions, may be unproven by modern tests, are rejected out of hand.

We should under these limitations examine the historicity of Rāma. Inscriptions, coins, foreign accounts, the main sources for ancient history are of no use for the period of Rāma. For history before the Buddha, when Rāma must have lived, we have to rely on traditions embodied in the extant later literature and art; and an appraisal of the evidences, scattered here and there in the variety of literary works, would show that Rāma's story is not as elusive and unreal as held by some. 'Rāma' is known to the Ṛgvedic literature with Veṇa and Duḥśīma.<sup>4</sup> The Vishṇu Purāṇa<sup>5</sup> refers to Daśaratha, son of Aja and father of Rāma.

Recently one Prof. Shukla has referred to an inscription found somewhere in U. P. wherein Rāma as Nārāyaṇa is referred to. Palaeographically it is to be placed in 2nd-1st Century B. C. When he disclosed the evidence there was some doubt expressed about its genuineness. On correspondence he reiterated his contention on verification of the inscription by competent experts. The inscription is now said to be deposited in the Allahabad Museum. And in such a case, epigraphic reference to Rāma is not much distant from that of Vāsudeva in the Besnagar inscription of the 2nd Century B. C. What is important to observe is that before rushing to positive conclusions, one should bear patience with time for evidences are still coming and are on way. Then the Nasik cave inscription of Vāśiṣṭhaputra Pulumāvi belonging to his 19th year (2nd century A. D.) refers to Gautamiputra as equal to Rāma-Keśava-Arjuna and Bhimasena in valour and in brilliance same as Nābhāga-Nahusha-Janamejaya-Sagara-Yayāti-Rāma-Ambharīsha. The Vishṇu Purāṇa clearly refers to the appearance of

Rāma and his brothers from Vishṇu.<sup>6</sup> Thus the deification of Rāma as an emnation from Vishṇu is as ancient as 4th Century A. D. at the latest, as the Purāṇas like Vāyu and Vishṇu were completed by the time of the Guptas. And one need not wait for Mādhvacārya to recognise Rāma as a God, which R. S. Sharma appears to contend. And we know that Kālidāsa whom most scholars place in the Gupta period does not only tell the life-history of Rāma but also takes him as an incarnation of Vishṇu.<sup>7</sup> Kālidāsa clearly suggests that he has composed this poem-Raghuvaṁśa after taking into account the works of previous poets on the history of the solar dynasty.<sup>8</sup> This is a pointer to the fact that even in the time of Kālidāsa there were many versions of the Rāmāyaṇa current. Even before him Bhāsa, placed between Aśvaghosha and Kālidāsa by Keith,<sup>9</sup> takes Rāma his hero in Pratimā and Abhisheka as his Īṣṭadeva.

And we know there were many versions of Rāma's story in still much earlier times. Father Kamil Bulke in his competent survey of Rāma Kathā in various versions and its references in different literature has done a great job.<sup>10</sup> Bulke has after detailed and analytical discussion of all relevant allusions to Rāma story has concluded<sup>11</sup> that the Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa is the oldest work on Rāma's story whose earlier versions are hinted from references in the Mahābhārata's Droṇa and Śāntiparvans and whose ākhyānas are lost." There is no reason to doubt that the Daśaratha Jātaka was also based on the Rāmāyaṇa though it was distorted in the hands of the Buddhists who used the story to vindicate Buddha's teaching and the venue was also changed. Vārāṇasī was popular to Buddhists, instead of Ayodhyā. And the Daśaratha Jātaka in its gāthā portion as a tale, must be placed not later than 5th-4th Century B. C. It is held by Weber that Daśaratha Jātaka and other Buddhist legends 'belonged to a time which was earlier than that of Vālmiki.' This is not a correct conclusion drawn from the analytical study of the Jātaka legends particularly in verses, which are believed to belong to earlier stratum. It is universally accepted that through the Jātaka legends Buddha told the stories of his previous births as Bodhisattva wherein he was a distinguished personality of good deeds, and, because of these stages of evolution consistently leading a pious life, he became the Buddha. It is obvious that many of these fables had historical base though in the Buddhist hands changes were affected in the original stories, to suit the ideals and principles of the Buddhist religion. That is why the Daśaratha Jātaka does not refer

to the Rāma-Rāvaṇa violent struggle. Scholars have drawn on this Jātaka as the germ of the Rāmāyaṇa, but they have glossed over the fact that Brahmadata, king of Vārānasi appears in more than one previous birth stories of the Buddha. The absurdity of such a situation in real life is obvious. But the veracity of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa has to be downgraded to this Jātaka version of the Buddhists in the eyes many historians who appear to use a pair of separate glasses to scan the Brahmanical literature. However, it has been well pointed by Altekar<sup>12</sup> that actually Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa was known to the author of the Jātakas. The whole of the Daśaratha Jātaka as it has come down to us is in prose, and old gāthās and verses are lost except one which is as follows :—

एक लक्ष्मण् सीता च उभे ओत्तरथोदकम् ।  
एवायं भरतो आह राजा दशरथो मते ॥

It is interesting to note, as has been pointed out by Altekar that actually this is almost in identical manner as appears in the Rāmāyaṇa where when Rāma is told by Bharata in Citrakūṭa that Daśaratha is dead, he says to Lakshmaṇa and Sītā that he will go for offering of water to the departed soul but they should precede him for this religious rite.<sup>13</sup> Such a minute detail could not have been included in a Buddhist legend without the relevant verses in the Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa current in the time of the Jātakas. While Daśaratha Jātaka as we have seen is silent about the violent life of Rāma, it is based on the Rāmāyaṇa. Both the Daśaratha Jātaka and the Rāmāyaṇa refer to 11000 years of Rāma's rule almost in same words. The Buddha in previous births claim to be Nimi, Mahājana Janaka, who are referred to in the Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upanishad, and it was believed in the time of the Buddha and later that they were great kings with pious deeds. Then why Rāma of the Daśaratha Jātaka would be a fictitious person, when the Buddha was Rāma in his previous birth. He was the wise Vidura in his previous birth also, and Vidura is the uncle of the Kaurava-Pāṇḍavas. But as we have shown above the Daśaratha Jātaka does not say the whole history of Rāma and the history as told is distorted for other reasons.

But the entire story of the Rāmāyaṇa was known to the composers of the early Jātaka gāthās is attested to by the Vesantara Jātaka (No. 547). The story of Vesantara and Maddi (Mādri) is very similar to Rāma and Sītā in the Rāmāyaṇa. Both Vesantara and Rāma are crown princes and banished to forests by their respective fathers



notwithstanding the protests of the loving and bewailing mother. In both cases, the prince almost in parallel verses asks their respective wives to stay at home as there were numerous dangers in the forest life. Maddi like Sītā refused to yield, and almost in similar sentences, poonpoohs the catastrophies painted by Vesantara and declares that she would not live without Vesantara, and ultimately she follows her husband to the forest where Vesantara takes up forester's clothes casting away royal dress as Rāma. The story is somewhat changed to suit Buddhist purpose and principles, but the parallels almost clinch the issue that Vesantara Jātaka was composed with the Rāmāyaṇa as the model in hand. Actually Maddi clearly alludes to the intense devotion of Sītā to Rāma and that she is as much attached to her husband. Altekar has quoted a number of lines of Vesantara Jātaka as parallels of ślokas in the Rāmāyaṇa in similar context and in similar emotional outbursts.<sup>14</sup> In the Jayaddisa Jātaka (No. 513), the queen-mother of the Kumāra (Bodhisattava) who is going to the forest to serve himself as meal to the Yaksha in place of his father, prays to gods that she is making the same prayer which mother of Rāma made for seeking the protection of her son who had gone to the Daṇḍaka forest. This clearly shows that the composer of the Jātaka knew the story of the Rāmāyaṇa and Rāma's sojourn in the Daṇḍaka forest. It is important to note that this Jātaka does not draw upon the Daśaratha Jātaka wherein the prince went to the Himālayas and not to the Daṇḍaka forest as in the Rāmāyaṇa. So the work-Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa was well known by the time the Jātakas were composed or told by the Buddha. Even Aśvaghosa does not base his informations about Rāma on the Daśaratha Jātaka. The Ramayanic episodes mentioned in the Buddhacarita are based on Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa. Even the Chinese Tripiṭaka particularly Anāma Jātaka and Daśaratha Kathānām are based on Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa and not on Daśaratha Jātaka. Thus, it is clear that the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa was well known to the Buddhists since the days of the Buddha and certainly from before 3rd Century B. C. when the Jātakas were compiled for the first time, and the Daśaratha Jātaka story is a caricature of the Rāmāyaṇa story with a view to highlight the qualities of the Bodhisattva.

The date of the Jātakas is a controversial subject, but the consciousness of the scholars appears to be that they could have existed between 5th and 3rd Centuries B. C. 'Some poems and a few prose negatives go back to his (Buddha's) time', but 'the major part of the

verses is not perhaps earlier than the 3rd Centuries B.C., where as much of the prose is later than the Christean era.<sup>15</sup> Rhys Davids puts the period of the Jātakas verses only, between the time of the Buddha down to Aśoka.<sup>16</sup> On this basis it is not unreasonable to hold that some of the Jātakas (gāthā part) could have been present as legends rooted in past history in the time of the Buddha himself, and in them were included allusions to Rāma story as described in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, which would be as old as 500 B. C.

This early date for the Rāmāyaṇa is confirmed by Pāṇinī. It has been generally assumed that while Pāṇinī refers to Mahābhārata heroes like Vāsudeva, Arjuna and Kariṣa, he does not mention any characters of the Rāmāyaṇa. But G. S. Altekar has at great pains shown that scholars "have not looked properly in the relevant sūtras and the gaṇas mentioned under them."<sup>17</sup> The Pāṇinīya Ashtādhyāyī (Sūtra and gaṇa) refers to roots and derived forms, such as Sumitrā and Saumitrī, Kośala and Kauśalyā, Ikshvāku and Aikshvāka, Kekaya and Kaikeyī, Kakutstha and Kākutstha, Videha-Vaideha-Vaidehī, Rāvaṇa-Rāvaṇi, Laṅkā-Laṅkāyani; derivation of the word Bibhīshaṇa, Hanu-Hanūmān Paṅpā and Kishkindhā, Rāma-Rāmi, Kṛshṇa-Kārshṇi etc. Thus we find that many important personages and regions known to the Rāmāyaṇa are known to Pāṇinī, who draws on them to explain the rules of his grammar. Rāma and his son Rāmi, Rāma's mother Kauśalyā and Kośala, Sumitra and her son Saumitri (Lakshmaṇa) play important parts in the Epic. Rāvaṇa and his son Rāvaṇi meaning Indrajit are mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa (Ram. VI, 93. 32, 35). Hanūman and Vibhishāṇa, Vaideha (Janaka) and Vaidehī (Sītā) are important characters addressed as such in the Rāmāyaṇa. Important geographical places like Laṅka, Paṅpā, and Kishkindhā are known to Pāṇinī. Rāma is addressed as Kākustha and Aikshvāka at number of places in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, and so also Kekaya and Kaikeyī maternal uncle and step mother of Rāma. This would clearly show that Pāṇinī knew the work Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, whose popularity and the general acceptance of the characters of Rāmāyaṇa at his time made him to explain the rules of his grammar with examples in the Rāmāyaṇa and of episodes in the history of Rāma. That Vālmiki preceded Pāṇinī is also suggested by Altekar on linguistic grounds. In his opinion while the Rāmāyaṇa as a ballad Epic was meant to be understood and sung by common people of the time, while the Pāṇinī lays down rules for the language of the Śiṣṭas—the educated and cultured people.<sup>18</sup> The

learned scholar has recalled the used of some such expressions as mā agamaḥ, smaratām as ārsha forms-archaic-use are not allowed under Paninian rules. In the author's own words, "Such liberty which is taken by Vālmīki with the rules of grammar would have been avoided by a poet of the classical period. But Vālmīki belonged to a period far earlier than that of Pāṇini.<sup>19</sup> There is controversy about the date of Pāṇini. Goldstucker placed him in 7th Century B. C. Weber placed him after Alexander's invasion in 323 B. C. on account of the use of word Yavana by Pāṇini. But Yavanas (Ionians actually) were known from long before Alexander, atleast in the north west where (Śālatura) Pāṇinī was born and he grew. According to Dr. Belvalkar as Pāṇinī knew Saṅkala (Asht. 4.2.73), existing in his time, he must have flourished before 350 B. C. when Alexander razed it to the ground. Pāṇinī mentions Asuras (Assyrians) and Parsus (Persians) as mercenary soldiers. Now Assyrians (Babylonians), were blotted out in 538 B. C. and the Persians in 329 B. C. So Pāṇinī must be earlier. Hsuan Tsang informs us that Pāṇinī was born in the town of P'o-lu-tu lo (identified with Śālatura), and he composed the Vyākaraṇa here his book of thousand ślokas and sent it to the supreme ruler who exceedingly prized it and issued an edict that throughout the kingdom it should be used and taught to others."<sup>20</sup> The Chinese traveller does not name the supreme ruler. But he was certainly the king of Magadha who ruled over an extensive empire including the city where Pāṇinī was born. According to Somadeva the author of Kathāsaritsāgara and Kshemendra the author of Bṛhat-Kathāmañjarī, Pāṇinī's work superseded Aindra Vyākaraṇa, and it was accorded recognition and honour by the Nanda emperor who became a friend of Pāṇini, who was a desciple of Varsha. Rājaśekhara in his Kāvya-mimāṃsā refers to the test of scholars in the Pāṭaliputra 'synod of wisemen' in the reign of Nanda who honoured with generous gifts scholars of the assembly of the learned'; Pāṇinī was an intimate friend of the Nanda king and had succeeded in the scholars' test in the assembly which was also successfully faced by Varsha, Upavarsha and others. Thus the Nanda king and Pāṇinī were contemporaries. The fact that Rājaśekhara mentions Kātyāyana and Patañjali also in the same list, when we knew they were centuries later than Pāṇinī does not reduce the validity of the tradition. Rājaśekhara is only giving the list of scholars who passed the test in Pāṭaliputra's Learned Assembly, and includes Pāṇinī's guru and his brother Varsha and Upavarsha also. Certainly both of them and

Pāṇinī did not pass the test at the same time. This Nanda king could be most probably the well known Mahāpadma Nanda who became the first ekaṛāṭ or cakravartin in the historical period. He cannot be Nandivardhana or Mahānandi, successors of Udayin and predecessors of Śiśunāga and Mahāpadma Nanda, as they were no imperial rulers having sway over north-west where Pāṇinī was born and educated. And then they are omitted from the Buddhist literature altogether. Now Mahāpadma Nanda is placed in 345 B.C.<sup>21</sup>. This may be accepted as the period of Pāṇinī if the later persistent literary references about Pāṇinī's contemporaneity with the Nanda king are given some credit. Any way there should be no difficulty in placing him between 500-350 B.C. And if so, the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa must have existed long before him, as he denies his words from the Rāmāyaṇa's contents.

The Mahābhārata as it has come down to us (the Poona Edition) is definitely later than Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa. No where in the entire Rāmāyaṇa any character of the Mahābhārata is mentioned, but Rāma's story and many prominent characters found clear echoes in the Mahābhārata in many of its parvans. The Rāmopakhyāna in the Vana (Araṇya) Parvan is one of the akhyānas (ancient tales) included in the Mahābhārata. Rāma's story in Rāmopakhyāna as related by Mārkaṇḍeya to Yudhiṣṭhira is also briefly alluded to in the relevant parts suiting the occasion by Vyāsa in the Droṇa Parvan, and by Kṛṣṇa in the Śānti Parvan clearly attesting to Rāma's story having been current since still more ancient times. The Rāmopakhyāna must have been composed with the copy of the Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa before the author. The story is almost identical from the time that Śītā has been abducted. It was related to console Yudhiṣṭhira for his sorrow over the kidnapping of Draupadī, while the earlier history of Rāma is stated in very brief words. The internal evidence in the Mahābhārata confirms this view. Mārīca warns Rāvaṇa against confrontation with Rāma, who punished him by throwing him off to Laṅka by his arrow. Now this story which is a part of the present Bālakāṇḍa must have been before the author when composing the relevant verse in the Mahābhārata. Śītā offered to Hanumat (Chūḍamaṇi) as a proof of her identification and also asked him to remind Rāma about the incident of his harassing the crow through his reed-arrow and blinding him (Van. 282.70). This would clearly shows that the author, was aware of the crow's (Jayanta's, Indra's son's) mischief against Śītā as described in the Rāmāyaṇa. It is interesting to observe that Lakshmaṇa's last

aggression against Indrajit was in accordance with Vibhīṣhaṇa's advice (विभीषणमते). But this expression could not but have been used by the author having Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa before him, wherein we are told in detail about Vibhīṣhaṇa's advice to Lakshmaṇa<sup>22</sup>. As a matter of fact there are numerous śloka in the Rāmopākhyāṇa which are identical paraphrase of the śloka in the Mahābhārata, which we have shown above is the borrower and not vice-versa. And then in the Rāmopākhyāṇa Rāma himself says that though Ravaṇa is a powerful Rākshasa and he only is a human being his arrows will kill him. This is the message which he sent through Aṅgada to Rāvaṇa (Pasye me dhanusho Viryain mānushasya niśācara—Vana Parvaṇ 284 Vs. 1-5). However, earlier in the same parvaṇ (Rāmopākhyāṇa parvaṇ), Mārkaṇdeya says to Yudhishṭhira that being distressed by Rāvaṇa's tyranny the gods went to Brahmā who informed them that on his request Viṣṇu has incarnated himself on the earth to destroy Rāvaṇa, and other gods should take birth on the earth (Vana Parvaṇ. Rāmopākhyāṇa 276. Vs. 1-7). This suggests that at least this section of the Parvaṇ knows that Rāma was an incarnation of Viṣṇu. That Mahābhārata was later than the Rāmāyaṇa is proved by the reference in the Droṇa Parvaṇ, one of the oldest part of the Mbh, wherein Sātyaki retorted to Bhūriśravā's reprimand, for cutting off latter's hand while in meditation, by stating that Indrajit had defended his imminent action for cutting off the head of Sītā, a woman, on the authority of Vālmiki who is an ancient verse (Purāgīta) had ruled that any enemy even a woman who causes distress has to be done with<sup>22a</sup>. Almost in the same words, the verse occurs in the Yuddhakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa<sup>23</sup>. So Vālmiki is mentioned in the Mahābhārata which was composed when Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa in complete form was before the author of the Mbh. Nalopākhyāṇa in the Mbh. contains many śloka very similar to description of Sītā in the Sundarkāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa. These are clearly borrowed from the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki<sup>24</sup>. Sudeva's reception-address in the Nalopākhyāṇa is borrowed from the Rāmāyaṇa<sup>25</sup>. In the Vanapavaṇ, Bhīma claims that Hanumān (Vānara-puṅgava) well known in the Rāmāyaṇa (Rāmāyaṇetivikhyātaḥ) was his elder brother. So the Rāmāyaṇa was known to the author of the Mbh. But in this section also Rāma is said to be Viṣṇu in human form-

(Atha Dāśarathirviro Rāmo nāma mahābalaḥ  
Viṣṇurmanusharūpeṇa cacāra vasudhā talam).<sup>26</sup>

This is what Hanumān says while telling Bhīma the story of the Rāmāyaṇa in the closing chapter of the Araṇyaparvan it is said that Viṣṇu living in the house of Daśaratha killed Rāvaṇa. In the Śāntiparvan when Hari is describing his incarnations he mentions he will appear as Dāśarathi (Rāma) in the Tretāyuga. In the Svargārohaṇaparvan it is said that in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Vedas every where Hari is sung.<sup>27</sup> However, these śloka do not appear in the Poona Edition. But in the Gītā Kṛṣṇa describes his divinbibhūti in which he includes Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Śankara, Soma, and includes Rāma in this list. It not only means that Rāma is earlier than Kṛṣṇa but that Rāma is an earlier incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. All these references in the Mahābhārata show that not only the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki was much more ancient work but also that Rāma by the time of the completion of the Mahābhārata was already deified and considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu. It is very difficult to say which part of the Mahābhārata is earlier or later, but the fact that Rāma in most references in the Mahābhārata is considered just a great human being and an ideal king, we can say that verses attributing divinity to Rāma were later composition. The Mahābhārata period of final composition is placed between 500 B.C.-200 A.D. but Bhagvadgītā is placed not later than 2nd Century B.C., rather much earlier. In view of this, deification of Rāma has to be placed not later than 2nd Century B.C., may be as an afterthought when Kṛṣṇa was already deified by 3rd Century B.C. may be in the time of Megasthenes even.<sup>28</sup>

But the composition of the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa may be placed in the 5th Century B.C. or even earlier, certainly earlier than the Daśaratha Jātaka and his references in other Jātakas, and earlier than Pāṇini. The latter is placed in 5th century B.C. by D.C. Sircar.<sup>29</sup> So all this proves that the Rāmāyaṇa and the acceptance of Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu were current in Indian tradition since many centuries before Christ, and not far distant in time from the belief in Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation. The entire theory of Rāma's later deification and his late antiquity falls through. The impact of Rāma's life-story and achievements—down the millennia and throughout the then civilised east is self-evident. No myth or sheer fable anywhere in the world has been able to continue to influence, rather permeate the life, thought and culture of the years. The entire life-style and cultural ethos of the Indians is so much a part of Rāma and his achievements that it looks absurd to suggest that all this was a fiction or pure myth.

The historicity rather factualness of Rāma's story may be discerned by a critical eye of the reader of the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa. We are referring to Vāli's killing by Rāma not in an open fight but by strategem. When Vāli reproached Rāma for his unbecoming conduct, the poet takes this criticism as proper, righteous and wholesome (itiyuktaḥ praśritaḥ Vākyam dharmārtha sahitam hitam-IV. 18.1). If the story of Rāma told by Vālmiki was a mere imaginative tale kneaded well by the poet, why should he have stated that Vāli was killed by Rāma in an improper way and that his this conduct was against religion (dharma). He could have either made Rāma killing Vāli in straight fight or would gloss over the incident as Vimalasūri and Guṇabhadra do in describing the life of Rāma who was a follower of Jainism in their belief. Vālmiki was writing an epic describing the noble deeds, high character and brave activities of his hero Rāma. But being an upholder of truth (nasmarāmyanṛtaṅ) and wedded to principles of good conduct, he approves the criticism of Vāli against Rāma's killing him unfairly because this was a historical fact that Vālmiki could not ignore to mention in his account of history of Rāma's life. As a matter of fact advised by Nārada he is writing an account of the maryādā-purusottama Rāma-the ideal man and ruler and not of Rāma as God. He does so faithfully. It is rightly held that the Bālakāṇḍa and Uttarakāṇḍa in which much extraneous matter besides Rāma as Viṣṇu are included are later interpolations by some other poet or poets. But it should be borne in mind that all that is in Bālakāṇḍa today is not extrapolation. Rāma's early life in association with Viśvāmitra and his confrontation with Mārīca, Subāhu etc. appear to be part of Vālmiki's composition as Mārīca refers to these incidents in the Araṇya Kāṇḍa which is believed by all to be genuine and is in the same way described in the Rāmopākhyāna Parvan of the Mahābhārata. It has been well argued that much of what is in the Bālakāṇḍa containing Rāma's story only, was composed by Vālmiki and was first included in the Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, with which probably the poet began his tale of Rāma.<sup>30</sup> Much additions were made later on, and a separate Kāṇḍa, Bālakāṇḍa was created which also included Vālmiki's original early history of Rāma (his association with Viśvāmitra and his marriage), taking this part from the original Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa. There is no deification of Rāma in the genuine story of Rāma in early life included first in Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa. The portion describing Rāma's

very harsh and unbecoming words from the mouth of maryādā-purushottama of Vālmīki to Sītā in presence of all Vānaras and Rākshasas appear to be a later interpolation. Sītā then willingly throws herself into the fire lit by Lakshmaṇa before the entire audience including Rāma. It is then the gods Brahmā, Yama, Indra, Varuṇa, Mahādeva and Kubera arrived in their chariots before Rāma and addressed him as creator of all the world (Kartā sarvasya lokasya, devagaṇa śreṣṭhaṁ) and tell him that he is Prajāpati among Vasus, eighth Rudra among Rudras, Pancama among Sādhyās (VI, 117. 7-8) and is the beginning, middle and end of everything (VI. 117.9). On hearing this Rāma says that he considers himself a man and son of Daśaratha and would like to be told by them as who he actually is and from where has he come. Then Brahmā tells him that he is god (Nārāyaṇa Cakrayudha-prabhu, Varāha, Aksharabrahma) and is Khadgadhr̥g Vishṇu and Kṛṣṇa, Upendra and Madhusūdana, Padmanābha, Trilokadhāryan (VI. 117. 13-23). So by this interpolation the author other than Vālmīki clearly announces that Rāma is Vishṇu in human form. The interpolations appear to have been made after the Bhagvadgītā was made a part of the Mbh, as is clear from the analogy of Vs. 7-8-9 of the Rāmāyaṇa with Bhagavatgītā X adhyāya, verses 20-32. It is interesting to note that in the 117 Sarga of the Yuddhakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma is told that he is Kṛṣṇa, is Madhusūdana. When in the Bhagavadgītā Kṛṣṇa says that he is the warrior Rāma it is quite reasonable to assume from this that claim of deification of Rāma as Vishṇu in human form was made by Rāmabhaktas in imitation of the development of the Kṛṣṇa cult. This interpolation in the Rāmāyaṇa appears to be even later than the Rāmopakhyāna as in the latter while Rāma speaks harshly to Sītā, there is no Agniparikshā. Rāma accepts Sītā when the gods and his father Daśaratha vouchsafe of Sītā's purity. The same gods-Indra Agni, Yama, Varuna, Vāyu, Mahādeva, Kubera and Brahma arrive as in the Rāmāyaṇa before Rāma and testify to Sītā's chastity without Agniparikshā. But in the Rāmāyaṇa the gods appear after Sītā throws herself in the fire appealing to Agni to declare her purity. And that this Agniparikshā story is an interpolation is proved to the hilt by the last verse in the 117 Sarga of Yuddha Kāṇḍa when it is said that this stotra is itihāsa-purātana (ancient history). As Vālmīki claimed to be contemporary of Rāma, his story could not have been said to be ancient history by Vālmīki himself<sup>31</sup>. The inner contradiction gives



away the fact of later interpolation. He will not claim his own verse to be ārsha.

The antiquity of the Rāmāyaṇa is proved by the reference to Sitā's golden image used by Rāma in his sacrifices in the Karmapradīpa which is an appendix to Gobhilasūtra of the Sāmaveda. The work Karmapradīpa is believed to be the work of Katyayana who came after Pāṇini, is said to be his disciple and may have lived in the 4th Century B.C. Here Rāma is regarded as a man<sup>32</sup>.

So taking into account the evidence of the Mahābhārata, Pāṇini, Karmapradīpa and Buddhist Jātakas it is clear that the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki was composed not later than 5th-4th Century B.C., and belief in deification of Rāma is as old as 3rd-2nd Century B.C.

After showing the antiquity of Rāma's story and his early deification we now turn to archaeological evidence. Being one of the few having the first hand experience of both, as a historian and a field archaeologist for many decades, I would like to point out the inadequacy of archaeology as the only or even a dominant source for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history. Our knowledge about our past will be very poor if we ignore archaeology and it will be still much poorer if we depend on archaeology alone, as our most important source. While archaeology is a young and growing science in India, other sources such as epigraphy, numismatic and literary evidences have, for much longer time, been analysed and collated to build a frame-work of ancient Indian History, and therefore, archaeology as a tool is useful as confirmatory evidence mainly.

Archaeology, as a positive science gives us information about materials life of periods as unfolded by different stratas exposed by the spade. But, it would be sheer foolhardiness to conclude from it that what it has not exposed, never existed. Momentous archaeological discoveries are like Archemedies' 'Eureka' i.e. chance discoveries, and the same Chance Goddess may bestow luck to other archaeologists, disclosing from within the womb of the mother earth, such knowledge missed by previous, may be well-versed archaeologists. So it is always safe and wise to qualify the results of archaeological discoveries as 'to-date' or 'so far'. This self-evident, but often ignored, virtue of caution can be demonstrated. When we were excavating Chirand, luxuriant, chalcolithic ceramic culture was noticed on the earliest exposed levels, in many trenches down to the virgin soil. But in one of the trenches was discovered evidence of earlier neolithic culture, a pleasant

surprise to the excavator who was almost going to close the excavation, then underway for many years. What a loss to knowledge it would have been! Again if R.D. Bannerji and Marshal had been excavating "Mohenjadaro" today, under the present-day financial constraints and expensive archaeological technique of vertical digging, it was quite likely that they would have stopped the digging after laying bare the so-called coolie-quarters with elements of "Harappan" pottery and building activities; but then we would have missed the massive Harappan architecture and its special monuments for which the civilisation is most famous. The point is that in view of lack of extensive horizontal excavations of all stratas of a site, its full history is not possible to be grasped. Moreover, in the context of getting archaeological proof of our pre-historic past and personalities one should ask the question what sort of evidence will prove the historicity or non-historicity of the Epic or Vedic characters. As no evidence of writing before Aśoka (leaving out the Harappan script) has been available so far, no contemporary written material for the time of "Rāma" or "Kṛṣṇa" should be expected. The cultural sequence exposed in the various stratas could give only relative chronology but no absolute chronology. Even when 'C<sup>14</sup>' (carbon-14 archaeological test) dates would give some approximate bracket in absolute dates to the excavated culture, as there is no certainty or an unanimity about the exact period of time when "Rāma" or "Kṛṣṇa" flourished, how far one would be right in assigning one or the other set of "dated culture" unearthed in trenches as the culture of the time of "Rāma" or "Kṛṣṇa". This would be arguing from the unknown to the unknown, particularly when we are not sure whether culture depicted in the "Rāmāyaṇa" or the "Mahābhārata" works, which were definitely much later composed than the time of their heroes, contained elements of culture, more of their authors' times than of their pre-historic heroes. Thus the inadequacy of archaeological evidence and literary works as well for the period of "Rāma" or "Kṛṣṇa" particularly, material culture-architecture, should be self-evident. In view of the fact that no evidence of use of stone as building material before Aśoka or of burnt brick before the "Buddha" is available, the literary references to the luxurious buildings described in the 'Epics' and the 'Purāṇas' will never be confirmed by archaeology. Wood-construction must have perished under the bowels of earth down the millennia. The difficulty of reconciling the literary evidence and the archaeological evidence

“to-date” is thus obvious. The easiest way chosen by many is to reject wholesale the testimony of the ancient literature—the ‘Epics’ and the ‘Purāṇas’ for the period before the time of the Buddha. But this selective rejection is not beyond reproach. The same scholars who reject the Puranic dynastic lists before the Buddhist period, have used the same Purāṇas for the political and dynastic history of the Buddhist period. But, it is hardly fair then, giving allowances for emendation, glosses, and imagination, to reject the entire pre-Buddha dynastic lists as sheer figment of imagination, particularly when some kings, priests and people mentioned in the Vedic literature are mentioned in the two Epics and the Purāṇas.

Now, according to Pargiter’s reconstruction of the dynastic synchronisms of the Purāṇas, Rāma-Dāśarathi is about thirty generations or so, earlier than Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata. According to archaeological evidence to date Ayodhyā, the traditional home city of Rāma is not earlier than 8th Century B. C. While in Hastināpur and other Mahābhārata sites, PGW culture equated with the Mahābhārata pottery by Mr. B. B. Lal, is dated between 1100-800 B. C., and the Mahābhārata war was fought according to Lal in 836 B. C., according to Pargiter in 950 B. C. So, Rāma who was not a founder of Ayodhyā must have come much after 800 B. C. and should be nearer to the Buddha than Kṛṣṇa especially when many archaeologists place PGW later than Lal has put it. But, the excavator of Dwārkā and the pioneer of marine archaeology, Mr. S. R. Rao has found evidence of the submerged city of Dwārkā of Kṛṣṇa, which he would place not later than 1500 B. C. Dwārkā was later than Hastināpura which was founded by Kuru, while the former was founded by Kṛṣṇa himself. All this discussion just point to the insufficiency of the available archaeological data and lack of consensus among archaeologists about the period of the Epic—Purāṇic heroes. would it therefore, be wise today to fix the chronology, and even relative chronology of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa with any degree of certainty? More extensive digging may shed some more light on the vexed problem. It would be sheer bravado, therefore, on this evidence to deny the historicity of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa so richly portrayed in ancient historical accounts. The archaeological excavations do not even confirm the history of Ayodhyā in the post-N. B. P. or post-Mauryan period. The ŚUNGA, Kushāṇa and Gupta stratas have been rather poor, but epigraphy, coins and literature speak of flourishing Ayodhyā in these and earlier periods. Archaeology has

not revealed any thing of the *prākārs*, *pratolis*, *devapatha* referred to by Patañjali in the *Mahābhāshya*. Neither we have found in the excavation evidence of Buddha's and Ādinātha's association with Ayodhyā. Should we reject the Buddhist and Jaina evidence as imaginary as the Epics? We should particularly remember that the Jaina tradition of the line of Tirthaṅkaras is consistent and quite reasonably reliable. 1st, 2nd, 4th and 14th Tirthaṅkaras were born in Ayodhyā also known as Vinīta and belonged to the Ikshavāku dynasty of Ayodhyā, which certainly antedated 8th Century B. C. which should be the period of 22nd Tirthaṅkara, Pārsvanathe.<sup>33</sup> Dhanadeva's inscription, the coins of Mitra-kings of Ayodhyā, and the fortification of Ayodhyā, its capital city—its architecture of the time of Gupta kings, Vikramāditya and Bālāditya of the 5th–6th centuries A. D., are all little known to archaeology of Ayodhyā. No evidence of the Skandhavara of Ayodhyā is depicted in the Gaya inscription has been unearthed. Would we be justified to reject the epigraphic, numismatic and literary evidence? And where are the Saṅghārāmas described by Hsuan Tsang and associated with Vasubandhu and Asaṅga? It is not only the "Epic Ayodhyā" but even "Gupta Ayodhyā" that is uncorroborated from archaeology. But, both traditions and other historical sources vouchsafe for an active and vibrant Ayodhyā in the post-Mauryan period. It was known as a land of Ikshavākus and the city of Rāma (Rāmapurī) in Vividha Tīrtha Kalpa, and in the Purāṇas it heads the list of salvation-giving cities, In the Skanda Purāṇa, the ghats of Ayodhyā for pilgrims' bath are referred to. The Ayodhyā Mahātmya appended to the Skanda Purāṇa should be dated not later than 9th Century A. D. It refers to "Śrī Rāmajanmabhūmi" and other sacred places. According to VIKARMĀNKADEVA *charita*, Bilhana came to Ayodhyā on pilgrimage. Therefore, to think of Ayodhyā as an important place for Hindus only from the 14th Century onwards is all hogwash. Sculptural representations of Rāmāyaṇa scenes in temples have been found in different parts of India from the 3rd Century onward. Sri Kṛṣhnadeva has drawn our attention to scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa sculptured at the Ikshavāku Art Centre of Nāgārjunikoṇḍā in Andhra Pradesh dated in the 3rd Century A. D. The sculptured stucco panels at Aphaṣṭ in Bihar, depicting as many as eight scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa were introduced to the scholarly world by the present author, and they are dated in the 7th Century A. D. The depiction of redemption of Ahalyā by Rāma is vividly depicted in the

Gupta temple at Deogaḍha dated in 5th Century A. D. Similar scene depicted on a terracotta and belonging to the Gupta period has been found at Śrāvastī. In a stone niche from Nachna (4th-5th Century A. D.) earlier than Deogaḍha example, Śūrpanakhā's episode has been beautifully engraved. From Nachāra Khedā in Haryana a number of terracotta panels were discovered. These depict scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa, and belong to the 5th-6th Century A. D. These are genuine panels according to Dr. R. C. Agarwala, (on personal information) and are housed in the Gurukul Museum, Jhajjara in the district of Hissar.

That Rāma's image for worship is proved by the canon on iconometry of Rāma in Varāhamihira's Bṛhatsaṃhitā (Ch. 57. V. 30), dated in the 6th Century A. D.. So Rāma's cult was well established from 2nd Century B. C. to 12th Century A. D. throughout India, and Rāma's temple from the time of Prabhavati Gupta, the Vākāṭaka Queen in 5th Century. Numerous Rāmāyaṇa scenes on Angkorwat (Vishṇu temple) in Cambodia are testimony to the spread of Rāmāyaṇa's fame in the S. E. Asia. Ramayanic scenes at Ellora (8th Century) are well-known. Sculptures representing Rāmāyaṇa scenes are found in Karnatak. The scene depicting Meghanāda dragging Hanumān to Rāvaṇa's Court was first noticed at Nachna (M. P.), and is found in the Varahī temple at Chaurāsī (Dist. Puri, Orissa) of the 10th Century A. D. From the Chinese sources it has been shown that the Rāmāyaṇa was a well-known and popular story in the time of Vasubandhu. The public recitation of the Rāmāyaṇa is referred to in the manuscript of Kalpa-nāmaṇḍītikā of the 2nd Century A. D. found in the Central Asia. The Paumacarita of Vimalasūri dated in the 1st Century A. D. is a recast of the Rāmāyaṇa story with important changes to glorify Janism. Some place it in 3rd-4th century A. D. The Khoṭānese and the Tibetan version of the Rāmāyaṇa further prove the antiquity and widespread of the Epic story. A distinguished scholar (B. N. Puri) held that on the basis of available evidence the Rāmāyaṇa was known in Central Asia from the 2nd Century A. D. may be still earlier, as Aśvaghosha who wrote Buddhacarita was indebted to Vālmīki and is said to have lived in Ayodhyā. The recitation of the Rāmāyaṇa is referred to in a Kambuja inscription of the 6th Century A. D. Recitation of only secret texts is reasonable. The above very brief summary of Rāma in art and literature makes it clear that Rāma was held in great reverence not only in almost all parts of India but also in South-East Asia, and Central Asia. The worship or deification of Rāma

is also as ancient. Even if we exclude the evidence of the Bālakāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, (showing Rāma to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu) believed to be no part of the original Rāmāyaṇa of Valmiki, they were interpolated long before the Mahābhārata was completed, they are certainly not as late as Rāmānanda or Kabira. Kālidāsa in the Raghuvamśa (4th-5th Century A. D.) refers to Rāma as a divine figure. Rāma could be, therefore, worshipped as Viṣṇu in caturbhujā form. The Padmasaṁhitā, a Vaiṣṇava text dating before 1000 A. D. refers to Rāma as caturbhujā installed in the garbhagṛha. In the ancient Rājiva-locana temple at Rajim in Raipur district of the Madhya Pradesh, built in the 12th century A. D., known and worshipped as Rāma the image is of Caturbhujā Viṣṇu. Ambamata temple at Osion near Jodhpur (11th Century) contains images of Rāma, Janakī, and Hanuman. That the two, Viṣṇu and Rāma were believed to be the same, is fully expressed in an inscription dated 467 A. D. on an image as of Citrakūṭaswāmi-Anantaśayī. An inscription found in Ayodhyā refers to visit of Candradeva Gahadval King in 1093 on a pilgrimage; he bathed in the Sarayū and performed worship of Vāsudeva. So what can be made of the thesis about Ayodhyā as a centre of Hindu pilgrimage in the medieval period !

However, while archaeology has so far failed to prove or disprove the hoary antiquity of Ayodhyā going back to 2nd millennium B. C., or that of the historicity of Rāma, it has certainly clearly indicated that the Babri Masjid stands on the ruins of a pre-Islamic structure of the 10th-11th Centuries. That brick-pillar bases placed at uniform distances going into section of the excavated trenches are extending into the Babri Masjid complex cannot be doubted. Fourteen pillars used in the mosque are standing testimony to the fact that parts of a damaged Hindu structure have been appropriated in the construction of the mosque. The bases of these pillars are just of the diameter which would fit in the depressions in the excavated pillar-bases which are just that large as to hold the pillars tightly. Excavations within the mosque-compound and under the floor of the mosque will certainly show the extension of the walls and pillar-bases. The pillars with carvings of human figures and symbols clearly demonstrate these to belong to early medieval Hindu architecture. It is hardly Islamic to fashion such pillars with human figures specially for a mosque. It is now contended by some leading motivated historians that the structure was a Buddhist one, may be one of which Hsuan Tsang referred to in his account of

Ayodhyā. But, the distinguished historians failed to mention rather may be as a deliberate move to spread disinformation that the Chinese pilgrim has mentioned no less than 10 'deva' temples, as well which could be Brahmanical only. What is wrong to ascribe one of these Brahmanical temple lying ruined under the Masjid as Rāma's temple. And should we forgive the invader Babar for destroying the Buddhist structure! One is reminded of Goldsmith's famous school-teacher who went on arguing though vanguished still. However, the crucial point in the archaeological evidence has been missed. The structure belongs to 10th-11th centuries A. D. So it was constructed more than a couple of hundred years after the Chinese pilgrim. The chances of the structure being Buddhist are dim. We all know that as a result of Śāṅkarācārya's digvijaya and other causes Buddhism suffered mortal injuries and soon disappeared from the land of its birth. We know that under the patronage of the Buddhist Pāla kings, it survived longer in Bihar and Bengal *only*. One would like to know if any Buddhist monuments of substantial dimensions were erected in 10th century and later, *West of Banaras*. It is, therefore, a valid point to hold that Babri Masjid stands on the destroyed Hindu temple of the Pratihāra or Gāhaḍavāla times, who were all Hindus by faith. We are not aware of any ruling dynasty of 9th-10th-11th Centuries in this part of the country claiming to be Buddhist by faith and it is well established that Buddhism largely flourished on royal munificance and traders' bounty which were not available in the post-Gupta period. The details of the so-called Śālabhajñjikā figure found in the Babari Masjid have not been given. But, granting the presence of the motif, it is hardly fair to date the ruined structure, whose part were appropriated in the masjid, on this ground alone as Buddhist. It has been well-argued and documented elsewhere by Dr. U. N. Rai (Salibhañrika) that in the post-Gupta period the motif was adapted by Hindu sculptors and Śālabhajñjikā model was modified to represent Lakshmī, Gaṅgā and Yamunā. In the Harshacarita Lakshmī has been compared to a Śālbhanjñjikā adorning the arm of a great hero like a victory-stand. From the same book it has been inferred that columns engraved with Śālbhanjñjikā motifs were found in royal apartment. The word Śālbhanjñjikā occurs in Āryasaptasati of Govardhanacārya, a court-poet of Lakshamaṇsena (12th Century A. D.), a Hindu by faith. The Allahabad Museum houses many Śālabhanjñjikā figures in dancing poses under mango tree. They are representatives of Jamsat-art. So the motif was not exclusively

Buddhist in the post-Gupta period. It is really strange that while the obvious conclusion is that the structure was Hindu, the obduracy to ignore presence of Hindu religion and art in ancient Ayodhyā, has made a particular brand of historians look for a very unlikely explanation, instead of the obvious one. It has been reported by the excavator that glazed Muslim pottery was found on the destruction level of the Hindu structure. This proves that the mosque was built immediately after the destruction of the Hindu structure—a temple. Archaeologically, there is no gap between the two events.

There should be no valid reason now to hold that the structure over which Babari Masjid stands was not Hindu in character. Then who destroyed the temple? Mir Baqi's inscription in the mosque clearly states that it was built at the *command* of Babar in 1528. Babar believed in and led jihad against Hindu rivals, and he did smash Jaina idols and mutilated many Jain temples in 1528 such as in Urwah Valley near Gwalior. In 1527 during his war against Rāṇāsaṅgā taken as jihad against non-muslims, Babar took the title of *Ghazi*, as he himself claims in the Babarnama. Before the battle, on the eve of his jihad against the Rāṇā, he broke his drinking cups into pieces in a manner, in which if Allah wills, the idols of the idolators will be smashed. So where remains the case that Babar, a tolerant ruler, could not be a party to destruction of the Hindu temple at Ayodhyā? He certainly demolished many Hindu temples at Chanderi when he occupied it and Babar may be to win zeal and support of Muslims, called for a Jihad covering a dar-ul-harb into dar-ul-Islam. There is a persistent evidence coming from Muslim sources since 1858 that the controversial site was known as Janmabhūmi site on the basis of earlier medieval sources, certainly not on British *dictate*.

In our opinion the Hindus were never reconciled to the lose of this sacred place and it may be due to opposition that the mosque was not completed, it is without minarets and a pond for ablution (*wazu*) of namazi's in the mosque. We have no evidence that it was very much in use as a grand mosque by the faithful down the centuries. It was probably in recognition of the strength of the Hindu opposition (in vast majority in the city) and in defence to his policy of toleration that according to a local tradition, Akbar is said to have allowed the building of the Chabutara on which Hindu idols were installed for worship, and the adjacent spot known as Sītā-Kī-Rasoī was called Sītāpāka. The Muslim rulers dared not destroy the sacred site of



Kaushlyā-Kī-Rasoī as well, which was not replaced by any Muslim architecture. But Hindu sense of grief and loss continued and often violent clashes over the issue of Rāma Chabutarā or the Janmabhūmi are said to have continued, certainly in the time of Nawabs of Oudh and caused considerable loss of life. Muhammad Asgar Khatil and Muazzin Babri Maszid had in 1858 petitioned for the demolition of the Rāmchabutarā built in the compound of Maszid-i-Janmasthan by the Vairagis earlier in the time of Wazid Ali Shah Chabutara built in Akbar's time was destroyed in the time of Aurangzeb who destroyed other temples in Ayodhya after much loss of life, and that the Hindus were performing worship there for hundreds of years. So as in the Janmasthan area worship was being carried on for hundreds of years, it is clear that this could happen only if the site had any ancient temple over it earlier. One Mirza Zan in his work Hadiqah-i-Shuhada, an eyewitness of 1855 jihad for recapture of Hanumangarhi from the vairagis clearly mentions that the Muslims cleaned up Faizabad and Avadh too from the fifth of reprobation (infidelity) because it was a great centre of worship and capital of Rāma's father, where there stood the great temple (of Ramajanmasthan), there they built a big mosque. Then another eyewitness of the 1855 struggle was Shaikh Azamat Ali Kakorawi Nami (1811-1893), who writes that the Babri mosque was built up in 923 under the patronage of Sayyid Mian Ashiqan in the Janmasthan temple (butkhane janmasthan mein). His work Mrragqah-i-Khurawi (Tarikhe Awadh) has a copy in Tagore Library, Lucknow and was published as late as in 1987. Dr. Kakorawi has appended in the book an excerpt from the Fasanah-i-Ibrat by Mirza Rajab Ali Beg Surur (1787-1867) which states that during the regime of Babar, a great mosque was built near the Sītā-Kī-Rasoī. Long before the British occupied Ayodhyā, the European traveller Tieffenthaler who visited the place in 1767, wrote about the Hindu worship being regularly conducted in the Maszid compound and mentions the tradition of the Janmabhūmi temple having been destroyed to make way for the existing mosque. Even earlier, the travelaques of Willam Finch (1608, copy in B. H. U. Library. I have not checked it) refers to the destruction of temple of Janmasthan and other temples of Rāmkoṭ area to build the Babri mosque. It is sheer blindfoldness, therefore, to assert that the dispute was concocted by the British for divide and rule. One cannot expect the great muslim divine and scholar Maulana Abdul Hai to be writing under British inspiration. He categorically writes that the

Babari Maszid was constructed by Babar on the site of birth place of Sri Ramcandraji.

So there should be no doubt in any reasonable unprejudiced mind that the Babari Maszid was built after destroying a Hindu temple. It is sheer obstinacy (Zid for Maszid) to argue that Mir Baqi got the Hindu pillars from a few kilometers away to instal in the mosque. why was he so much in love with the pillars? It is obvious that he used the pillars which he found after destruction of the temple on the site and similar evidence has been found in Kutubaminar complex. And it is beyond dispute that for hundreds of years if not thousands, the Hindus have believed this site to be birth place of their divine Lord Rāma. You cannot whisk away such long held pious belief of millions with even tons of weighty polemics.

Therefore, there is no reason to doubt the testimony of Martin (1838, Eastern India, Vol. II), Surgeon-General Edward Balfour (Encyclopaedia of India, 1858), Oudh-Gazetteer (1877) and Alexander Cunningham (1862) that Babri Maszid, known in Muslim medieval documents as Maszid-i-Janamsthan, was built on the destruction of a temple in Ramjanamsthan. There was no reason for the conspiracy of the British rulers to divide Muslims and Hindus by creating this phantom of controversy, as the controversy rather confrontation over it between the two communities had begun in the Mughal period and continued site then. The daughter of Aurangzeb also is aware of the destruction of the temple and construction of Maszid over it and is insistent that the Hindus attempt to regain this as well as Mathura and Kashi should be resisted. The Hindus had as early as 1886 petitioned to the government (Mahanta Raghubar Das was the petitioner) to give permission to build a temple on the Rāma Chabutarā outside the mosque, and the District Judge Col. F. E. A. Chamuer while rejecting the petition was constrained to remark—"It is most unfortunate that a maszid should have been built on the land specially held sacred by the Hindus, but as that event occurred 356 years ago it is too late now to remedy the grievance." And the official position remained that while the controversy continued, riots broke out. In the Gory communal riot of 1934, much damage was done to the mosque and some Muslims defending the mosque were killed. The maszid was rebuilt by the government by 1936. But it remained not much in use. Certainly no prayers by Muslims on festival days have been noted since 1936, though some Muslims may have continued to offer namaz in the

mosque. It was not functioning as a community mosque or mass prayer ground.

The Hindus desire to convert the mosque into a temple on the site seems to have been powerfully stirred by the decision of government of India headed by, the king among secularists, Jawahar Lal Nehru to rebuild the Temple of Somnath on the earlier site. It would have been reasonable and wise to take a similar decision of Rāmājanmabhūmi site also, but for reasons unknown added with the serious illness and consequent premature death of Sardar Patel, no attention was given to the problem, which was sought to rest under the carpet. But the Vairagis of Ayodhyā were not letting the matter sleep, and decided to act. Their decision was not a secretive conspiracy. They had organised Rāmāyaṇapāṭha and Rāmdhun Kīrtan all round the area. Even some clashes occurred and blood was shed and many of them entered inside the mosque and installed Hindu images in the sanctum-Sanctorium of the mosque after proper invocation and installation ceremony (pranapratisthā) on 23rd Dec. 1949 and thus the mosque was converted into a Hindu place of worship, and the situation is as it was in Dec. 1949.

It passes one's comprehension as to what was the government of U. P. led by Govindaballabha Pant and the government of India led by Pandit Nehru doing to nip the trouble in bud? With all the intelligence net under them, with police thana in Ayodhya and Executive officers in Faizabad they could not have been unaware of what was happening and what was to happen. But in their sublime wisdom they just waited, and on 23rd Dec. Vairagis entered the mosque and set up images of Rāma and other Hindu deities after proper invocation (pranapratistha) ceremony. Lord Rāma became the juridical authority and the mosque was converted into a temple where Hindus worshipped the deity. It is interesting to see that no violent nor any all provincial what to say of all-India agitation is known to have been organised by the aggrieved community. The oral F. I. R. against forcible possession of the masjid was not made by any Muslim but the Hindu constable Mata Prasad to the effect that the masjid was desecrated and the Hindus had installed idols there. The Muslims were completely ousted from the Masjid on the early hours of 23rd Dec. 1949, and the situation exists as that till-today strengthened by the Civil Judge's order of, on the petition of Sri Gopal Singh Vishard, passed on 19th January, 1950, an interim injunction restraining the parties from removing the idols and

disturbing the Puja. The Civil Judge confirmed the injunction on 3rd March, 1951, and the Allahabad High Court dismissed the Muslims' appeal against the injunction on 26th April, 1955. In the meantime the city Magistrate by his order on 30th July, 1953 appointed a receiver to look after and manage the worship of the deity under the central dome of the masjid. The doors to the sanctum were locked, armed sentries were posted, and five Pandas by turn were allowed entry by rotation to carry on the worship and Ramadhun for the 24 hours, and Hindu worshippers received parshad and offered flowers through the grilled-window. The Muslims were not allowed entry into the masjid and its compound. Meanwhile many title suits were filed by the Hindus for transferring the masjid now temple to them. It is interesting that only a few days before the statutory limitation of 12 years was to expire, the U. P. Central Board of Waqfs and eight Sunni Muslim individuals filed a suit. Whether this suit is tenable in law or not is a debatable question but the significant thing to note is that nearly 12 years after being ousted Muslims claim the ownership of the Masjid property. Any way between 1949-1986, there are no reports of any violent clashes or even mass agitations by either party to preempt the court decision. The matter could have rested at that, one does not know for how long. But on Feb. 1, 1986 on the petition of a Hindu, Justice K. M. Pandey ordered the locks removed from the Mandir-Masjid gate. It appears that the government had some prior information of the impending judgement as precautionary measures like posting of para-military forces in Ayodhya were taken by the government. And now when the temple was freely open to the general Hindu public, a movement for the construction of Sri Rāma's temple on the site was natural, and the Viśva Hindu Parishad organised a nationwide movement to take bricks to the site, and in 1988 the government permitted the śilānyāsa ceremony on the site as well, which later on was allegedly found to be included in the disputed area. And what happened is too much present with us to discuss academically.

But as historians and academicians we have our duty not only to present facts in historical perspective but also to try our hands in smothering the fire, in extinguishing the fire tending to devour both the communities. The historical review of the dispute going back to hundreds of years as made above clearly shows that the mosque by Mir Baqi Khan was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple of the 10th-11th Century. It is also clear that this site for the Hindus has been one of

their holiest centres of pilgrimage for thousands of years as Mecca is to Muslims, Bethelham to the Christians and Jerusalem to the Jews. As against this, the Babri Maszid for the Muslims has not been a very popular place of worship for the large Muslim community. Actually there are no records of the medieval period indicating occasions when large congregations of Muslims offered prayer in the mosque on festival-days and even on Fridays. The absence of minaret made it impossible for the Muazzin to call loudly the Muslims to join in public worship in the mosque. Of course private worship may have continued down to 1934, or even before 23rd Dec., 1949. Neither the Sunni or the Shia Waqfs took adequate care for the maintenance of the mosque. Even Aurangzeb who destroyed the Ramachabutara and other temples of Ayodhya did not get minaret constructed for the mosque. There is no doubt that the mosque is not that important for the Muslim masses as the Ramjanmabhumi is for the Hindu masses. And the agitation for construction of the Ramajanmabhumi temple has undoubtedly gained support of the vast multitudes of Hindus who constitute the overwhelming majority in India.

Will it be, therefore, too much to solicit the Muslim leadership to concede the Hindu demand for Rāma Temple? It is crystal clear that for hundreds of years Rāma has permeated the Hindu psyche and Ayodhya and Ramajanmabhumi are ingrained in Hindu consciousness. I had written somewhere earlier that for Hindus Rāma's historicity and Ayodhyā's antiquity are not negotiable. The Muslims will be actually giving up nothing very important or even a popular mass-based place of worship. The Maszid was forcibly occupied by the Hindus in the time of Wazid Ali Shah Nawab of Oudh and in the compound the worship of Rāma and other deities continued with all fan fare and in spite of Muslim protests; the poet Nawab refused to interfere and recited the couplet—

हम इशक के बंदे है, मज़हब से नहीं वाकिफ ।

गर काबा हुआ तो क्या, बुतखाना हुआ तो क्या ॥

So before Oudh came under the British rule, the site had come under the possession of the Hindus who continued their worship of Hindu deities at the site of Ramajanmabhumi. When the British annexed Oudh and realised the inbuilt tension between the two communities at the Maszid-Ramajanmabhumi site with worship by both communities going on in the same compound, they divided the site into two; the inner courtyard of the maszid decided on a

compromise and was for Muslims, and in the outer courtyard within the same compound wall, was Hindu worship continued on Ramchabutara and Sita-Ki-Rasoi. And this was the situation which was altered in 1949, Dec. 23. So the Muslims at best enjoyed right over the mosque from 1858 to 1949, 23rd Dec, under British dispensation. The Hindus were never reconciled to the situation, as we have seen in 1934 riots the Hindus damaged the mosque severely and factually the Muslims by large abandoned the mosque.

It is only the successive governments of Independent India for their smaller and temporary ends which have blown the issue out of all proportions and fanned both the Hindu and Muslim communalism. With the tension at its peak today, the Muslims should show a gesture. After all the mosque, now converted into a Hindu place of worship for more than 4 decades now, could hardly in accordance with the shariat law be restored to its sacred character of a mosque for worship. So for them it is actually a deadly confrontation for *non-issue*. Their declaration to leave the site for the temple construction on which a large section of the Hindus have been galvanised to set their hearts upon, would have an electrifying effect, and the Hindus would never forget such a brotherly gesture. It could lead towards the fruition of the cherished dream of Hindu-Muslim Unity and cooperation in building up of a strong and united India. And such a gesture of bequeathing a religious site by one community to another community is not unknown to Indian history. And the most recent parallel is the surrendering of proprietary Hindu religious orders rights over the Bodh Gaya temple to the Buddhists and their Mahabodhi Society in 1953. We may solicit the similar constructive approach by the present government of India. And the Hindus in that eventuality should reciprocate the Muslims' gesture by assuring that no damage would be done to the structure of the mosque. It should not be beyond the Ken of modern architects to build a temple over an earlier structure without causing any damage to it. The Muslim community is also to be reasonably assured that their other mosques would not suffer the fate of masjid-i-Janamsthāna. Give and take in a plurastic society is the woof-and warp for building a composite nation.

- 
1. Itihasa Ka Rajnitik Durupayog-Pamphlet published by New Age Printing Press.
  2. R. S. Sharma, Communal History and Rāma's Ayodhyā. (People's Publishing House).

3. The Japanese scholar Daisaku Ikeda has well observed—"We may of course deny the validity of scriptures themselves, in which case since they are our only source we are reduced to silence." (Buddhism, the first Millennium by Daisaku Ikeda, Trans. by Buston Weston (1977), p. 14.
4. Vedic Index, Vol. II. Ṛgveda, X. 93. 94. Besides the 'mighty Rāma', (Asura Rāma), Dasaratha (R. V. I. 12(4), Ikshavāku RV X. 60 4; A. V. XIX 39.9. as kings are mentioned But Sita is an agricultural deity or daughter of Prajapati or a god, in the Vedic Literature.
5. Vishṇu Purāṇa (Wilson), p. 306.
6. Ibid., pp. 306-307.
7. Raghuvamśa, X. 53,86; XI. 86; XIII. 1
8. Ibid. 1, 4.
9. History of Sanskrit Literature, pp. XIIff.
10. Rev. Father Kamil Bulke-Rāmakathā (1950).
11. Ibid., p. 31.
12. G. S. Altekar-Studies in the Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa (Poona), pp. 97ff.
13. Ram. II, 12.15, 20, 21.
14. Ibid., pp. 104-125.
15. R. C. Majumdar, Age of Imperial Unity, p. 405
16. Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, p. 197
17. G. S. Altekar, op. cit., pp. 72 ff.
18. Ibid., pp. 87 ff.
19. Ibid., p. 92.
20. Si-Yu-Ki, Trans. by S. Beal (Pub. Sushil Gupta), Pt. II, pp. 163-164.
21. H. C. Raichaudhuri, Political History of Ancient India, p. 201.
22. Ram. VI. 84.Vs. 14-19; 85. 13-16. Na hantavyāḥ striyasceti yad bravishi plavaṅgama Pīdākaramamitranām yaccha kartavyamevatat Ram. VI. 81.28.
- 22a. अपि चार्यं पुरा गीतः श्लोको वाल्मीकिना भुवि ।  
न हन्तव्याः स्त्रियः इति यद् ब्रवीषि प्लवंगम ॥ Drona parvan, 143.85
23. G.S. Altekar, op. cit., p. 57.
24. Ibid., p. 60.
25. Rāmakathā, p. 42.
26. Ibid., p. 45.
27. Bhagvadgīta X. 20-31. Kṛṣṇa himself says that he is Vāsudeva among the Vṛṣṇis.
28. D.C. Sircar-Age of Imperial Unity (ed. R.C. Majumdar) p. 432.
29. Ibid.
30. G.S. Altekar, op. cit., pp. 190 ff.
31. Imāmārsharī stavam divyamitihāsam purātanam. VI. 117. p. 32. It is to be also realised that such an agniparikshā by Rāma in Lankā before the Vānaras and the Rākshas was unnecessary as they had never doubted the chastity of Sitā; moreover such a value-system as the fidelity of woman was not practised among the Vānaras and the Rākshasas, though it was a part of Hindu Value system, which Rāma was determined to uphold. But in Lankā where was the question of Janavādabhaya' (fear of public opinion) for Rāma? It could be in Ayodhyā, but no where there is any mention that the fact of Agniparikshā of Sitā at Lankā was told to the people of Ayodhyā. Only Rāma reminds Lakshmaṇa in private (Ram. VII. 45.7) of the agniparikshā of Sitā. Even in Lankā after the agniparikshā Rāma confesses that he knew of and believed in Sitā's fidelity all through

(Ram. VI. 118.15). Ananyahṛdayam Sītām maccitaparirakṣiṇīm, ahamapyava-gacchām, Maithilim Janakātmajāñī). Then where was the necessity of the agniparikṣhā in Laṅkā. It was absolutely irrelevant and uncalled for. There could be some justification for it in Ayodhyā on his return from Laṅkā. A great poet Vālmiki would not have committed this indiscretion of including the alleged event in his work. We are not here discussing Jain versions of Rāmāyaṇa story which are quite late for our studies here. Vimalasuri (3rd-4th century) and Guṇabhadra (9th century A.D.) are principal Jain stories about Rāma.

32. G.S. Altekar, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

33. Ṛshabha, the first Jaina Tirthankara is not only known to the Purāṇas as son of king Nābhi but also to the Vedic literature (Vedic Index I, p. 115.) as a king who performed Aśvamedha. The Mbh. knows Ṛshabha both as a king and ascetic, and the Rāmāyaṇa knows him as a king of Ayodhyā in whose time the city rose in eminence again. Mahābhārata refers to Ṛshābha-tīrtha in Ayodhyā. region. So Ṛshabha is a historical person and should have flourished long before 100 B. C.



## HISTORICITY OF ŚRĪ RĀMA

By

K. D. BAJPAI

The historicity of Rāma, his association with Ayodhyā and the impact of *Rāma-kathā* on the life and thought of the country have recently been much debated. The subject is being discussed in the country and abroad chiefly on the basis of literary and archaeological source-material.

The available sources indicate that the story of Rāma (*Rāmopākhyāna*) had gained some popularity during the later Vedic period. The kernel of the story highlighted the victory of righteousness over the evil forces. Rāma, the hero of the epic, was regarded as the embodiment of the ideals of the Vedic (Aryan) culture *par excellence*. He gained victory over Rāvaṇa, the evil force, who opposed the elements of *ṛta* (ethical order) and *satya* (truth) as enshrined in the Vedic culture.

To the sage Vālmīki is attributed the first rendering of the popular story of Rāma into simple *anuṣṭubha* Sanskrit verses. On the basis of the language and the literary form of the original kernel of the epic, it may be surmised that the first versification of the Rāmāyaṇa took place about c. 400 B. C. The lower limit of the extant epic can be assigned to c. 300 A. D., if not a little later. Looking to the unusual popularity of the Rāmāyaṇa, this long stretch of time cannot be regarded unreasonable. This also holds good in case of the other great epic, the Mahābhārata. The main episodes of both the epics were elaborated in course of time, bearing profuse poetic embellishments. This was but natural in the case of the two popular epics.

It is not possible to agree with the view that the Rāmāyaṇa is a myth. Had it been a myth, pure and simple, the story of Rāma could not have survived through the ages. It could not then have penetrated deep into the life of the masses throughout the country. Nor could it have made any lasting impact on the cultures of several South-East Asian countries outside India. Rāma's story can be called historical or semi-historical in the same sense as it is applicable to the stories of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, of Kṛṣṇa, of Mahāvīra or of Gautama Buddha. We do not question the historicity of Mahāvīra, Buddha,

Bimbisāra or Pāṇini. The existence of Rāma or Kṛiṣṇa in the proto-historic period cannot be denied on the ground that no inscriptions or coins of theirs or of their time have been discovered. All protohistory cannot be dubbed as unreliable mythology. Otherwise, the very name 'Proto-history' would become a misnomer. This criterion is not applicable to India alone but can also hold good in the case of other civilized countries of the past. The view, based on sufficient reliable evidence, that the time of the Bhārata-War was about 1400 B. C. and that Rāma flourished about 500 years before the Bhārata War can be regarded as plausible.

The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki, even in its extant enlarged form, contains sufficient reliable evidence pertaining to the geography of the long stretch of land between Ayodhyā on the river Sarayū in U. P. and Daṇḍakāraṇya, stretching through the present Chhattisgarh region of Madhya Pradesh. The geographical details of the Rāmāyaṇa, when studied along with those occurring in the works of Kālidāsa, Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Bhavabhūti, Rājaśekhara and others, coupled with the available archaeological evidence, lead us to the conclusion that Rāma, after leaving Chitrakūṭa (in the Bānda district of U. P.), took up the south-eastern direction to reach Daṇḍakāraṇya. In the present geographical context, Rāma on his onward journey from Chitrakūṭa passed through the districts of Panna, Satna, Shahdol, Ambikapur, Bilaspur, Raipur and Bastar. There after he proceeded towards Laṅka of Rāvana. He met several sages (Atri, Śarabhaṅga, Sutikṣṇa, Agastya, etc. on his way. Chitrakūṭa was the first major halt of Rāma. The second chief site of his sojourn was Panchavatī, on the river Godāvārī. In the present Madhya Pradesh he must have crossed the major rivers Sone and Mahānadī to reach the Bastar region. He did not cross the major river Narmadā. Several present geographical names and relics in the areas, mentioned above, furnish a clue to their association with the story of Rāma in one form or the other.

It is interesting to note that the portrayal in stone of Rāma's story is found, probably for the first time, at Nachna in the Panna district of Madhya Pradesh. Several artistic stone panels of the Gupta period, depicting Rāma's episodes of the forest and his association with the Vānaras led by Sugrīva, have been discovered at Nachna. It seems that a temple of Rāma was constructed at Nachna in the 5th c. A.D. Rama's earliest cult-image is likely to be traced out at Nachna or near about.

Another important centre, not far from Nachna, is Deogarh (district Lalitpur, U.P.) Several stone slabs, representing the story of Rāma, have been obtained at Deogarh. They are assignable to early 6th century A.D., a little later than the Nachna panels. These relics indicate that Rāma's story had become quite popular in Central India during the later Gupta period.

Besides Nachna and Deogarh, depiction on stone of several episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa have been discovered in Central India at Tripurī (distt. Jabalpur), Khajuraho, Kharod, Sibarīnārāyaṇa, Ratanpur, Palī and Jānjgīr. The last mentioned five sites are located in the Bilaspur district of Madhya Pradesh. At Sirpur in the Raipur district some scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa have been traced. From the Bhind district an interesting terracotta figure showing Sitā, seated under an Aśoka tree in a pensive mood, has been discovered. There is a similar stone piece in the Samath Museum, which P. Banerji identifies with Sitā. It may be noted that instead of portraying the early episodes of Rāma-kathā we find that the sculptors of the Madhya Pradesh region were mainly attracted towards depicting Rāma's life after his banishment to the forest. It is interesting to note that the early life of Rāma has been depicted in variegated forms in the art of south India.

A few other sites can be sited where the depiction of Rāma's popular story is discernible in plastic art. Mention may be made of Bhītargaon (district Kanpur), Śrāvastī (district Gonda, U.P.), Pravarapur (Vidarbha), Chausā and Apsad (Bihar), Pahārpur (Bengal) and Kirāḍū (Rajasthan). In the South Rāmāyaṇa scenes were popular at several sites. Mention may be made of Ellora, Paṭṭadakal, Halebid and Kumbhakonam. In almost all the schools of Indian painting numerous pictorial representations of the story of Rāma are known.

Rāma's story travelled to other countries, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Jāva, Sumātrā and Bālī through south-eastern Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The profuse carvings of scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa in the countries, mentioned above, eloquently prove the popularity of Rāma's story outside India. A comparative study of the themes, human ethnic features and also of the decorative patterns, found in the plastic art of the Chhattisgarh region, of the early medieval period with the contemporary art of South-East Asia would leave no doubt as to the impact of the Chhattisgarh region on the art of those distant lands.

Rāma took the south-eastern direction in the region of Madhya Pradesh to reach Daṇḍaka forest. He passed through the area of

Dakṣiṇa Kosala, the name having been given to the region south of the present Satna-Rewa districts. It may be mentioned here that Rāma's mother Kausalyā most probably belonged to this region. To distinguish it from the northern Kosala of the Ikṣvākus (with Ayodhyā as its capital), the southern region was called Daṣkiṇa Kosala. The route of Rāma was later on followed by Samudragupta in the 4th century A. D. in his south Indian campaign. Had Rāma passed through the south-western part of Madhya Pradesh, some tangible traces of his route would have been found and at least some early art-relics could have been preserved in that region. It taking the south-western route it was necessary for Rāma to cross the river Narmadā. But in the Rāmāyaṇa or in the other early sources, we do not find that Rāma had crossed the river Narmadā while proceeding to the south.

As regards the names 'Daṇḍaka' and 'Laṅkā', there is a strong basis to believe that these and several other geographical names originated from the local languages of the Śabarās who inhabited the Vindhyaṭavī and the region further south Daṇḍakāraṇya. The *āśramas* of sages like Vālmiki, Atri, Agastya and Śarabhaṅga, whose main objective was to propagate Āryan culture in the area of the *Niṣādas* and the *Śabarās*, were located in these forest areas.

Rāma in his wanderings reached the southern part of Daṇḍakāraṇya. There is another Chitrakūṭa in the Bastar district, on the banks of the river Indrāvati. It also claims association with Rāma. The ancient name of Chittaur in southern Rajasthan was also Chitrakūṭa.

From the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki we learn that several powerful chiefs of the *Niṣādas*, the *Śabarās*, the *Vānarās* and the *Ṛkṣas* (all human beings) became friendly with Rāma. They realised that they would be safe if they sided with Rāma against the *Rākṣas* as, whose leader Rāvaṇa was a terror to the tribal people of the area and who had later on become Rāma's enemy.

As regards Rāvaṇa and his Laṅkā, the great epic eloquently shows that Rāvaṇa was a very powerful monarch of the extensive Daṇḍaka area and the region to its south. He seems to have extended his sway in the north, right up to AmaraKaṇṭaka. The name 'AmaraKaṇṭaka' suggests that the place was like a thorn to the *Amaras* (*Devas*, or the followers of the Āryan culture). The name of Rāvaṇa's dynasty is given as *Sālakāṇṭaka* (more correctly 'Śālakāṇṭaka'). Due to several reasons, Rāvaṇa became antagonistic to the Vedic culture, which eulogised Indra, Agni and Viṣṇu as supreme gods. He, on the other hand, was a devotee of Mahādeva Śiva, the Lord of the extensive tribal regions.

From several accounts, found in the Epic, it can be gathered that the predecessors of Rāvaṇa had to bear humiliation inflicted on them by the rising Aryan power in Central India. Rāvaṇa having attained suzerainty in the Daṇḍaka region, challenged the alleged superiority of the Aryans. It was not possible for him to submit to any alien power whosoever it might be. Naturally, he came into conflict with Rāma, the Aryan prince of Ayodhya, who, after Agastya, had made his mission to extend his hegemony in the south.

The causes for clash between Rāma and Rāvaṇa and the eventual battle between the forces led by the two chiefs can be gleaned from the Rāmāyaṇa. The Śūrpaṅakhā-episode, the destruction of a large army of Rāvaṇa led by his trusted chivalrous commanders (Khara, Dūṣaṇa, etc.) and elopement of Sitā by Rāvaṇa were the obvious causes of the war. Rāvaṇa was vehemently opposed to the Āryans and their way of life, which was a rising menace to the Rākṣasa culture represented by Rāvaṇa. He had come to know about the power of Rāma, the great archer, who had established his reputation as a warrior and victor. But Rāvaṇa remained undaunted throughout. He failed to realise as to why a crown prince of Rāma's stature should have relinquished his rightful claim to the throne of the mighty kingdom of Ayodhyā simply on the sweet wish of a woman (Kaikeyī). In the Āraṇyakāṇḍa of Rāmāyaṇa (ch. 40, verses 4-5), Rāvaṇa despises Rāma and also his Āryan principle of statecraft. Rāvaṇa says that only a fool like Rāma could ignore the monarchy of Ayodhya. The decision taken by Rāma, in this respect, was in accordance with the moral code enjoined in the Āryan polity. It was in clear contradiction to the Rākṣasa way of life and the code of conduct followed by Rāvaṇa.

Laṅkā and Siṁhala (or Tāmraparṇī) are separately mentioned in several ancient texts. In the face of the available evidence, it does not seem feasible to identify Laṅkā of Rāvaṇa with Siṁhala or the present Śrī Laṅkā. In the history of Ceylon (Śrī Laṅka) no reliable references to Rāvaṇa or his exploits are traceable. No early relics, depicting Rāma's episodes or any achievements of Laṅkā's hero, Rāvaṇa, are known in the ancient plastic or pictorial art in the entire area of Śrī Laṅkā. On the basis of the source-material known to us, it can be said that the Laṅkā of Rāvaṇa was located somewhere in the borders of Bastar, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. With the spread of the Āryan culture to the south of the Vindhyan ranges, several geographical names travelled from the North to the South and South-East. They became current even

in Sindhala, Brahmadesā (Burma), Indo-china and Indonesia. The name Laṅkā seems to have been given to the Island of Sindhala sometime before the Gupta period, by which time the Āryan culture had spread almost throughout the Indian sub-continent.

With all his valour, Rāvaṇa was undoubtedly a human being. It seems that he had ten appellations, not ten heads. In ancient art-relics Rāvaṇa is usually represented as a human being and not a demon. Numerous images of Rāvaṇa in the *Rāvaṇānugraha* form are known in Madhya Pradesh and outside, wherein Rāvaṇa is usually shown in the human form with one head and two arms. The super-human attributes to Rāvaṇa were added to indicate that he was an extremely powerful person, who could even challenge the supremacy of Rāma, his Āryan adversary. It may be pointed out that not only Rāvaṇa but also Rāma and several other heroes of the Rāmāyaṇa, in course of time, came to be credited with super-natural powers.

## RĀMA AND HIS EARLY IMAGES

By

SHEO BAHADUR SINGH

Rāma, the great hero, the ideal *Purushottama*, the *par excellence* king, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, the destroyer of the wicked and the saviour of the meritorious is still most venerated among the Hindus. He is the truth-incarnate, the ideal ruler, obedient to parents, loving husband, affectionate brother and kind to down-trodden. He has all the good qualities of an ideal man and so loved most by the elite and masses. His popular stories spread far and wide in the country and beyond even upto the South-East Asia.

The earliest story of Rāma is originally recorded in the Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the first ornate poem composed in the third or more, probably in the fourth century B.C.<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, with additions of Books I and VII along with some passages in the other Books, it assumed its present form at the end of second century A.D. when Rāma was already defined as an incarnation of Viṣṇu<sup>2</sup>. The story of Rāma occurs further in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas*, such as *Brahma*, *Padma*, *Garuḍa*, *Nārada*, *Bhāgavata*, *Agni*, *Skanda* and *Vāyu*, the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*, *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and *Ānand Rāmāyaṇa* etc. Many famous Sanskrit poets, such as Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and Rājeśekhara have adopted the story for their poems and plays from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The story became so popular that the Buddhists and Jains retold the same in different versions with deep involvement. The most popular form of the Buddhist's *Rāmāyaṇa* is *Daśaratha Jātaka*, while the Jain forms of the story of Rāma, such as the *Paūma Chariya* of Vimal Sūri<sup>3</sup>, the *Padma Purāṇa* of Raviṣeṇa<sup>4</sup> and several others were composed.

Numerous versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are found in the principal languages of India, such as in Hindi (*Rāmacaritamānasa* by Tulasī-dāsa), Bengali (*Kṛttivāsa Rāmāyaṇa*), Kashmiri (*Kashmiri Rāmāyaṇa*), Marathi (*Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*), Gujarati (*Rāmāyaṇa Sāra*), Tamil (*Tamil Rāmāyaṇa* by Kambana), Telugu (*Dvipada Rāmāyaṇa*), and Kanarese (*Pampa Rāmāyaṇa*) etc. Thus, the story of Rāma has become very popular in India and outside since the hoary past.

Possibly the deification and worship of Rāma is earlier than his identification with Viṣṇu. But it is certain that Rāma was an incarnation of the God Vishṇu in the Gupta period. Kālidāsa describes in the *Raghuvamśa* that the God Vishṇu was born as Daśaratha's son for the destruction of Rāvaṇa<sup>5</sup>. The Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatīgupta, daughter of Chandragupta II was a worshipper of Bhagavat Rāmagiri-svāmin (Lord at Ramagiri, modern Ramtek, near Nagpur) who seems to be no other than Rāma, son of Daśaratha<sup>6</sup>. The suggestion is corroborated by the reference in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* to the footprints of Raghupati (Rāma Daśarathi) on the Ramagiri<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Rāma, as an incarnation of the God Vishṇu, was fervently worshipped during the Gupta period. The worship of Rāma is indicated by Varāhamihira in the sixth century A.D. who formulated rules for making images of Rāma<sup>8</sup>. His worship was also popular in the south India particularly amongst the Ālavara saints<sup>9</sup>.

Various iconographic texts were composed from the Gupta period onwards. Among them the *Bṛhatsamhitā*, the *Vishṇudharmottara*, the *Agni Purāṇa*, the *Vaikhānasāgama* and the *Rūpamaṇḍana* etc. have discussed the iconographical features of Rāma. These recordings are mainly based on the earlier actual images of Rāma found in the plastic art from the Gupta period onwards. The forms of early images were observed closely by these authors with meticulous details and, thereafter, recorded them in the later texts. The *Bṛhatsamhitā* states that the image of Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, should be 120 *aṅgulas* in measurement<sup>10</sup>. The *Vishṇudharmottara* records that Rāma should be shown with princely *lakṣhaṇas* along with Bharata, Lakshamaṇa and Satrugna<sup>11</sup>. The *Vaikhānasāgama* describes the image of Rāma as standing in *tribhaṅga* pose, wearing *Kirīṭamukuta* and ornaments. He should have two hands, holding *bāṇa* in the right and *dhanusa* in the left arms. Sītā, Lakshamaṇa and Hanumat should also be shown with him<sup>12</sup>. The *Agni Purāṇa* gives somewhat different version regarding the number of hands of the deity. It states that Rāma should be represented with four arms, carrying a bow, an arrow, a conch and a sword<sup>13</sup>. The *Rūpamaṇḍana* informs that the image of Rāma should be shown with two hands, carrying a bow and arrow and have black complexion<sup>14</sup>. Thus, most of the iconographic texts agree for Rāma's two hands carrying bow and an arrow except the *Agni Purāṇa* which, however, records four arms for Rāma with some other attributes.



The image of Rāma was sculptured for the first time in the Gupta period<sup>15</sup>. The reliefs representing this incarnation are located at Deogarh (Jhansi)<sup>16</sup>, Sringerapura (Allahabad), Varanasi and Chandpur (Jhansi) etc. Barring Chandpur frieze, other reliefs have the influence of the classical Sāranāth school of art with refined forms treated with plasticity, elegance and graceful contour. The figures present a balanced approach in their rhythmic movement, linearism and fine idioms. Rāma is occasionally shown with Sītā, Lakshamaṇa and Hanumat. He is frequently depicted with two hands and, rarely, with four arms.

The platform panels of the Daśavatāra temple at Deogarh represents Rāma showing his bust or the headless image. A statuette (5th-6th century A.D. Fig.1) represents the image of Rāma shooting an arrow by the right hand and carrying a bow in the left. The hand of the deity is broken. He wears tight dress, *dhoti*, and *Chhanavīra*, etc. on the trunk. He is shown in *ālīḍha* pose. Lakshamaṇa, similarly dressed, is stretching the string of his bow. Another Gupta image from the same place shows the bust of Rāma, usually dressed with *Jaṭāmukuta* and *yajñopavīta*, holding a bow in the left hand and arrow in the right. A Gupta frieze from Sringerpur (Allahabad Museum No. 261) depicts the figures of Rāma and Lakshamaṇa standing in *dvibhaṅga* pose under a tree with their usual dress. Both the figures carry a bow in the left hand resting with shoulder, while the right hand is held in the *abhaya* pose. A male figure is shown discoursing with Rāma. Hanumat is standing beside him with his right hand raised in the *abhaya* pose. The *abhaya* pose of Hanumat elevates his position to a deity where he guarantees protection to others. Thus, since the Gupta period he is deified as a saviour. An image (10th, 11th century A.D.) from Garhwa Fort, Allahabad represents two-armed Rāma standing in *dvibhaṅga* pose. He wears *vanamālā*, *chhanavīra* and has matted locks over the head. He has two arms, carrying bow and arrow. The incarnation of Rāma is also represented on the Daśavatāra panels along with the main deity Vishṇu,<sup>17</sup> particularly in the early medieval period. Most of the aforesaid images represent *vanavāsī* Rāma which suggests that this form gained more popularity among the artists and patrons.

A niche on the temple (10th, 11th century A.D., Fig.2) at Chandpur (Jhansi) is interesting as far as it shows Rāma with four hands, carrying a conch in the back left, a bow in the broken front left, hanging with the shoulder and an arrow in the back right hands, while the

front right hand is held in the *varada* pose. The deity is standing in the *Tribhaṅga* pose and wears a *kirīṭamukūṭa*, *hāra*, *Kaṅkaṇa*, *keyūra* and *yajnopavīta*. Below a female figure, probably Ahilyā, is seated on a stone slab with folded hands. The image almost tallies with the description of the *Agni Purāṇa* and possibly refers to Ahilyā *uddhāra* scene.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are found since the Gupta period. These are also found in the early and late medieval temple walls not only in India but also in Indo-China and Indonesia<sup>18</sup>. The Daśāvātāra Gupta temple at Deogarh represents reliefs on its platform depicting *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes, such as Chastisement of *Sūrpanakhā* by *Lakshmaṇa* and curbing of *Paraśurāma*'s pride by *Rāma*, etc.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, several other scenes, such as the reception of *Lakshmaṇa* by *Sugrīva*, *Hanumat* carrying *Sanjīvanī Būty*, garlanding of *Sugrīva* by *Lakshmaṇa*, combat of *Bāli* and *Sugrīva*, *Sugrīva* seated on a throne and *Sītā*, *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* in the hermitage of *Atri* etc. are found at Deogarh. A few more *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are found at Varanasi and Srīngverapur.

The panel showing reception of *Lakshmaṇa* by *Sugrīva* (c. 5th, 6th century A.D.) depicts the figure of *Sugrīva* being urged by his wife *Rūmā* and nephew *Aṅgada* to receive *Lakshmaṇa* with great honour. *Sugrīva* seated in *lalitāsana* wears a crown and holds an indistinct object. *Hanumat* is standing behind. Another Gupta frieze from the same place shows *Hanumat* carrying *Sanjīvanī būti*, flying with a hill supported by both the hands. A relief from the same place represents the scene of garlanding *Sugrīva* by *Lakshmaṇa* in the presence of *Rāma* (Fig. 3). *Lakshmaṇa* holds a garland by both the hands and is prepared to garland *Sugrīva* standing beside with a crown over his head. The frieze belongs to c. 5th, 6th century A.D. Another Gupta relief shows the combat of *Bāli* and *Sugrīva*. *Sugrīva* carries a mace and is ready to fight the combat in *ālīḍha* pose. *Hanumat* is also standing behind him with a mace in his hand. The figure of *Bāli* is broken. An image from the same place shows *Sugrīva* seated on a throne after defeating *Bāli*. He wears a crown, *hāra* and tight upper garments. He is seated in *lalitāsana* on a throne with a back pillow and holds a flower in his right hand. Behind him, his wife *Rūmā* and *Aṅgada* are standing (c. 6th century A.D.) Another panel from there, artistically executed in the plastic conception of c. 5th, 6th century A.D., (Fig. 4) represents *Sītā*, *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* in the hermitage of *Atri* and *Anusūyā*. *Rāma* is seated in *utkuṭikāsana*, while

Lakshamaṇa is standing in the *dvibhaṅga* pose. The ascetic Atri is seated cross-legged with a *yogapaṭṭa* around his legs. He holds a book in his left hand and wears matted locks, beaded necklace and *yajñopavīta*. Sītā is seated with her turned legs, supporting herself with the right hand. Anusūyā standing behind is adoring Sītā with flowers. A frieze from the same place shows Rāma and Lakshamaṇa at the hermitage of Sabarī<sup>20</sup>. (c. 6th century A.D.). The identification of Sabarī is doubtful.

A slab from Varanasi (Bharat Kala Bhawan No. 165) depicts the *Rāmāyaṇa* scene for the construction of the holy-bridge. It shows figures of Rāma, Lakshamaṇa, Sugrīva and Hanumat seated below, while on the lower relief several monkeys are erecting the bridge. This relief may be assigned to c. 5th century A.D. A Gupta panel from Srīngaverapura represents Rāma and Lakshamaṇa standing in *dvibhaṅga* pose with similar dress and *jaṭājūṭa*. Rāma keeps his right hand in the *abhaya* pose, while Lakshamaṇa has raised this hand upto the shoulder. Beside him, Sugrīva and Hanumat are standing in a discoursing mood with a dwarfish figure. These images are precursor of those found at Hazara Ramswami temple of Vijayanagara which are executed with great life and spirit<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the reliefs from Prambanam (Central Java) depicting *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes lucidly differ in themes<sup>22</sup>.

It is evident that the worship of Rāma became popular from the early centuries of the Christian era. His sculptural form appears in the early Gupta period. The various episodes of Rāma's life in the form of the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are also exquisitely treated in the plastic creation during this period. Since then the worship of the deity and the creation of images go hand in hand. Since the early medieval period a number of temples are erected in the honour of Lord Rāma throughout the country. His personality is so charming that he combines in him a large number of good qualities, as such he is elevated to an ideal position of *Purushottama*. He is still remembered as an ideal ruler for his *Rāma Rājya*. Even today, no god can vie in popularity with him.

1. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, pp. 500-517.

2. R.C. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 254.

3. The date of Vimal Sūrī is very controversial but, probably it may be in the end of third century A.D., Jacobi, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII, p. 467.

4. His date is fixed 678 A.D. on his own narration, *Padma Purāṇa*, Intro. p.1.

5. X, 73; XIII, 1.
6. *The Classical Age*, p. 422.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, LVIII, 30.
9. The Saint Kulaśekhara, the king of Kerala in the Malabar coast was a devotee of Rāma, *The Classical Age*, p. 422.
10. LVIII, 30.
11. III, 85, 62-63.
12. T.A.G. Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, I, I, pp. 189-92.
13. 49, 6.
14. III, 27.
15. S.B. Singh, *Brahmanical Icons in Northern India*, p. 84.
16. M.A.S.I., No. 70, pp. 16-18, Pl. XV, a,b; Pl. XVI, a,b and Pl. XVII, a-e.
17. Mathura, V.N. Srivastava, *Bulletin of Museums and Archaeology in U.P.* No. 2, pp. 56-57, Fig. 3.
18. J.N. Banerjca, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 421.
19. *Archaeological Survey Reports*, Vol. X, pp. 108-09, *JISOA*. Vol. XIV, p. 13.
20. *History of India and Indonesian Art*, pp. 204, fig., 167.
21. V.A. Smith, *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylone*, p. 230, Pl. XLVII.
22. J. Ph. Vogel, *The Relation between the Art of India and Java*, pp. 38 ff. Fig. VI, etc.

# THE EARLIEST KNOWN DEPICTION OF RĀVAṆA- ŚIRAḤKṚNTTANA IN INDIAN SCULPTURE

By

PRITHVI KUMAR AGRAWALA

The famous Gupta temple at Deogarh is one of such early monuments which show a remarkable combination of moderate architectural planning with rich sculptural wealth. Apart from some of the finest carvings of mature Gupta style (c. 450-500 A.D.), including its doorframe, huge *rathikā*-panels and other slabs which once studded on outer faces of its high plinth, afford a veritable documentation of Vaiṣṇava iconography (such as the Rāmāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa-līlā scenes), there are several architectural members and sculptural fragments recovered from the same temple complex which would demand closer scrutiny and discussion<sup>1</sup>.

Here we propose to identify and examine the iconographic theme of an unpublished architectural piece lying close to the plinth of the temple. It is strange how this well preserved enormous stone with detailed carvings escaped the attention of earlier scholars and finds no mention or treatment in the Archaeological Survey Memoir by Madho Swarup Vats, who has reproduced and discussed so zealously numerous discrete pieces from the temple ruins for their artistic and iconographic merit<sup>2</sup>.

The architectural slab (app. one metre long and a half metre high) under review shows a Caitya-window niche in the centre with a flanking design of similar half-windows one on each side, the side lunettes forming circular medallion-space in correspondence to the bifoliate ornament of the central niche. While the side medallion-like features are occupied by the figure of a boy or dwarf standing behind a column in vigilant attitude, in the oval area of the main niche we find an interesting mythical scene depicted with much precision of details by the artist. M.S. Vats has already published one similar architectural fragment illustrating one of the rarest figures of Narasiṃha<sup>3</sup>, described by J.N. Banerjea on the basis of the *Vaikhānasāgama* authority cited by Gopinatha Rao, under the name of Kevala Narasiṃha<sup>4</sup>. At least there are three more similar slabs with more or less identical architectonic planning showing significant representations of divinities

including a seated Kubera (?), a flying demigod, and a Viṣṇu type (fragmentary). It is a pity that these have not been published as yet and their exact location in the architecture of the temple has not been properly identified<sup>5</sup>. On stylistic considerations it is probably reasonable to concede that all of these sculptured slabs belong to the initial stages of the establishment at Deogarh and had their own relevance in the architectural and sculptural planning of the Gupta temple.

However, the central depiction in the beaded medallion (Fig. 1) of the presently treated sculpture has to show a curious epiphany of Śiva. It is a *liṅga*-like representation with an Ekamukha at the top but provided with a pair of hands below. We may describe it as showing the head and bust of the lord appearing above a high pedestal. But the presence of a garland of full-blown lotus flowers around the base of this depiction goes to indicate that the artist has here quite ingeniously combined the Śaivite Liṅga with the upper body of Śiva's emanation from the symbol when pleased at the occasion of outstanding devotion shown to him by his excellent votary of votaries, namely Rāvaṇa, who had presented as offerings his severed heads to propitiate the lord. The male figure standing to right can be well identified as that of the demon-king who is seen in a vigorous attitude of holding his tenth head at its locks by the upraised left hand while ready to sacrifice it with the sword waved by his right hand. There in the foreground before the Liṅga-altar are shown nine severed heads of Rāvaṇa arranged in two rows, five in the lower and four in the upper pile, some of their details being damaged in the sculpture now preserved. The standing figure of a male to the left carries a staff in his right hand while the left is placed near the thigh. This attendant may be presumably identified to be Śiva's lieutenant Nandin who accompanies his lord in such depictions as a silent witness to the legendary drama going on.

The head of Śiva is characterised by a high pile of matted locks, marked by a crescent, and decked with a long lotus-garland encircling it as a halo and indicating perhaps an earlier offering made by the demon devotee during his long-drawn-out penances and worship propitiating the god. His vertical eye is shown on the forehead. He wears a discoidal ear-plaque and a beaded torque. The entire depiction of Śiva's epiphany was conceived in full frontal view which enabled the artist in delineating the divine face engrossed in tranquil

meditation, well defined in its half-closed introvert eyes and gracefully dignified smile. Indeed, the present specimen can be well compared in its eminent expression and spiritual import with the well-known Ekamukhī Śiva-liṅgas from Khoh and Nachna Kuthara, perhaps the most glorious creations of Śaiva sculpture during the fifth century when the Gupta art was at its peak<sup>6</sup>.

Of specific interest further are the two hands of Śiva displaying some significant attributes. The posture of his right hand may presumably be described to represent the classical *hasta-mudrā* stated under the name of *Sūcī mukha* in Bharata's *Nāṭyśāstra* and enjoined to be used for the purpose of expressing approbation (*sābhuvāda*) of an act, for example by saying something like "Well done", "Oh, wonderful"<sup>7</sup>. In Śiva's left hand we find a peculiar object shown as held on its open palm of which an exact description and identification at present seems to be rather problematic. It presumably represents some token or symbol which the propitiated lord is to gift to his devout votary. It shows an elliptical base from which rises a long slender flame-like emblem. It is remarkable that the same thing has been carved by the artist again in prominent proportions above the entire depiction as an independent sign placed in the top angle of the Caitya-window arch. It can not easily be interpreted to show a Liṅga shape, neither we may be justified in describing it as a lighted wick of lamp in want of any substantiating literary evidence.

Besides other minor details, the presence of a pair of symbols on either side at the upper level of the central medallion should be remarked. Here we see the signs of a crescent-moon and a solar disc within its horns, symbolising presumably Candra and Sūrya, the occurrence of which in early Śaiva iconography has been eminently studied by competent authorities<sup>8</sup>.

This is perhaps the earliest depiction hitherto known of the mythical legend of *Rāvaṇa—śiraḥkṛnttana* in Indian art. Another specimen of this theme identified so far in early sculptures is at Ellora, in the Kailāsa temple, datable roughly to the 8th century<sup>9</sup>. However, Gopinatha Rao and J.N. Banerjea have not mentioned this particular type of Śaivite iconography. The theme of Śiva's compassion on Rāvaṇa, styled as *Rāvaṇānugraha-mūrti*, has been more popular in Gupta and medieval sculptures and was first identified by V.S. Agrawala in a Gupta period relief from Mathura as its earliest known depiction<sup>10</sup>. In fact, the present sculpture from Deogarh can also be

classed as a distinctive type of Śīva's Grace on Rāvaṇa, i.e. *Rāvaṇa-anugraha-mūrti* of Śīva. But to avoid any confusion of it with the well-known type we have preferred to call it by a distinguishing and fully enumerative name of the *Rāvaṇa-śiraḥkṛnttana*, "Rāvaṇa offering his severed head to Śīva".

It is more than strange that we find no mention of this myth in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki even in its vulgate editions; according to the Uttarakāṇḍa story (ch. 10) Rāvaṇa offered his heads to appease Brahmā<sup>11</sup>. His devotion to Śīva is only once alluded to in the work.<sup>12</sup> However, Kālidāsa is perhaps the first poet who makes pointed reference to the specific myth of Rāvaṇa's head-offering to Śīva for gaining boons of immortality:

*jetāraṃ lokapālānāṃ svamukhair arciteśvaram /  
rāmas tulitakailāsam arātiṃ bahvamanya //*

*Raghuvamśa, 12.89.*

*svāsīdhārāparihṛtaḥ kāmāṃ cakrasya tena me /  
sthāpito daśamo mūrdhā labhyāṃśa iva rakṣasā //*

*Ibid., 10.41.*

One of the detailed Purāṇic accounts of the legend occurs in the *Śīva Mahāpurāṇa*,<sup>13</sup> and it is also mentioned in the *Mahimna-stava* of Puṣpadanta—a text assigned by scholars to the 5-6th century A.D.<sup>14</sup> Amongst later texts and poetic works mentioning this specific myth a reference may be made to Murāri's *Anargharāghava*, Bhoja's *Campūrāmāyaṇa*, Kṣemendra's *Daśāvatāracarita*, certain Stotras, etc.<sup>15</sup> However, specific attention may be drawn to the story as given in the *Vaidyanātha-māhātmya*, a floating text of uncertain date though said to be professedly derived from the age-old traditional lore of the Purāṇas. In it the incidence of Rāvaṇa propitiating Śīva with the offering of his heads is stated to take place when he was carrying the Liṅga-symbol gifted by Śīva from the mount Kailāsa to Laṅkā and which had stuck through the conspiracy of Viṣṇu to the earth at that moment; Rāvaṇa desperately attempted to lift up the Śivaliṅga from the spot but failed, and at the orders of Śīva himself the place came to be sanctified with the Liṅga as the Abode of Vaidyanātha<sup>16</sup>. We are not in a position to ascertain whether this story was known to the Gupta sculptor of the Deogarh panel, and this can be a mere guess if we were to interpret the curious symbol held in the left hand of Śīva as a Liṅga which he gifted to Rāvaṇa, according to the Vaidyanātha legend. Anyway, in design this symbol can be well compared, not with



the actual stone Śivaliṅgas of early art but with the phallic details to be seen carved in the ithyphallic feature of Śaiva images during the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods<sup>17</sup>.

However, it may be remarked that the present sculptural representation formed part of the Viṣṇu temple embellishments. One may call it to be an isolated Śaiva depiction. But its presence in the series of Rāmāyaṇa scenes, believed to have once been studded around the Deogarh temple plinth, has full justification of its own as we would certainly expect here the depiction of the story of Rāvaṇa in some specific details. Scholars have already identified the demon-king in certain panels of the same complex, for example, Rāvaṇa threatening Sītā (Vats, *Gupta Temple*, pl. XVII, d).

1. This temple, often called as the Daśavatāra Temple, is a Vaiṣṇava monument, locally known by the name of *Sāgaramadhā*. Being the earliest extant shrine with a Śikhara and also for its rich plastic wealth it has been the subject of detailed study by several scholars for more than a century since its publication by Alexander Cunningham (1875) and P.C. Mukerji (1899). See M.S. Vats (*The Gupta Temple at Deogarh*, MASI, No. 70, Delhi, 1952) for earlier references, and some other discussions, for example R.D. Banerji, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, BHU., Varanasi, 1933; V.S. Agrawala, "Gupta Temple at Deogarh," *Art and Thought*, London, 1947 pp. 51 ff.; J.N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 275-6, 421-22, etc.; Madhuri Desai, *The Gupta Temple at Deogarh*, Bombay, 1958; my *Gupta Temple Architecture*, Varanasi, 1968, 2nd ed., 1981. Anyway, the iconographic themes represented on this temple and from the ruins of its Pañcāyatana complex still remain unexhausted. The present sculpture showing so far unidentified and unpublished scene of Rāvaṇa worshipping Śiva is just an example.
2. Perhaps the stone slab under scrutiny here is included in the architectural fragments a general view of which is given by Vats in his pl. XXVI (d). However, reasons are unknown of his not including it in his architectural as well as sculptural discussion of the temple.
3. Vats, *Gupta Temple*, p. 21, Pl. XXII (c), which he gives under the "Description of the panels of the plinth". But his statement about the architectural position of this Caitya-window slab is confusing and perhaps wrong: "This presumably crowned the third storey pediment on one side".
4. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 417, pl. XXIII, 3.
5. Vats has illustrated only the above-mentioned "Architectural member showing Narasiṃha in the medallion". See note 3 above.
6. Banerji, *Imperial Guptas*, pp. 124-25, 175; Agrawala, "Sculptures from Nachna Kuthara and khoh," *Lalit Kala*, No. 9, 1961; my *Gupta Temple*, pp. 123-24.
7. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Gackwad's Oriental Series, No. LXVIII, Baroda, 1934, IX. 66. Abhinavagupta on it comments: *sādhuvādāḥ bhadrām śobhanam ityādyāḥ*.
8. N. P. Joshi, *Prācīna Bhāratiya Mūrtivijñāna*, Patna, 1977, PP. 31, 35; R. C. Agrawala, "Sun and Moon in Early Śaiva Icons," *Bhārati*, No. 16 (R. C. Majumdar Volume), 1989, BHU., Varanasi.

9. C. Sivaramamurti, *The Art of India*, New York, 1977, fig. 350. Further depictions of the same theme are known in Central Indian Kalacuri sculpture and in the late medieval art of Maharashtra; see, R. N. Mishra, *Sculptures of Dahala and Dakshina Kosala*, p. 120; G. B. Deglurkar, *Temple Architecture and Sculpture of Maharashtra*, XXVII, 3.
10. V. S. Agrawala, "Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art," *JISOA.*, Calcutta, 1837, p. 128, pl. 15(1); B. N. Sharma, "Rāvaṇānugrahamurti—An unpublished Sculpture in the National Museum," *Bhāraṇī*, Nos. 12-14 (V. S. Agrawalas Volume), p. 152.
11. Kamila Bulke, *Rāma—kathā kā Vikāsa*, Allahabad, 1962, pp. 636-37.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 643-4; Uttarakāṇḍa, ch. 31.
13. *Śiva Mahāpurāṇa*, IV. 28. 7-10, also verses 48ff.  
*tatasśīrāmsi chitvā ca pūjanaṁ śaṅkarasya vai /*  
*prārabdhaṁ daityapatnī rāvaṇena mahātmanā //*  
*ekaikaṁ ca śiraśchinnam vidhinā śivapūjane /*  
*evam satkramatastena cchinnāni nava vai yadā //*  
*ekasminnavāsiṣṭe tu prasannaśśaṅkarastadā /*  
*āvīrbabhūva tatraiva santuṣṭo bhaktavatsalah //*
14. V. S. Agrawala, "Mahimnastava", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, vol. XV, Nos. 3-4, pp. 394-5.
15. Anargharāghava, VI. 47, 53, 57; *Campūrāmāyaṇa*, Yuddhakāṇḍa, verse 38; *Daśavatāracarita*, VII. 7; Stotra-samāhāra, pt. 2 edited by K. Raghavan Pillai, Trivandrum, 1971, p. 2.
16. *Śrī Vaidyanātha-māhātmya*, VS. 1962, Bombay, p. 8 : *navabhistu śirobhiḥ sa tatra homaṁ cakāra ha*; also see p. 148.
17. For example, see Joshi, *Mūrti-vijñāna*, pl. 20, 24, 26, line-sketches, No. 29, 33, 35; Banerjia, *Hindu Iconography*, pl. XXXVIII, 2, etc.

#### Description of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Detail showing the legend of Rāvaṇa offering his heads to please Śiva. Architectural fragment, Viṣṇu Temple ruins, at Deogarh. Probably the stone belongs to the sculptural decoration of the plinth of the Gupta temple, c. 450-500 A. D. Photo : P. K. Agrawala.

THE RĀMA JANMABHŪMI-BABARI MASJID DISPUTE :  
EVIDENCE FROM MEDIEVAL INDIA

By

HARBANS MUKHIA

This paper is exclusively focused on the question: Was there a Rama temple underneath the structure known as the Babari mosque today ? The reference point of this discussion is the evidence of medieval Indian sources.

The earliest and most authentic evidence that a mosque was constructed at this site comes from the walls of the structure itself. The inscription in verse in the Persian language, on the inner side of the rear wall, now hidden by the newly installed idols of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, reads in Mrs. A.S. Beveridge's excellent translation as follows:

By the command of the Emperor Babur whose justice is an edifice reaching up to the very height of the heavens. The good-hearted Mir Baqi built this alighting-place of angels.

*Buvad khair baqi !* (May this goodness last forever!)

The year of building it was made clear likewise when I said, *Buvad khair baqi* [=935 (A. H.)].<sup>1</sup>

The inscription just above the central arch has also been reproduced by Mrs. Beveridge, though this time instead of translating it, she has given a plain interpretation' of it.<sup>2</sup> I give below the English rendering of this inscription :

In the name of One who is omniscient  
Creator of the universe, but without an abode of His own  
In salutation to The Prophet, beyond all praise  
The chief of prophets in the two worlds  
The story of Babur, the recluse (Babur *qalandar*),  
Whose worldly success reaches glorious heights in his time<sup>3</sup>.

The second inscription is clearly incomplete and this fact was noted by Mrs. Beveridge; she, however, cautioned against 'read[ing] further meaning' into these verses because 'the language would not warrant it'.<sup>4</sup> The inscriptions do not use the term mosque anywhere for this

structure; instead a more poetic phrase, 'alighting place of angels', is substituted. This phrase, meant to refer to the abode of god, for god is described in a comely term as abode-less, does justice to the Mir's poetic sensibility even if the structure of the mosque itself has little of aesthetic appeal in it. Clearly, Mir Baqi was a better poet than architect ! The structure also leaves little room for doubt that it indeed was a mosque with its three domes, each covering a court, the niche placed in the direction of the setting sun, the floor divided into individual spaces for the *namazis*.

However, the inscriptions leave no scope for the assumption that the mosque had been constructed at a site where there was an already existing structure, much less a temple of any sort.

Babur himself records his visit in 1528 A. D. [934 A. H.] to Ayodhya twice on the same page in his Memoirs<sup>5</sup> and mentions that he 'stayed a few days ... in order to settle the affairs of Aud' [medieval Persian texts' synonym for Ayodhya]. He does not fail to let go of even such minor details as a hunt for which he had set out after a reconnaissance done on his behalf by one of his minions. But he shows no recognition of the existence of a Rama temple there and therefore, not surprisingly, makes no mention of any order for its demolition and the construction of a mosque in its stead.<sup>6</sup>

We shall return to Babur in a while. Meanwhile, the next bit of our evidence comes from Abul Fazl's *Ain i-Akbari*. "Awadh" says the *Ain*," is one of the largest cities of India. It is situated in longitude 118, 16', and latitude 27, 22'. In ancient times its populous site covered an extent of 148 *kos* in length and 36 in breadth, and it is esteemed one of the holiest places of antiquity. Around the environs of the city, they sift the earth and gold is obtained. It was the residence of Ramchandra who in the *Treta* age combined in his own person both the spiritual supremacy and kingly office."<sup>7</sup> With all his admiration for Ayodhya and his evident recognition of its association with Rama, Abul Fazl does not record the existence of a Rama temple and its replacement by the mosque. Nor does Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni, a truly "fundamentalist" historian if ever there was one in medieval India, a contemporary and rival of Abul Fazl, an Imam, whose world-view had a single reference point, namely Islam, who wrote his three-volume *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh* entirely because he could not bear the pain of witnessing what he considered was the deliberate denigration of Islam by his employer, emperor Akbar, though he took care not to risk

imperial displeasure and wrote the book in utter secrecy. If Badauni, a courtier of Akbar, had the slightest inkling that the mosque's importance lay in its displacement of a holy temple of the infidels, he would have written of it in hyperbole with his even normally a very facile pen; but he didn't.

Indeed no historical work written during the medieval centuries, either by a "liberal" historian like Abul Fazl, or by a host of others situated in a range of orthodox religious positions, or by Hindu historians, makes any mention whatsoever of either the existence of a Rama temple at the present disputed site or its demolition to make way for the mosque. No literary work does that either. And, neither Babur himself, as we have seen above, nor *any* of his imperial descendants, not even the bigoted Aurangzeb, himself responsible for the destruction of several Hindu temples and the construction of mosques in their stead, recounts the story of the displacement of a Rama temple by this mosque.

If this were surprising, even more surprising is the absence of any mention of it in the works of Goswami Tulasi Das, author of the second great epic on the theme of Rama's life, the *Rama-charitamanasa*. Tulasi Das was an inhabitant of Ayodhya and wrote the epic in his native Awadhi dialect. A lifelong devotion to Rama had given him a rare boldness, such that he curtly turned down an invitation by emperor Akbar himself to visit the imperial court, as legend goes. The *Ramacharitamanas* was composed within a half century of the construction of the Babari mosque. That is, the mosque had been built within Tulasi Das's living memory. It stands to reason that if the mosque had been built at the site that to Tulasi Das would have been the holiest of holies, namely the site of Rama's birth itself with a temple to commemorate it, its demolition could only have driven him hopping mad. Yet what we have from him is dead silence! He does make a casual, and somewhat derogatory reference to falling as low as taking the punishment of sleeping in a mosque in his *Kavitavali*, but all that this reference does is to take cognisance of a mosque, even Babari mosque if we are keen to stretch the argument considerably, but it hardly establishes the existence of the Rama temple underneath. If this is all on which one were to build the case of the existence of a Rama temple, then it might prove a little flimsy as historical evidence at least for the professional historian.

The first written evidence bearing on this dispute and stating unambiguously that the Babari mosque had been built at the place of Rama's birth comes from a legal document submitted to the Faizabad law-court in 1822 by one Hafizullah, the court's superintendent. The document has been reproduced in its original Persian language by Kamal ud-din Haidar in his *Qaisar ut-Tawarikh*. I give the translation: The mosque founded by emperor Babur is situated at the Janmasthan, i. e. at the site of the birth of Rama, son of Raja Dasrath, (and is) adjacent to the kitchen of Sita, wife of Rama.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a tradition which had been growing around the site had become strong enough to get into the historical documents. Indeed, the nineteenth century is full of a whole range of historical and documentary evidence indicating the growing conviction that the mosque had been constructed at the site of Rama's birth and disputes on this issue, at times violent, did occur during the century, even as attempts to resolve the dispute amicably were also made and with considerable success. Yet, in the 1822 document no mention had been made of the existence of a temple, which had been destroyed by Babur; it merely stated that the mosque stood at the site where Rama was born. P. Carnegie was the first to put it on record in 1870 that the mosque had displaced an earlier Rama temple and he professedly bases this statement on "locally affirmed" information, i.e. popular tradition.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, some time during the half century following Hafizullah's testimony, the legend of Rama's birth had also given that site a temple.

It is reasonable to argue that the entry of the story into a legal document of 1822 would indicate a pre-history, that the story must have taken some time to grow. Without doubt, such would have been the case. Popular tradition is increasingly being given its due by the discipline of history as an important source, at par with archaeology and texts. However, popular tradition too must be historicised; it does not help to treat it as a revelation of some eternal truth. Thus, in view of the fact that until the end of the eighteenth century there is no recorded evidence of any kind attesting to the existence of even the birth site of Rama, not to speak of a temple and that records begin to speak of it only in the nineteenth century, it seems likely that sometime during the eighteenth century such a tradition had begun to catch popular imagination, without still causing any disputes, and from there the tradition began to move up and worm its way into recorded history.

It is from Carnegie that the story was picked up by H. R. Neville for his *Faizabad Gazetteer*<sup>10</sup> from where it travelled into Mrs. Beveridge's translation of Babur's Memoirs in the form of a footnote to an appendix.<sup>11</sup> But then, while it would be interesting to examine the social context of the origin and growth of such a tradition in the eighteenth century, it can hardly serve as unimpeachable evidence for the factual details of an event which occurred in 1528!

Mrs. Beveridge, in her famous footnote to Appendix U in her translation of the *Babur-Nama* treats Neville's 1905 statement precisely as a factual evidence and seeks to explain its rationale thus:

Presumably the order for building the mosque was given during Babur's stay at Aud (Ajodhya) in 934 AH., at which time he would be impressed by the dignity and sanctity of the ancient Hindu shrine it (at least in part) displaced, and like the obedient follower of Muhammad he was in intolerance of another Faith, would regard the substitution of a temple by a mosque as dutiful and worthy.<sup>12</sup>

There are several assumptions and an equal number of presumptions implicit in this observation. That Babur did give this order has just been presumed; it has also been presumed that there was such a temple at the site and Babur not only knew about it but was also "impressed by the antiquity and dignity" of the shrine; and because he was a Muslim, it was imperative on his part to demolish it and construct a mosque in its stead.

As we have seen, the evidence for the existence of a temple at the site of Rama's birth is non-existent right up to the later part of the nineteenth century; it therefore does no credit to Mrs. Beveridge's extremely impressive scholarly authority on Babur to have gone on making all those presumptions, and to have assumed that by virtue of being a Muslim, one must destroy a temple and build a mosque there. History is replete with accounts of rulers of all religious denominations who were possessed of extremely varying dispositions towards their own religion and that of others. In medieval India too, among the Muslim rulers there is a whole spectrum of dispositions from the remarkably liberal Akbar to the equally remarkably bigoted Aurangzeb who derived considerable satisfaction from asserting his orthodox Islamic identity, by demolishing Hindu temples, building mosques and collecting the discriminatory tax, the *jizia*. Among these rulers Babur was not particularly renowned for his bigotry. If anything, he was a happy-go-lucky kind of individual, fond of good things of life, of a sip

of liquor, beautiful women, lush gardens and sensuous poetry, some of the most accomplished of it composed by himself. The following couplet attributed to him nearly approximates to his life's style and philosophy:

The New Year's celebrations, the arrival of the new spring  
 a cup of wine and a bit of music  
 Are the great things of life  
 Babur ! enjoy yourself  
 For you will not get this life again!

His was far from a puritannical disposition essential for taking delight in demolishing places of worship of others and substituting for them one's own.

At any rate, if one accepts Mrs. Beveridge's rationale and follows in its train, one would expect a great deal of attention being lavished on this mosque not only by Babur but by his successors, by historians and poets, by orthodox Muslims, as a great act of religious piety and by Hindus as an act of unforgivable vandalism. On both sides the "antiquity and dignity of the ancient Hindu shrine" should have made it a kind of landmark mosque in medieval Indian history. There is unquestionable historical evidence for the demolition of the Kashi Vishwanath temple and the temple at Mathura and their replacement by mosques, both at the hands of Aurangzeb because the emperor proclaimed this with great pride. The silence on *everone's* part on the demolition of the Rama temple for the construction of the mosque until as late as the nineteenth century, or, in terms of popular tradition some part of the eighteenth, therefore becomes all the more intriguing. The only feasible explanation of this universal silence is that the story of the demolition of the temple is a nineteenth century product at the earliest.

Dr. S. P. Gupta has, towards the end of 1990, brought forward the evidence of the black stone pillars embedded in the walls of the existing mosque structure as proof of the existence of the Rama temple from which these pillars were appropriated. Unfortunately, Dr. Gupta can not make up his mind even about the origin of the stone from which these pillars have been carved out. For, on December 2, 1990 he confidently announced that "The blackstone is schistose, of the black variety which is found only in the Gahrwal-Kumaon region as far as U. P. is concerned".<sup>13</sup> Less than two weeks later, however, he declared that "schistose, of which these pillars are made is a sedimentary rock found at the bottom of the seas",<sup>14</sup> his confidence still undiminished !



At any rate, the carving on these pillars can leave little doubt that these could not possibly have been *in situ*. Of the fourteen pillars embedded in the walls, ten have dissimilar carving and four have one that is similar. What is more, there is no order in which these pillars, with or without similar carving have been arranged. Indeed, such is the lack of order that on the main entrance to the open courtyard of the mosque the arch has one such pillar on each side and the carving is completely dissimilar ! It should be obvious then that these pillars have been brought on to this site from somewhere else and placed here and there in a haphazard manner and that they serve no function except as substitutes for the rubble and plaster that would have gone into the wall space that these have been used to fill up. These pillars might even belong to a temple, though the evidence for this is far from conclusive; but they certainly did not belong to any temple, or any other structure, located at the site where the Babari mosque has stood since 1528.

- 
1. Zahiru' ud-din Muhammad Babur, *Babur-Nama*, tr. A. S. Beveridge, first published 1922, Delhi reprint 1970, Appendix U, P. lxxvii where both the Persian text and its translation have been given.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. lxxix.
  3. *Ibid.*, p. lxxviii for the text.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. lxxix.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 602.
  6. Sushil Srivastava has, in a somewhat laboured argument, disputed the story of Babur's visit to Ayodhya; see his *The Disputed Mosque: A Historical Inquiry*, New Delhi, pp. 72-78.
  7. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. II, Eng. tr. H. S. Jarrett, corrected by J. N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1949, p. 182.
  8. *Qaisar ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, Lucknow 1896, p. 117.
  9. P. Carnegy, *A Historical Sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad Zillah Fyzabad*, Lucknow, 1870, p. 21.
  10. H. R. Neville, ed., *District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh: Fyzabad*, vol. XLIII, Allahabad, 1905, pp. 173-74.
  11. *Babur-Nama*, Appendix U, p. lxxviii.
  12. *Ibid.*
  13. *Indian Express*, New Delhi, December 2, 1990, p. 5.
  14. Letter entitled "Disputed Site", *The Times of India*, New Delhi, December 13, 1990.

## SOME HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISSUES CONCERNING AYODHYĀ'S RĀMA JANMABHŪMI

By

S. P. GUPTA

It is common knowledge that millions of Hindus all over world consider Rama as Maryada-Purushottam (i. e., a man *par excellence*, the upholder of human values). He was the eldest of the four sons of Desharath, the king of Kosala. The capital of the kingdom of Kosala was located at Ayodhya, on the river Saryu. Rama, his eldest son from his eldest consort Kaushalya, was born in this township. He was married to princess Sita. Due to some family feuds between Dashrath and his youngest consort Kaikeyi, Rama was exiled for 14 years. He then left the capital, along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, reached Nandigram on the river Tamasa, not too far from Ayodhya, where he spent sometime, and then moved on further south-east and reached Sringeripur on the river Ganga, in District Allahabad, crossed it on boat and reached Bharadwaj Ashram, located near Sangam, i. e., the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna, at Prayag, also called Allahabad city. After staying here for a few days, he moved on further south-east, crossed the river Yamuna, near present-day Arail, and reached Chitrakuta, located on the banks of the Mandakini. Thus the story goes on till the party of these three persons reaches Lanka to kill Ravana. Everyone agrees that this story is based on the Ramayana, composed by sage Valmiki in chaste Sanskrit. It was retold in various languages in India and various countries of South Asia and South-East Asia.

There is a Muslim mosque at Ayodhya. On the basis of two fragmentary inscriptions in Persian,<sup>1</sup> located in the mosque, it is said that the Mosque was built during the time of Babur, an invader from Soviet Central Asian region of Farghana, a rich river valley, precisely in the Hijari year 935, which is calculated to 1528 A. D. However, the actual builder, as mentioned in one of the inscriptions, was someone called Mir Baqi, perhaps one of his commanders.

The Hindus maintain that this mosque was built forcibly at this place, after demolishing a pre-existing Hindu temple. They also maintain that this place is the birth-place, or *janmasthan*, of Rama. According to them Rama was no ordinary human being, he was an

incarnation of *avatar* of Lord Vishnu. For them, it is, therefore, not the question of actual birth-place of a prince of a royal family, it is in reality the question of their Faith. Here the God was born in the form of a human being. His 'place of birth' is, therefore, the 'most Sacred' and 'most Holy' 'piece of land' for them. In Hinduism, unlike Islam, what matters is 'the place where incidents of religious nature occur'. That is why Kurukshetra, Haridwar, Prayag, Gurudwara Shishganj at Delhi, Harmandir Saheb at Amritsar, etc., are of great religious significance to them. By the same token, Krishna Janmasthan at Mathura and Buddha Janmasthan at Lumbini are sacred to them.

In cases of this kind poor historians are called upon by both the communities to produce historical evidence in their favour. And precisely at this point we find them divided into two groups—one trying to blow-up certain facts by suppressing the rest, and the other trying to do exactly the opposite. The public is thus confused. The politicians take advantage of this situation. The newspapers sometimes also take sides.

The historical issues may be broadly divided into two groups: one which concern literary and traditional date, and the other which concern art and archaeology.

The literary and traditional data may be called from all known sources—Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jain and Islamic—while the art and archaeological data may be called from the carvings present on the temple-pillars, door-jambes and old stone images and the results of archaeological excavations conducted at the sites by different scholars.

The Valmiki Ramayana, as noted earlier, maintains that Lord Vishnu incarnated himself in the human body of Rama at Ayodhya. The date of birth is also given: one the 9th day, in the month of Chaitra, which often falls in March. The year is not mentioned but *yuga* is mentioned—it is *treta*, that is in the third phase or period of the world's history which has traditionally been divided into four periods or eras called *yugas*.

Now what is the date of the Ramayana, and what is the Treta Yuga?

The Valmiki Ramayana is generally dated in the period between 2nd century B. C. and 2nd century A. D. It is generally held by scholars that it was orally composed as well as orally handed down in the *Guru-Sishya Paramapara*, i. e., one generation learning it by heart and passing it over to the next generation. The basis of this dating is

two-fold: (a) the language and style, and (b) the contents, such as the mention of certain kinds of palace and also of men of foreign origin, generally coming from West Asian countries.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, also maintained by some other scholars that it began as a story told orally, in the narrative form, at least from the 4th century B. C. How much still earlier this oral tradition may go, is perhaps possible to guess. Stray references to the individual items of the story, such as the occurrence of the term Ayodhya, are found in the works of Later Vedic, pre-Buddhist (or, pre-600 B.C.) literature, such as the *Aitareya Brahmana*<sup>3</sup> and *Śatapatha Brahmana*.<sup>4</sup> At least one form of the story occurs in the Buddhist literature, the Dasharatha Jataka, even in China. Archaeological dating of the lowest levels of habitation at Ayodhya goes back to 8th-9th century B. C.<sup>5</sup> Since the earliest date of the site can also be, broadly speaking, the date of Valmiki and his Ramayana, the tradition may be 3000 years old. Parts of the story, it may be mentioned, also occur in the Mahabharata, the core of which is dated, on astronomical grounds, around 1450 B. C. The Rama *Katha* may, thus, be even 3500 years old.

Some scholars, like Romila Thapar, however, maintain that the crucial issue is the dating of Treta Yuga in which Rama is said to have been born. Treta Yuga is dated to thousands of years prior to Kali Yuga, which itself is said to have started in the year 3102 B. C.<sup>6</sup> This they say is enough to maintain that the claims of the Hindus cannot be historically true since, archaeologically speaking, the site of Ayodhya was itself not inhabited prior to 1000 B. C.; in fact 800 B. C.

On this issue at least some scholars of ancient history however, maintain that the terminology of the *yugas*—*sata*, *treta*, *dvapara* and *kali*—is also applied to four different parts of a single year, based on four major seasons.<sup>7</sup> In that case *treta* will represent the season of the year in which Rama was born. Be that as it may, we, the historians, without taking any sides, are clear in our minds that since the Ramayana is an epic, its growth is encyclopaedic, for example the Balakanda and the Uttarkanda were definitely added at a date later than the date of other *kandas*; some other portions may also have been added in the process of growth. We are also convinced of the fact that since it is a work of *kavya* literature, poetic embellishment of the core story is in the very nature of things, just as it was true with the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer. We are equally aware of the fact that natural and supernatural have invariably been mixed up in all epics, both Indian

and non-Indian. We also know that each age in which such core-stories are retold, contemporary picture gets readily added; it happened in the case of *Ramacharitamanas* by Tulsidas, and it happened in all the other versions of the Ramayana.<sup>8</sup> The Mahabharata is also no exception. The Bible too is no exception.

We, the historians, therefore, try to sort out and sift the 'supernatural' from the 'natural', the 'additions' from the 'basic' and, the 'growth' from the 'seed', all in order to find out the core. After that, in order to evaluate the evidence, we frame the questions as follows:

Is the whole story just a fiction, or at least the core or germ or seem-story is likely to be correct ?

This question, in relation to the Ramayana, will be answered at the end, first let us categorise the supernatural or mythological part of the Rama story because, in strict historical terms, i. e., in calendar years, we can neither prove that nor disprove that. But that, we all know, is not at all expected of us, the historians; since everyone of us, as well as the public at large, knows one thing very clearly that more than the historical events, these are the 'Social Realities' which are based on these 'supernatural' and 'mythological' beliefs and faiths. These are in no way peculiar to the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; all the Greek and Roman epics are full of such supernatural beliefs, still 'historical truths' and 'social realities' are sifted from these epics.

Thus working, we know it well that the birth of Rama cannot be proved, at least not in the Treta Yuga; if it is Treta season, then, perhaps, there may be some truth in it. It is, therefore, to be treated as that part of the epic which bestows upon the core-story fathomless antiquity.

Exactly the same thing happens when we start dealing with the concept of *Avatar* of incarnation; in the present case Rama as the incarnation of Vishnu. It can never be, and it has never been, the subject of history in terms of chronology worked out in calendar years.

This scale of measurement has not been applied at any time by any historian to any religion, be it Christianity, or Islam, or Jainism, or Buddhism, or any other. Where was Lord Christ born? From the womb of the Holy Mother Mary who was unmarried to any male. How was Buddha Born? From the side, hip region, of Maya. Now let any one prove them as 'historically' correct events. Yet it can hardly be maintained that Christ and Buddha were not the human beings; we

know even their dates of birth. We, the historians, thus sift the 'supernatural', which we know human beings are in the habit of adding or imposing on their supreme social and religious leaders, from the 'natural' in order to reach two kinds of truths—the 'historical realities', and 'social realities'. For us, none of them is untrue; both are the facts of social history. In fact, social realities born out of religious practices are of greater historical value than the historical realities.

It brings us to the historical part of the issue. The first is the lead question: which is the cut-off date in the whole controversy ?

It is 1528 A. D., the year in which the mosque was built. This is the datum line. This is the fixed point or the reference point; every other piece of evidence has to be considered with reference to this date.

The second question is was there a temple at the site of the mosque? If so, what is its date?

According to one view, there was no temple at the site prior to the mosque. Hence, there was no question of its demolition by Babur or by Mir Baqi. There is, in fact, absolutely no mention of the demolition of a temple at the site in any literary text written prior to the coming of the British as the rulers of India.

According to the opposite views, there was a temple at this site. There are art and archaeological evidences to prove the existence of a temple at the site in pre-Babur period. It was demolished by the people of Mir Baqi. It was done so in order to build a mosque here for Babur, perhaps to create a place where he could offer his prayers while at Ayodhya.

First, let us deal with the evidences of art and archaeology which are based upon scientific methods; these are perfectly reliable sources of history.

In the mosque there are as many as 14 pillars which support the super-structure of a part of the mosque. The pillars are of black schitose rock of the slate variety. Locally, it is called *kasauti* stone. It is found in the lower Himalayas, in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, from Chamba through Garhwal, Almora and Kumaon, out of which many images were carved and kept in the temples of these very regions, mostly dated from the 9th through the 12th century. There are two more similar pillars of black stone, fixed upside down, beside the grave of one Muslim saint, Fazole Abbas alias Musa Ashikhan, who is generally blamed by the local people for inciting the then authorities to demolish the temple and build a mosque at Janmasthana; the local old people

maintain that this they know from traditional accounts handed over to them generation after generation; it has been mentioned by various modern historians, including Hans Bakker, the writer of the famous work 'Ayodhya'. In addition, there is a door-jamb, resting against the wall in the mosque's compound, that is in the court-yard of the new Janmasthan temple. There are nearly a dozen images, both Vaishnava and Saiva, located at various places in Ayodhya and Faizabad. The details of these items, including photographs of several of them, can be found in the book written by Hans Bakker.<sup>9</sup>

The pillars are carved at the base with the sacred water-pitcher or *urn* or *kumbha* or *kalasha* with overhanging creepers with rich foliage arranged in highly stylised manner. From this a decorative lotus rises up. On one of the octagonal side of one pillar a female figure (measuring about 15-20 cm) in *tribhanga* (bent at three places) pose is still visible, although it is heavily mutilated. The columns have sixteen facets passing into a square at the base, the four corners are having four load-carrying *kichakas* or *yakshas*, shown supporting the *kumbha*.<sup>10</sup>

The door-jamb is of the same stone as the columns. It is 115 cm long, and decorated with sculptured figures from top to bottom. At the base there is a small arched recess in which one can see a standing male figure. The image is wearing a *karanda mukuta* (tiara or *pagadi* with *kalangi*) on the head, an *uttariya* (long scarf) on the front bare body. Above the niche are two vertical bands of decoration, the right one shows the rising creeper motif, the left one contains three figures of *devakanyas* or *apsaras*, i. e., nymphs or heavenly female beings, alternating with *ganas* in dancing pose. These are arranged one above the other, the uppermost figure is in fact of a *Salabhanjika*, a female figure holding and bending the branch of a blossoming tree.<sup>11</sup>

Can we date them? If yes, then how ?

Yes, these can be easily dated on the basis of what we call the science of art-style. If we carefully look at the forms of various elements of decorations, for example the type of creepers (the leaves and the flowers), the form of the waterpitcher, the garland, the female figures (body, eyes, nose, face) and the architectural features, such as the form of the arch, and the pilasters, we come to the conclusion that these pillars were definitely carved in the 11th century, may be even late 10th, some 900 years ago, since stylistically these forms belong to what we call in art history 'Late Pratihara' or 'Gahadavala' style. We have several examples of similar forms from different sites in northern India,

some of which are from sites like Jamsot in Distt. Allahabad, the examples of which in sandstone are housed in the Allahabad Museum.

However, those who maintain that there was no temple at the site which was destroyed by the orders of Babur or his Commandar Mir Baqi ask us : admitting that these pillars are of the 11th century, what proof is there that these pillars and the door-jamb belong to a temple which was built at the site, and not brought from somewhere else, say a kilometer or two away? Questions of this kind can be convincingly answered only by the science of field-archaeology.

What does archaeological excavations conducted at the site by some eminent archaeologists reveal?

In 1969 Prof. A.K. Narain of the Banaras Hindu University excavated the site of Ayodhya by laying three trenches at three different places at Ayodhya<sup>12</sup>. From 1975 through 1980 Prof. B.B. Lal, a former Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India, and Director, Indian Institute of Indian Studies, Shimla, laid as many as fourteen trenches at different places at Ayodhya, including one at Janmabhumi, just behind the Babari Mosque for archaeological investigations<sup>13</sup>. The work was done in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India as a part of a large national project launched by the Central Government, when Prof. Nurul Hasan was the Minister of Education and Culture, called "Archaeology of the Ramayana Sites"; in fact, he was the 'motive force' behind this project. These 17 trenches yielded the following data which have direct bearing on the problem we are faced with here.

First, the earliest habitational layer in these trenches, laid directly above the natural soil, yielded the most beautiful pottery of Indian material culture, called Northern Black Polished Ware with silvery and golden hues. It is fired uniformly at a very high temperature, more than 1000°C. to produce not only unique lustre but also unique metallic sound. It has been dated by various scientific methods, including Radiocarbon dating with MASCA correction, of the associated organic objects. This pottery is dated to the period 8th-9th century B.C.

Secondly, there has been almost continuous human habitation in the Janmabhumi-Masjid area, upto the 1st century A.D.

Thirdly, in the 11th century some people constructed a series of rectangular bases' or short pillar-like structures of burnt bricks. This was done by cutting the debris of the 10th century. These bases served



as the fillings of the foundation trenches so that the heavy weight of the pillars could easily be borne by the earth (not-so-hard debris of earlier structures) here. These bases, arranged in a regular fashion, have been encountered in the trench laid in the Janmabhumi; in all likelihood if the trench is extended we will get more evidence of this kind.

Fourthly, a well-laid floor, made of pinkish white chunam or lime, slightly higher than the upper most face of the 'brick bases', was found running across and beyond the trench-area. A little above, evidence of a new, second, floor has also been found. At the end, the temple structure was destroyed and the area levelled up with the debris. This debris has yielded ceramics of different periods, such as the medieval glazed ware with blue paintings dated variously between the 13th and 16th centuries. Obviously, the structure was destroyed in 16th century.

All this establishes the fact that the structure of the temple was built over the brick-bases and it had a well-remmed lime floor all around the stone pillars. It was a part of a very large pillared hall. We, the field archaeologists, are quite convinced that given a chance to excavate here on larger scale, we will be able to reveal the evidence of more 'pillar-bases' and more of the 'lime floor' of this temple.

These kinds of art and archaeological evidences establish two things:

One, the antiquity of the site of Ayodhya is at least 3000 years from now if not more, and

Second, in the 11th century a Hindu temple was erected at the site popularly called 'Janmabhumi', where now 16th century mosque, with 14 black-stone pillars, decorated with beautiful floral and human carvings, largely mutilated, stands; if the earth dumped\* by the archaeologists inside the trench to cover it is removed even today, the brick-bases of the pillars and the lime floor can be exposed to all the people of the world to see for themselves and examine the evidence. And if allowed to dig further, archaeologists will be able to reveal many more similar brick-built pillar-bases in the foundation trenches dug for erecting a temple-complex.

These art and archaeological evidences indicate that if the core of the Ramayana is based upon some historically occurred events, then these events, including the birth of Rama, must have taken place in the time-frame of about 3000 years.

Further, most of the pillars of the temple were removed at a later date, although a few (four) of them seem to be still in the original placement, many are displaced, and the rest are now completely lost.

This brings us to another point of the controversy that the present site of Ayodhya located on the banks of Saryu, also called Ghaghra, in Distt. Faizabad, U.P. may not be the Ayodhya of the Valmiki Ramayana. In favour of this doubt, some historian friends quote a few Buddhist literary works which call this site "Saket" and not Ayodhya. Many of the Jain literary sources also do not generally call this site Ayodhya; they call it 'Vinita' and 'Saket'. Only the Brahmanical literary sources call the site Ayodhya, rarely Saket. Since the Buddhist and Jain sources are, according to their tradition, older in date than the Hindu traditions, the latter are not to be relied upon. Thus, if there was indeed the town of Ayodhya, it was located somewhere else, perhaps on the river Ganga, hundreds of km. away in Bihar. Here, at the present site of Ayodhya there was the town called 'Saket'. For these scholars, the two names stand for two different towns located far away from each other<sup>14</sup>.

In this context we would like to draw the attention to the following facts.

To begin with, there is ample evidence to show that the ancient town of Saket (of the Jain and Buddhist texts), was the capital town of the ancient region of Kosala, referred to as 'one of the sixteen *mahajanapadas*' of the time of the Buddha, i.e., the 6th century B.C.; perhaps some 100 or more years still older, the *mahajanapadas* were of pre-Buddha times according to various literary sources, including Jain and Buddhist. According to Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya was the capital town of the kingdom of Kosala, where ruled the mighty kings of the Ikshvaku dynasty including Dasharath, the father of Rama.

Were then there the practice of two different capital-towns in the Mahajanapadas, including Kosala? We have no example to this effect. Then the two of them are likely to be one and the same town. But was it so?

There are some Buddhist sources which do occasionally use the term 'Ayodhya' for Saket as if both the names are interchangeable. In fact, the famous Chinese traveller of the 7th century, Hieun T'sang, uses the Chinese version of the term Ayodhya and not Saket—it is A-yo-to. Clearly enough, if Saket was a Buddhist town separately located than the Hindu town Ayodhya, Hieun T'sang, the Buddhist monk, would have used the Chinese version of the term 'Saket' and not the Chinese

version of the term Ayodhya. He was after all primarily describing the Buddhist establishments of the township; the reference to 'ten Deva temples' was only incidental<sup>15</sup>.

There is nothing surprising in it. The town of Varanasi has also been called Kashi, and Sarnath was within the region or *kshetra* of Kashi. While Prayag was the name of the place where *ashramas* and temples existed. Pratishthanpur was the name of the place where the actual habitation of the general public was located, both the sites were located within the Prayag Kshetra. Similarly, Pataliputra, modern Patna, in Bihar, was also known in the ancient literature as Kusumpur. In fact, Ayodhya had still another name, Vinita, used repeatedly by the Jainas. It was called as the birth-place of the First Tirthankar, Adinath or Rishabha. This was also the birth-place of the fourth and fifth Tirthankars. Mahavira, like Buddha, also said to have visited the place. Hence, in all likelihood Ayodhya township and *Kshetra* had different sectors, some religions patronised some sectors and gave them one name while the other religions patronised other sections and called them by another name. But basically they all belonged to a single human settlement-area.

Buddhists, Jains and the Brahmins lived together, side by side, not at one place but at various places in India. At Ellora, there are the rock-cut temples of all the three religions. At Mathura, Kausambi and Kashi also the same was true, there are the remains of all the three religions. If this was the situation at Saket-Ayodhya also, there is nothing surprising in it.

In fact, Kalidas, the famous Sanskrit poet of the 5th century, used both the names interchangeably in his famous work *Raghuvamsam*<sup>16</sup>. Emperor Skandagupta, of the Gupta dynasty, 5th century, laid the foundation of a Vishnu temple at Bhitari, near Gazipur U.P. which, as mentioned in the inscription, he dedicated to God Saringin, i.e., the God with bow-and-arrow; obviously, no other than Rama<sup>17</sup>.

We have, therefore, ample historical evidence to prove that for at least 1500 years Ayodhya has been considered as the birth-place of Lord Rama and the term 'Saket' was used for this very town—the two names were interchangeable<sup>18</sup>.

We, the historians are also aware of another fact, that there is absolutely no correlation between antiquity and socio-religious realities—Islam may be youngest but it is in now way inferior either to Christianity of Hinduism. Hence if the core of the Rama story is only

3000 years old, Rama will not lose his position of eminence in the Hindu socio-religious realities, even though many pious Hindus have taken this date hard to digest, as Prof. B.B. Lal has observed in one of his articles on Ayodhya.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, as long as we have ample evidence of some social realities in the form of beliefs existing amongst the millions of the people through the length and breadth of the country existing for hundreds of years, which are manifested in literature (Ramayana) in art (sculpture and paintings), in architecture (temple) and in rituals (*puja* and *archana*) and claims are made over all of them even in adverse circumstances, (in the present case, connected with the Janmasthan at Ayodhya in pre-1528 A.D. period, the date of the construction of the Babari Mosque). It is our sacred duty to enumerate and evaluate them faithfully as historical evidences, since it is absolutely immaterial whether the traditions are 1500 years old or 15000 years old.

In the present controversy, it is also to be noted by all concerned that in the 5th century A.D. no one in India did anything in reaction to Islam since Islam was not even then born the history of Islam is only 1400 years old. Hence the traditions were born out of positive faith.

Our evaluation of all historical events should be based upon historical processes, i.e., why and how certain things happened the way they happened, because the former are only the products of the latter. In all historical studies what we really study and evaluate are not so much the historical events but historical processes and historical patterns human behaviour, including the reactions and the attitudes of the people contemporary to the events, and the people following them, generation after generation; both, the rulers and the ruled—we are social scientists.

It is common knowledge that although India was invaded by various people in her history but rarely anyone made it a point to demolish the existing temples to build the holy structures of their own religion, except the Muslims. At Ayodhya itself, in the 12th century, the Adinath temple of the Jains was demolished by the Ghauris for building a tomb; this place is now known as Shah Juran Tila.<sup>20</sup> The demolition of Somnath temple in Gujarat is well known. Aurangzed also caused to demolish some temples to build mosques at those very sites such as Mathura and Varanasi. Thus, there is a visible pattern of behaviour of the Muslim rulers in medieval India. Hence, if Mir Baqi did the same in 1528, there is absolutely nothing surprising in it; it is

immaterial whether Babur himself ordered to demolish the temple and build a mosque here or Mir Baqi did it in his overenthusiasms.

The fact of the matter is that these rulers thought that what they were doing was not at all wrong; their sense of justice and morality was entirely different than ours. The norms of social behaviour of these rulers should be judged in the light of that sense of morality which existed in these days; let us not gloss over these facts, it is bound to be short lived.

Now let us see how the ruled people, the Hindus, reacted to this act of Mir Baqi. We know from *Ain-a-Akbari*, that even in Akbar's time the place was considered as the 'birth place' of Lord Rama.<sup>21</sup> Although he did not undo the wrong done to the Hindus earlier, he perhaps did not hinder the Hindus to go to the inner courtyard and offer their prayers to the Janmasthan. He even issued the 'Rama-Siya' coins bearing images of Rama and Sita with the legend 'Rama-Siya' in Devanagari script.<sup>22</sup> Jahangir and Shahjahan followed this liberal practice. But, not Aurangzeb, perhaps, he built at Svargadwar area at Ayodhya two mosques after demolishing temples<sup>23</sup>. In the British period while some Nawabs of Lucknow did offer their patronage through their Hindu colleagues, the period, by and large, was marked by fierce disputes over the ownership of the Janmasthan. Gazetteers of Faizabad Distt. are full of these facts.<sup>24</sup>

This shows that at no point of time the Hindus abandoned their claim to this piece of land which was so very sacred to them.

This is also clear from several accounts of the European travellers who visited India in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Joseph Tieffenthaler,<sup>25</sup> a German speaking traveller, visited Ayodhya in 1767. Here he saw a *Vedi*, i.e., a sacred platform, inside the mosque, which was considered to represent the Rama Janmasthan. He saw the Hindus visiting in large numbers going round it three times (*Parikrama*) and prostrating (*dandavanta*) before it. On Rama Navami day people visited it with accompanied festivities, according to him. Martin<sup>26</sup>, in 1838, also saw similar acts of piety. Several others have also similar accounts to offer. In 1608-11, the English traveller William Finch<sup>27</sup> also witnessed the sacred nature of Janmasthan through the Hindu practices and living traditions during the Mughal period, these were the early days of Jahangir, Akbar had passed away in 1605. He records the tradition that 400 years earlier to him there was a temple at

the Janmabhumi, it comes to 11th century as is also proved by the art style of the pillars.

For the historians, these facts are more important than anything else since in these are the records of the reactions and observations of the people who soon followed Babur and Mir Baqi.

There is no historical record to prove that Babur himself demolished the temple here, or for that matter any temple in India. However, there are a few other facts which may be noted here.

That the total period of Babur's stay in India was only about four and a half years, from 1526 to 1530; he died in the 48th year of his life, in 1530. Even these years he spent only in the battle-field.<sup>28</sup>

That the diary of events of his life which he wrote in his own handwriting was in Turkic which Akbar got translated in Persian by Abdur Rahim Khankhana in 30 years' time, in 1589.<sup>29</sup>

That, a part of the original Turkic manuscript was first got burnt while Babur's tent caught fire, though later he tried to repair it and made good the loss, still the accounts for more than five months, early 1528 (2nd April) to late 1528 (17th September) are completely lost to the world, on Thursday 2nd April, he writes he 'rode out intending to hunt' and nothing more, the next entry starts on the 18th September.<sup>30</sup>

That, the entire original Turkic manuscript still remains untraceable, after Jahangir no Mughal ruler had seen it .

That, the present 'Babur Nama' our source of information, is an English translation (1921)(by Mrs. A.S.Beveridge) of a very late Turkic transcript, earlier 18th century perhaps, of the so-called original, found at the Salar Jung Museum in 1905. This version has the details of Babur's days spent in India. though only fragmentary, besides the account of his early life.<sup>31</sup>

Hence our main source of information about Babur is neither complete nor fully reliable, neither the original manuscript written by Babur in his own handwriting is preserved any where in the world nor exactly the same pages of the diary which may have contained his exploits at Ayodhya, if any, are preserved even in translations and Turkic copies. Similarly, none of the two Persian inscriptions by Mir Baqi located in the Mosque is found complete. Hence, it is just possible that the 'missing portions' contained the reference of the temple or the demolition of the temple; but it is only our conjecture. In fact, we do not really expect any writing about the destruction of such an important temple as this during the Muslim rule in India; everyone was mortally

afraid of the brutal consequences and the Muslims also seem to have feared the Hindu back-lash. Even otherwise, absence of references to certain acts is never taken as positive evidence in historical writing since it does show the bias of the historian.

One thing more. In one of the Persian inscriptions in the Mosque, Babur is given the appellation on 'Qalandar' a Persian term almost exclusively used for a Muslim saint; generally an emperor, that is the ruler of the mundane world is not called 'qalandar' in the Muslim annals. But this is besides the point since it goes to show only this much that Mir Baqi became over-zealous in every thing concerning the mosque and his master. We suspect that neither Babur visited the township of Ayodhya nor really ordered the destruction of the temple and building of a mosque at Janmabhumi. It was Mir Baqi's own doing to gain personal favours. It should thus be called 'Mir Baqi mosque' and not Babari mosque, even though Mir Baqi may have obtained permission from Babur to destroy the temple and build a mosque there.

In this context what is most important for all of us is to note the fact that soon after Babur, Akbar, Babur's grandson, seems to have, on circumstantial grounds, allowed the Hindus to offer prayers at Janmasthan which was located within the premises of the Mosque. What does it show, particularly when we know it that neither Akbar nor his father Humayun had built the mosque here? How then the 'Janmasthan' got located inside the mosque when it was not already existing before the erection of the mosque? Foreign travellers, who had no reason to take sides in the 17th and 18th centuries, have left their own accounts to the fact that there was a *vedi* or platform within the mosque which the Hindus took for the Janmasthan of Rama and worshipped it as such. We should not forget the fact that for the Hindus a superstructure is not a all essential for regarding a place 'holy', fit for worship-temple is a later growth, the original form was just a platform since for them the actual spot where an event of religious nature took place is of supreme importance; in fact, even a formal *vedi* or platform was not essential, just the piece of land was enough, demarcated or not demarcated.

Similarly, the 'history' for the Hindus always lies in the *Shrutis* (What is heard), the *Smritis* (which is remembered) and the *Puranas* (what is codified in traditions). Their sense of history was not like that of Herodotus or Al'Biruni, something like that (narration of events in calendar years) developed very late in India, only after the coming of

the Muslims. Hence, it is perfectly 'historical' for them to regard a particular place as Rama Janmasthana since behind this has been a very long 'tradition', at least of 1500 years, if not 3000 or more years; it was in any case of pre-Islamic origin.

1. Beveridge, A.S. Babur-nama, London, 1922, Appendix U, pp. LXXVII-LXXVIII.
2. The use of terms like Turushka, Yavana, etc.
3. *Aitareya Brahmana* (VIII,3-4).
4. *Satpatha Brahmana* (1.4.1.14-17).  
Also *Atharvaveda* (X, 2, 31).  
Sankhyayana Srautsutra (XV, 17, 25);  
Panini (IV.1171) See also Gazetteer of Distt. Faizabad, U.P. edited by Mrs E.B.Joshi (Allahabad 1960).
5. Lat B.B. "Was Ayodhya a Mythical Town ?" *Puratattva* No. 10(1978-79), pp.45-49.
6. Ojha, G.S. *Prachina Bharatiya Lipian* (Hindi) New Delhi reprint 1959) pp. 159-163.
7. Kosambi, D.D. *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical outline* (London, 1965) pp. 26-27.
8. Bulke, Kamil, Father, *Rama Katha, Utpatti aur Vikas* (Hindi) (Allahabad 1971).
9. Bakker, Hans *Ayodhya* (Groningen, 1986). Also Joshi, M.C. *Puratattva* No. 12 (1979-80) and reply of B.B. Lal, *Puratattva* No. 16.
10. This can be clearly observed in Fig No. 1 & 2. The roots of this element goes back to the Gupta period- Fig. No. 3.
11. These can be seen in Fig. No. 4 and 5.
12. See reports in *Indian Archaeology—a Review*, for the year 1969-70.
13. See reports in *Indian Archaeology—a Review*, for the years 1976-77, 1979-80. Also *News Letter of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies* (Simla) Nos. 7 and 8, pp. 26-27. Also unpublished report given to the Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India in 1989. Also *Puratattva* No. 16.
14. See for details *Ayodhya* by Hans Bakker, *op.cit.*, Chapter I, p. 1-48.
15. Beal, S., *Buddhist Records of the Western World by Hiuen Tsiang* A. D. 629, (London, 1884).
16. Bakker, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
17. Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, pp. 52-55; Reprint 1963
18. Bakker, *op.cit.*, chapter I.
19. Lal, B.B. Unpublished Report with the Director General, Arch. survey of India, dated 27th June, 1989; page 10.
20. Bakker, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
21. Jarrett, H.S., *Ain-a -Akbari* (English Translation) Vol. II, (Oriental Reprint), p. 182.
22. Anand Krishna, Rai, "Rama-Siya Mudra", *Kalanidhi*, Bulletin, Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi (Hindi), Vol. I, pp. 44-47.
23. Bakker, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
24. Joshi E. B., *op. cit.* Carnegie (1870).
25. Tieffenthaler, Joseph, *Historisch-geographische Beschreibung von Hindustan*, Berlin / Gotha / 1785-1788, p. 181.



- 
26. Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. II, pp. 333 f.
  27. Foster, William, *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, London, 1921, (New Delhi, Reprint 1968, pp. 176).
  28. Beveridge, *op. cit.*
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. *Ibid.*
  31. *Ibid.*

# "RĀMA-JANMABHŪMI BHAVANA-THE TESTIMONY OF THE AYODHYĀ-MĀHĀTMYA"

By

V. S. PATHAK\* & J. N. TIWARI\*\*

Although the importance of *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* for the knowledge of the religious geography of Ayodhyā during the pre-Babri Masjid period and for the boundaries of the Rāma-Janmabhūmi area and the Rāja-bhavana complex in it is unmatched, the text has largely escaped the attention of scholars and even specialists have generally tended to ignore it. This is unfortunate, because not only are the various recensions of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* singularly rich in informations about religious history and geography but they can also be dated and chronologically arranged on the basis of internal and external evidence. Since the Gāhaḍavāla epigraphy seems to provide excellent corroborative material, the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* becomes a very important source for reconstructing the religious geography of Ayodhyā at least from 12th-13th century A. D.

*Ayodhyā Māhātmya* is the type of literature generally designated as *Sthala-Māhātmya* or 'religious importance of sacred places'. The historians of medieval India have, of course, almost completely ignored it. But even those historians of ancient India who were well equipped to scientifically discuss and analyse Purāṇic material of this type only made limited use of them. The situation has improved only during the last two decades, mostly as a result of the labours of French, German and Dutch scholars. The well known Dutch Indologist Jan Gonda underlined the great importance of *Sthala-Māhātmyas* for reconstructing religious history and geography in his book entitled *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*.<sup>1</sup> The *Gayā Māhātmya* was studied by Jacques (1962)<sup>2</sup>, *Kāñchī Māhātmya* by Dessigane, Pattabiraman and Filliozat (1964),<sup>3</sup> the *Indradyumna* legend by Geib (1975)<sup>4</sup> and *Purushottama Māhātmya* by Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi (1978)<sup>5</sup>, *Chidambara Māhātmya* by Kulke (1969,1970)<sup>6</sup> and *Prayāga Māhātmya* by Kantawala (1967)<sup>7</sup> and Spera (1977)<sup>8</sup>. These studies have vastly increased our knowledge of the respective sacred places and added a new dimension to historical studies. It is a matter of great satisfaction that another Dutch scholar, Dr. Hans. Bakker, chose

*Ayodhyā Māhātmya* for intensive scientific study and published his researches in 1986 in a voluminous work<sup>9</sup>, which sheds new light on the pre-Babar Ayodhyā.

It is clear that there were several traditions of *Ayodhyā Māhātmya*. The most popular and discussed is the one contained in the *Sthala Māhātmya* section of the *Skanda Mahā-Purāṇa*. There are actually four *Sthala Māhātmyas* in the *Vaishṇava Khaṇḍa* of this *Purāṇa* : *Veṅkaṭāchala*, *Purushottama-Kshetra*, *Badarikāśrama* and *Ayodhyā*. Analysis of the *Purushottama Kshetra Māhātmya* suggests that it was probably composed around 1,300 A.D. Bakker made a close comparison of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* in the *Skanda Purāṇa* with various other recensions of this text, using two manuscripts from the Bodleian Library at Oxford and one each from the Vrindaban Research Institute, Vrindaban, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, and Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta. His conclusion is : (a) that a tradition of *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* existed even before the one incorporated in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and it is represented by the Vrindaban Research Institute manuscript, and

(b) epigraphic evidence suggests that the tradition of *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* synchronizes with the foundation of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty<sup>10</sup>. The eleventh century A.D. seems to herald a new chapter in the history of Ayodhyā which is reflected in the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* and contemporary inscriptions.

Chandradeva, the founder of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty, proudly claimed : *Tīrthāni Kāśi Kuśikottara Kośalendra sthānīyakāni paripālayatābhigamya*, i.e., 'he obtained and protected Kāśī, Kānyakubja, Uttara-Kośala (Ayodhyā) and Indrasthāna (Indraprastha?)<sup>11</sup>. He seems to have been specially attached to Uttara-Kośala (Ayodhyā), since he writes in the Chandravati copper plate inscription of V.S. 1150 (=1093 A.D.)<sup>12</sup> that in Uttara Kośala, on the *amāvasyā* day in the month of Āśvina, after worshipping Vāsudeva in the Svargadvāra tīrtha on the banks of Sarayū-Ghargharā, he celebrated Piṇḍa-pitṛi sacrifice and made gifts of land to brahmins. In this context, the reference to Chandrahari temple found in all the editions of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya*<sup>13</sup> is very interesting :

Ayodhyā nilayaṁ viṣṇuṁ jñātvā śītānśurutṣukaḥ,  
 Āgatyā tīrthamāhātmyaṁ sākshātkartuṁ sudhānidhiḥ. 4  
 Āgatyā Chātra Chandro'pi tīrthayātrāṁ chakāra saḥ,  
 Krameṇa vidhipūrvaṁ cha nānāścharya-samanvitaḥ. 5

Samārādhyā tato vishṇuṁ tapasā duśchareṇa vai,  
 Tatpratyakshaṁ samāsādya svābhidhāna-purassaram,  
 Hariṁ saṁsthāpayāmasa tena chandrahariḥ smṛitaḥ.

6

“Knowing that Vishṇu resides in Ayodhyā the moon-god (śītāṁsuḥ, Sudhānidhiḥ) enthusiastically journeyed to this place to directly experience its greatness for himself, and performing various prescribed rituals, he worshipped Vishṇu through severe austerities. He dedicated an image of the God after his own name, which is, therefore, called Chandrahari”. The Purāṇic imagery here is very transparent and it is not at all difficult to see that the Vishṇu temple built by the Gāhaḍavāla king Chandra at the Svargadvāra tīrtha is being referred to. This temple must have been constructed shortly before V.S. 1150 (=1093 A.D.) when the king performed the Piṇḍa-pitṛi-yajña on the *amāvasyā* day. There is a Svargadvāra tīrtha even today in Ayodhyā and in the compound of a private building in that area there is even a Śaiva monastery named Chandrahari, but the old Chandrahari temple has become the mosque of Aurangzeb<sup>14</sup>. It may be noted that Jayachandra Gāhaḍavāla also built a Vishṇu temple at the Svargadvāra tīrtha in 1148 A.D., as testified by epigraphy<sup>15</sup>. It was called, according to tradition, *Tretā-ke-Ṭhākura* temple or the temple of Rāma, which is the reason why the mosque built over it by Aurangzeb is still called *Tretā-ke-Ṭhākura Masjid*<sup>16</sup>. Besides the above mentioned Chandrahari temple, the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* also refers to Dharma-hari<sup>17</sup>, Gupta-hari and Chakra-hari<sup>18</sup> and Vishṇu-hari<sup>19</sup> temples. These also must be ancient although none of them can be certainly identified with the one built by Jayachandra Gāhaḍavāla<sup>20</sup>. This fact is of significance, because it gives rise to the strong probability that the original *Ayodhyā Māhātmya*, was composed before 1184 A.D. and after Chandra Gāhaḍavāla, the founder of the dynasty. In other words the original of this *Sthala-Māhātmya* evolved in 11th-12th centuries A.D. in the course of a hundred years. It is possible to identify and isolate it through a comparative study of the various manuscript traditions. Bakker has done the groundwork and much research still needs to be done, but it would be a very fruitful research indeed. For the present, it may be noted that the Rāma Janmabhūmi complex was certainly contained in this original, as were the Gupta-hari, Vishṇu-hari, Chandra-hari, Dharma-hari and Janmabhūmi temples because they are referred to in all the available traditions of the text<sup>21</sup>.

The following verses about the Rāma Janmabhūmi in the Ayodhyā Māhātmya are being quoted from the Vrindaban Research Institute manuscript:<sup>22</sup>

Vighneśvarāt pūrvabhāge vasishṭhāc cottare tathā,  
 Lomaśāt paścime bhāge janmasthānaṁ tataḥ smṛitam. 2  
 Dhanuḥ pañchaśatād ūrdhvaṁ sthānaṁ vai lomaśasthalāt,  
 Vighneśvarāt sahasrāśṭāv unmattāc ca dhanuḥśatam. 3  
 Madhye tu rājabhavanaṁ brahmaṇā nirmitasthalam,  
 Janmasthānam idaṁ proktaṁ mokṣhādīphaladāyakam. 4

“The Janmasthāna revered by the seers and the gods should be visited. The area that lies to the east of Vighneśvara, north of Vasishṭha Āśrama and west of Lomaśa-ṛishi Āśrama is called Janmasthāna. It extends 50 dhanus (or 75 meters) from the Lomaśa Āśrama, 1000 dhanus (or 1500 meters) from the Vighneśvara and 100 dhanus (or 150 meters) from the Matta-Gajendra (or Unmatta-Gajendra). In the middle of it lies the Rāja-bhavana, built by Brahmā, which is the giver of the fruit of liberation.” It is to be especially noted here that the word Rāma-Janmabhūmi bears two senses in the above verses, one general and comprehensive and the other relatively narrow and precise. In its comprehensive sense, Rāma Janmabhūmi is that large area whose boundaries are marked by the shrines or sites of Vighneśvara, Lomaśa, Vasishṭha and Matta-Gajendra and which extends approximately 2250 meters east-west and 300 meters north-south. In its narrow sense, it only denotes the Rāja-bhavana, which stood in the middle of the above and in a specific part of which Rāma was believed to have been born. On account of the limited space at our disposal, we shall not, enter into discussion of the original locations of Vighneśvara, Matta-Gajendra, etc., although it is possible to do so even in the Ayodhyā of today, and shall confine ourselves only to the Rāja-bhavana.

The various recensions of the *Ayodhyā-Māhātmya* give varying informations about the Rāja-bhavana. In the Vrindaban Research Institute manuscript, which, as mentioned above, seems to represent the earliest tradition, three parts of the Rāja-bhavana are referred to Janmasthāna, Kaikeyī Bhavana and Sumitrā Bhavana<sup>23</sup>. The Sumitrā Bhavana is said to have been 30 dhanus or 45 meters to the south and the Kaikeyī Bhavana 20 dhanus or 30 meters to the north of the Rāja-bhavana, which apparently faced east. The Bodleian manuscript adds to the above also Sītā Pākasthāna, and Sītā Kūpa, and the description seems to suggest that while the Sītā Pākasthāna was situated on the left

of the Rāja-bhavana in the north-westerly direction, the Sītā Kūpa was to its right in the south-east<sup>24</sup>. It is peculiar that the *Skanda Purāṇa* tradition makes no mention of the Rāja-bhavana, Sumitrā Bhavana, Kaikeyī Bhavana, Sītā Pākasthāna, etc. Instead, it only describes the Rāma Janmabhūmi and dilates upon the importance of visit to it<sup>25</sup>. It has been suggested above that the tradition of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* represented by the Vrindaban Research Institute manuscript appears to be the earliest of the three. The *Skanda Purāṇa* tradition should be the latest. On the basis of comparative study, the tradition of the Bodleian manuscript may be placed in between the two<sup>26</sup>. Looked at historically, the Rāja-bhavana complex appears to have gradually expanded. At the earliest stage, it was a complex of the Rāja-bhavana proper with the Sumitrā and Kaikeyī Bhavanas built respectively to the north and south of it. In the second stage of evolution, Sītā Pākasthāna was built close to the Rāja-bhavana and integrated to it. This is the stage described in the Bodleian manuscript. The stage represented in the Vaishṇava Khaṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa* must belong to the period when only the memory of the Rāja-bhavana had remained. As Rāma Janmabhūmi, the site was still sacred and worth visiting, but the structure itself had disappeared.

The informations gathered from the various recensions of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* are corroborated by Muslim writers, foreign travellers' accounts and Sanskrit, Apabhraṁśa and Hindi literature. William Foster published in 1921 (London) a work entitled *Early Travels in India, 1583-1691*, which is the travel account of an Englishman named William Finch who also visited Ayodhyā between 1608 and 1611. He informs : "Here are also the ruins of Ramchand (s) (i.e. Rāma's) castle and houses, which the Indians acknowledge for the great God, saying that he took flesh upon him to see the tamasha of the world"<sup>27</sup>. Reference to 'houses' here, and not temples, is significant, because the Vrindaban manuscript also speaks only of houses or buildings (Rāja-bhavana, Sumitrā Bhavana, Kaikeyī Bhavana, etc.). This is also supported by such sources as *Rāma-charita-mānasa*, *Bhuṣuṇḍi-Rāmāyaṇa*, and others. The *Rāma-charita-mānasa*, for example, has : *Bandi rāma-siya charan suhāye, Chale saṅga nṛipa-mandira āye. (Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, 75-76); Sāṁjha samaya sānanda nṛipa gayo kekayū geha. (ibid., 24); Eka samaya saba sahita samājā, Rāja sabhā raghurāja birājā. (Ibid., 1-2).*

The three additional buildings, Sītā kitchen, Sītā well and Janmsthāna, of the Bodleian Library manuscript are important. Ancient works on architecture provide for them as *maṇḍapas* in the Royal palace complex. In its *Rāja-harmya-vidhāna* section, the well known architectural text *Mānasāra* gives the placement of the various *maṇḍapas* in the Royal palace complex as follows<sup>28</sup> :

Dakshiṇe nairṛite vā'pi bhojanārthaṁ tu maṇḍapam.	49
Tatheśāna pade vā'pi pachanālayam eva cha,	
Anale chāgnike vā'pi pushkaraṇīś cha kalpayet.	50
.....	
Vāyavye nairṛite vā'pi sūtikā-maṇḍapaṁ bhavet.	53

“The Bhojana-maṇḍapa or dining hall should be located towards the south or south-west of the Rāja-bhavana, the Pachanālaya or kitchen to the north-west, the Pushkaraṇī or pond towards north-west or south-east and the Sūtikā-maṇḍapa or the maternity wing should be in the north-west or south-west.” The Sītā Pākasthāna of the manuscript is obviously the Pachanālaya of the *Mānasāra* and the Sīta Rasoī of the Muslim sources. Mirza Rajab Ali Beg Surur (1787-1867 A.D.) informs in his *Fasanah-i Ibrat* that the big mosque was built at the place which was Sītā kī Rasoī<sup>29</sup>. The Sītā-kūpa of the *Māhātmya* should be the Pushkaraṇī of the *Mānasāra*, and the Janmsthāna is certainly the same as the Sūtikā Maṇḍapa or the maternity pavilion.

Here the travel account of the Austrian Jesuit priest Tiefentheller sheds new light. He visited India between 1766 and 1771 and extensively toured in the Awadh area. His original travel account in Latin was first published in French in 1876 under the title *Descreption historique et géographique de la Inde* (“The Historical and Geographical Account of Hindustan”). Relevant parts of his observations about the contemporary Ayodhyā are being reproduced here : <sup>30</sup>“The Emperor Aurangzeb destroyed the fort called Rāmakōṭa and built over it a Muslim shrine having three domes.....According to others, this was built by Babar.....Towards the left of it can be seen a five inch high platform.....Hindus call it *vedi*, which means a cradle, because Rāma was born here. Subsequently Aurangzeb, or, as others say, Babar, destroyed this place so that the non-believers may not practice their superstitious religion here. But they are performing their rites in both the places, because they regard them as the birth-place of Rāma. They circumambulate it thrice and salute it by prostrating themselves.....on the 24th day of the month of Chaitra, a very large crowd gathers here to

celebrate the birthday festival of Rāma. This festival is famous all over India." This account gives precise information about the Janmabhūmi or the Maternity pavilion and the Sītā kitchen pavilion of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya*. The Sītā kitchen was located to the north-west of the Rāja-bhavana and the Maternity pavilion to the south-west of it. The mosque must have been built over these, which is the reason why the Muslim sources refer to it by two names, 'Masjid-i Janmasthan' and 'Masjid-i Sita-Rasoi.' In a petition dated 30th November, 1858, Muhammad Asghar, the Khatib and Mu'azzin of the Babri Masjid, refers to the mosque as Masjid-i Janmasthan<sup>31</sup>, and makes a complaint against the 'Bairagiyan-i Janmasthan'. In the *Hadiqah-i Shuhada* of Mirza Jan,<sup>32</sup> which was written around 1855 A.D., it is said that the principal place of the Rāma incarnation (*avatāra*) was the Janmasthāna temple and the adjacent Sītā kitchen. Under the direction of Musa Ashikhan, Babar built a huge mosque there, which is known far and wide as the 'Sita-ki-Rasoi Masjid'.

The references to Rāma-durga and Rāma-sabhā also apparently belong to this second stage of development of the Rāja-bhavana: *Sabhāyāḥ paśchime bhāge rāmadurgas tu vidyate*<sup>33</sup>. This Rāma-durga is referred to as Ayodhyā-durga in the *Bhuṣuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa*<sup>34</sup> and in the *Vividha-ūrtha-kalpa* of Jinaprabha Sūri<sup>35</sup>. Jinaprabha Sūri describes it as follows: "*eśā purī aujjhā saraūjala-sichchamāṇā gaḍhabhitā*", 'this Ayodhyā-purī is sprinkled with the water of Sarayū and is surrounded by fort-wall (i.e. encircled by fortifications)'. In the *Rāma-charita-mānasa*, Tulasīdāsa also says: "*Pura chahuṅ ṛ kot ati sundara, rache kaṅgūrā raṅga raṅga raṅga bard*" (*Uttara-Kāṇḍa*, 26-27). It may be recollected that Finch clearly refers to the ruins of Rāma's 'castle' in Ayodhyā.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* version of the *Māhātmya* available today in printed form is representative of the third and final phase of development, when the Rāja-bhavana, with its many ancillary buildings, the Rāma-durga, sabhā, etc., had been destroyed and only their memory or ruins had remained, but the Hindus made pilgrimages to the Janmabhūmi site and performed special celebrations there on the Rāma-navamī day. Tiefentheller clearly refers to this state of affairs and it is also corroborated by the petition of Muhammad Asghar.<sup>36</sup> The importance of the *darśana* of Rāma Janmabhūmi and celebration of the birthday festival of Rāma on the 9th day of the bright half of Chaitra are thus described in the *Skanda Purāṇa*:<sup>37</sup>



Navamī divase prāpte vratadhārī hi mānavaḥ,  
 Snāna-dāna-prabhāveṇa muchyate janma-bandhanāt.  
 Kapilā-go-sahasrāṇi yo dadāti dine dine,  
 Tatphalaṁ samavāpnoti janmabhūmeḥ pradarsanāt.  
 Āśrame vasatām puṁsām tāpasānām cha yatphalam,  
 Rājasūya-sahasrāṇi prativarshāgnihotrataḥ.

It is interesting in this context that Tulasīdāsa inaugurated the composition of his *Rāma-charita-mānasa* on the Rāmanavamī day in Ayodhyā in V. S. 1631 or 1574 A. D., i. e. about fifty years after the construction of the Babri mosque ("Sambat solah sai ekūsā, karauṅ kathā hari pad dhari sīsā. Naumī bhaumayāra madhumāsā, avadhapurī yah charita prakāsā")<sup>38</sup>. Almost certainly, this inauguration must have taken place at the Janmabhūmi or the Babri Masjid site, and Tulasī too must be counted among the pilgrim visitors to this holy place about whom Tiefentheller speaks. The mystery of the saint poet proudly referring to himself in a poem of his *Kavitāvālī*<sup>39</sup> as 'the recognized slave of Rāma, ready to sleep in the mosque' also gets cleared in the above light.

To recapitulate, the earliest recension of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* came into being after V. S. 1150 or 1093 A. D. when Chandra, the founder of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty, issued his Chandravati copper plate of that date, and before 1184 A. D. when Jayachandra Gāhaḍavāla built the Tretā-ke-Ṭhākura temple in Ayodhyā. Vrindaban Research Institute manuscript represents this recension and it appears dateable in the 13th century A. D. The Bodleian Library manuscript tradition also must have evolved before the construction of the Babri Masjid, because it refers to buildings existing before it. The *Skanda Purāṇa* recension in its present form appears to belong to the 17-18th century. Thus the various recensions taken together give us a picture of about five hundred years of changing religious geography of Ayodhyā.

This study has yielded an information deserving special consideration, which is that the Janmabhūmi area was covered not with temples built in the traditional north Indian, Nāgara style, but with a Rāja-bhavana complex consisting of various pavilions or *maṇḍapas*. But the five special 'hari' temples—Chandrahari, etc. - and the Tretā-ke-Ṭhākura temple built by Jayachandra must have been in the Nāgara style. We actually have two traditions of architecture which, for the sake of convenience, may be designated as Devakula and Devālaya. The *Pratimā-nāṭaka* of Bhāsa<sup>40</sup> testifies to the existence of the

Devakula tradition and there is even archaeological evidence of it from Mathura of the Kushāṇa period.<sup>41</sup> It is this tradition mixed with the Rāja-bhavana style of the architectural texts that was present in Ayodhyā. It grew and expanded with the growth of Ayodhyā as the centre of Rāma cult. Epigraphic evidence makes it clear that with the establishment of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty a new chapter opens in the history of Ayodhyā and the city becomes a centre of Vaishṇava bhakti.

Those historians who are of the opinion that the Babri Masjid was constructed on the Rāma Janmabhūmi site on an open piece of ground and without destroying any pre-existing building there would naturally object to our historical reconstruction of the Rāja-bhavana complex as above. They base their opinion mainly on the following three arguments:

1. There is no reference to destruction of any temple in the Babri Masjid inscriptions.

2. There is no mention of destruction of any temple in Ayodhyā by Babar even in the *Babar-nama*.

3. Babar left his last will and testament in a document dated Hijri 933, in which he advised his son Humayun not to destroy any temples.

These may be examined one by one:

1. There are three Persian inscriptions in the Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā, one each on the two sides of the main entrance and another under the overhanging ceiling in the centre.<sup>42</sup> The last, which is the longest, also appears to be the principal inscription. It begins with "Bismillah rahmano rahim" in the customary fashion and ends with salutations to the Prophet. In between, there are four couplets, each of four lines. In these, after the eulogy of Khalik-i-alam, Mustafa and Babar, there are praises of Mir Baqi, the builder of the mosque and the surrounding wall (*hisār*). He has been given such epithets as Mir-i-muazzim, Mushir-i-Saltanat, Tadbir-i-mulkash, Asif-i-Shani, etc. In the end, the date of construction of the Masjid has been given as Hijri 935. The two shorter inscriptions on the two sides of the entrance are of six lines each and inform that to provide a place for angels to alight on the earth, Mir Baqi constructed this strong building in Hijri 935 by the order of, or in accordance with the wishes of, Babar ('Ba-farmaudahe Shah Babar' 'Ba-manshaye Babar'). Besides the bare record of the construction of the monument, all the three epigraphs have room only for the mere formality of Bismillah, Tamam-shud, salutations to God and the Prophet and some praises of Babar and

especially Mir Baqi. They are no detailed accounts of construction of the Masjid and, therefore, it is too much to expect in them a reference to the destruction of any pre-existing structures on the site. This becomes clearer when we compare them with the inscription in the Jami Masjid at Sambhal.<sup>43</sup> It is an accepted fact that this mosque was constructed two years earlier, in Hijri 933 or 1526 A. D. to be precise, by the Babar's Amir Hindu Beg after destroying Hari Mandir. But the nine line Persian inscription in verse on the mosque recording the event of construction has, like the Babri Masjid inscription, only the praises of Babar and Hindu Beg and nothing about breaking Hari Mandir. Non-mention of a Hindu shrine in the Babri Masjid inscriptions, therefore, in no way proves that no such structure existed there and the mosque was built on an open piece of ground at the Janmabhūmisite.

2. The argument that *Babar-nama* does not mention destruction of any temple in Ayodhyā to construct a mosque there is very interesting indeed. According to the Babri Masjid inscriptions, that building was constructed in Hijri 935 or 1528 A. D. *Babar-nama* informs that on the 2nd April, 1528 A. D., Babar set up camp seven or eight 'kos' (15-16 miles) from Awadh on the banks of Sarayu, and the same book also tells that he was near Agra on the 18th September of the same year, which was the third day of Moharram and a Friday.<sup>44</sup> The mosque must have been constructed in the duration of these two dates, but the interesting thing is that there are no entries at all for these four and a half months in the *Babar-nama*. The first English translation of *Babar-nama* was published by William Erskine in 1826 under the title 'Memoirs of Zahiruddin Babar'. He comments on p. 321 of this book: "Every manuscript that I used lacked the entries of the remaining months of Hijri 935". Now when the *Babar-nama* has no information at all about the period when the Babri Masjid was constructed, the argument of non-mention of destruction of any temple, etc. becomes meaningless. As a matter of fact, no careful historian would advance such an argument.

3. The third argument that Babar left in Hijri 933 a secret will in which he advised his son not to damage any temples etc., and, therefore, he couldn't have indulged in such destruction himself, deserves to be considered in detail. This will was preserved in the Bhopal State Library and is now in the archives of the Madhya Pradesh

government. It is indeed a striking document and we give below a gist of it.<sup>45</sup>

*"Aye farjand mamalkat hindostān az mazhab mukhtalif māmūr ast* (O son, different religions exist in the state of Hindustan). *Al hamdulillāh haq subānahū tālā bādashāhī ān batū karāmat farmūdah bāyad* (Praise be to the Lord who has out of kindness bestowed this kingdom upon you). *Ki taassubāte mazahabī az loh dil pāk namūdah* (you should keep your heart free from religious hatred). *Mawāfiq az tariqeh har millat mādilat kunī* (You must dispense justice in accordance with the customs of various religions). *Khasūsān az kurbānī gāvo parhez ki tasarvīre qulūbe ahale hindostānast va rayyat aye valdiyat va hasanāte bādashāhī vāvistah shavad* (Refrain especially from sacrificing cows, so that you may win the heart of the Indians and your subjects may obey your royal commands). *Manādir va maābatagāh har qaum ke zere farmān bādashāhī ast kharāb makun* (Do not destroy temples and Places of worship of any religion which lie in your territory)... *Taraqqiye islām az teghe ehsān behtar ast ba az teghe zulm* (For the progress of Islam, the sword of kindness is better than the sword of cruelty).

Undoubtedly this document is replete with high idealism and catholicity of views. It emphatically forbids destruction of places of worship, including Hindu temples. If it is really written by Babar, he must be absolved of any accusation of destroying the Janmabhūmi shrine in Ayodhyā. Unfortunately, this secret will of Babar is a forgery. Mrs. Beveridge, the translator of *Babar-nama* has minutely examined this question.<sup>46</sup> She has listed as many as fourteen grounds of seal inscription, paleography, titulature, language and style – to prove that it is a forged document, and hardly any careful historian regards it as a genuine testimony of Babar. The document, therefore, is valueless on the question of destruction of the Janmabhūmi shrine and cannot be adduced as evidence.

When was this forgery committed and with what purpose, these are important questions. By this forged will of Babar hangs an important mystery tale whose unrevelling has the potentiality of shedding welcome light on the policy of the Mughal kings towards Rāma, the god of the Hindus.

Babar's will is, of course, not a modern forgery. (Even Mrs. Beveridge did not say so, though she dated it later than seems to be case).<sup>47</sup> The one important instruction contained in it is to refrain

from killing cows, and it is known that this question had arisen in a big way in Akbar's time. Akbar issued more than one farman forbidding cow-slaughter and a caveat to this effect was also entered in his treaties with the rulers of Rajasthan.<sup>48</sup> The suspicion of Mrs. Beveridge that this document did not exist till 1587 A. D. appears well founded. She has raised the question: "where was this will when the entire royal archives had been thrown open for the examination and use of Abul Fazl? why didn't he find it?" Clearly, it wasn't then in existence. This forgery must be dated in the post-1587 period, in the later years of Akbar's reign or later.

Here it must be borne in mind that the Emperor Akbar and many of his courtiers are known to have held Rāma in great regard. Akbar even issued a unique type of gold coin, showing on the obverse the figures of Rāma and his consort Sītā and the legend *Rāma-Sīya* in Devanāgarī on the top in place of the traditional Kalima *Allaho Akbar Jalla Jalalahu* of his coins. A half-rupee specimen in silver of this type is also preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan of the Banaras Hindu University.<sup>49</sup> Abdur-Rahim Khan-khana, one of the most trusted courtiers of Akbar, betrays his devotion to Rāma in his writings. Such influence is also conspicuously noticeable in Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan and heir-apparent to the throne, who had made a bold attempt at a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam in his Persian work *Majma'-ul-Bahrain*, 'the Mingling of the Two Oceans'. He got the *Yoga-vāsishṭha* translated in Persian by an unknown courtier friend of his, who writes in the preface that Dara Shikoh was inspired about this translation after having had a dream of Rāma and his guru Vasishṭha, in which he bowed to Rāma and received from him sweets as '*prasāda*' or gift. Thus, on the one hand, we have in the Mughal polity a tradition of religious tolerance, Hindu-Muslim unity and devotion to Rāma, of which the emperor Akbar, Abdur-Rahim Khan-khana, Dara Shikoh, etc. are excellent examples, there is on the other hand the tendency of 'Darul-Islam', religious fanaticism and a readiness to destroy Hindu places of worship. The above-mentioned secret will of Babar was in all likelihood prepared under the inspiration of kings of the first group, Akbar or Dara Shikoh, and its purpose must have been to strengthen their hands against the aggressive stance of the fanatical mullahs. Thus this remarkable document, though forged, bears an important message and is relevant even today<sup>50</sup>.

In conclusion, there is no basis on which it may be asserted that no building existed at the Rāma Janmabhūmi before the Babri Masjid was constructed on it<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand, William Finch (1608–11), Joseph Tiefentheller (1766–71), Muhammad Asghar, the Khatib and Mu'azzin of the Babri Masjid (1858), Mirza Jan (1855), Mirza Rajab Ali Beg Surur (1867), etc. give evidence of a strong tradition that the Rāma Janmabhūmi shrine was destroyed before a Muslim mosque was built on the site. Thus the testimony of the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* about the Rāja-bhavana complex is in full agreement with all other evidence, whether originating from Muslim or non-Muslim sources.

---

\* Visiting Professor, B.H.U. and Ex-Professor & Head, Ancient History, Gorakhpur University.

\*\* Professor, Ancient History, Culture & Archaeology, B.H.U.

1. J. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 276–281. On p. 278, Gonda says: "This genre of literature is not only very useful for deepening our knowledge of the cultural and religious history of India in general but also most valuable for those who want to reconstruct the development of regional history and local cults or to gain a deeper insight into various religious institutions..." Earlier, on p. 276 he notes that literature on holy places of special sanctity is in all probability for more extensive than any other single topic of Dharmaśāstra.
2. C. Jacques, *Gayā Māhātmya*, etc. (Pondichery 1962).
3. R. Dessigane, P. Z. Pattabiraman et Jean Filliozat, *Les legendes C, ivaites de Kāñcīpuram*, etc. (Pondichery 1964).
4. Ruprecht Geib, *Indradyumna-Legende. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Jagannātha-Kultes* (Wiesbaden, 1975).
5. Anncharlot Eschmann, Herman Kulke and Gaya Charn Tripathi, *The Cult of Jagannātha and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, (Delhi, 1978).
6. Hermann Kulke, "Funktionale Erklärung eines süd-indischen Māhātmyas. Die Legende Hiranyavarmans und das Leben des Cola-Königs Kulottuṅga I", (*Saeculum*, Ed. 20, 1969), pp. 412–422; and by the same author, *Cidambara-māhātmya*, etc. (Wiesbaden, 1970)
7. S. G. Kantawala, "Prayāga-māhātmya: A Study", *Purāṇa*, IX, no. 1 (1967), pp. 103–120.
8. Giuseppe Spera, "Some Notes on Prayāga-māhātmya", *Indologica Taurinensia*, V (1977), pp. 179–197.
9. Hans Bakker, *Ayodhyā* (Groningen, 1886).
10. Bakker, Op. cit., Pt. II, Intro., pp. VII–XXXIII; Pt. I, Ch. 3 (pp.49–59) and Ch. 8 (pp. 125 ff.); see also Intro. to Pt. I, pp. XV–XVIII. About the Vrindaban Research Institute manuscript, Bakker's clear inference is (Bakker, op.cit., Pt. II, p, 143) that it appears to be "the most direct or crudest version of the a-type-of-text, which was edited in the *Skanda Purāṇa* and Bodleian Library manuscript versions."

11. "Chandravati Plate of Chandradeva, Sam. 1148" (ed. Sten Konow), *Ep. Ind.*, IX (1907-08), p. 304. The same expression occurs in an inscription of Jayachandra ("Two copper plate grants of Jayachandra of Kanauj", ed. Kielhorn, *Journal Asiatique*, XV (1886), p.7. Cf. also *The Struggle for Empire* (ed. R.C.Majumdar), p. 52
12. "Chandravati Plates of Ciaandra-deva, V.S. 1150" (ed. Daya Ram Sahnī), *Ep. Ind.*, XIV (1917-18), p. 194.
13. AM. 11.4-6 (Bakker, op.cit., Pt. II, p. 87). For the sake of convenience, we have throughout this essay cited the *Ayodhyā Māhātmya* as collated and edited in the Bakker's work cited in note 9 above.
14. See Bakker, op. cit., Pt. I, p. 52, where Carnegie, Fyzabad Gazetteer and Fuhrer are also cited; see also Pt. II, p. 86.
15. The broken stone slab, bearing the inscription, was discovered in the ruins of the Aurangzeb's Masjid built over the temple, and deposited in the local museum at Faizabad (see Fuhrer, *The Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur*, etc. p. 68). It is now in the State Museum, Lucknow.
16. Bakker, op. cit., Pt. I, pp. 52-53.
17. AM. 14.1 (Bakker, op. cit., Pt. II, p. 103).
18. AM. 58. 1 ff., 35-38 (Bakker, op. cit., Pt. II, pp. 318 ff).
19. AM. 47.5 (Bakker, op. cit., Pt. II, p. 260).
20. Bakker's identification of the Dharma-hari temple with the one built by Jayachandra at Svargadvāra (see Bakker, op. cit., Pt., I, p. 53 and Pt. II, p. 102) appears speculative to us.
21. Bakker also (op. cit., pt. I, p. 54) infers the existence of five Vishṇu temples in Ayodhyā in the 12th century A.D.-Gupta-hari at Gopratāra-ghāt, Vishṇu-hari at Chakratīrtha, Chandrahari on the west side of Svargadvāra ghāt, Dharmahari on the east side of it, and a Vishṇu temple at the Janmabhūmi.
22. AM. 21.2-4 (Bakker, op. cit., pt. II, p. 149).
23. AM. 25.1-4 (Bakker, op. cit., pt. II, p. 177).
24. AM. 24.1 ff and 26.1-3 (Bakker, op. cit., pt. II, pp. 174 and 178).
25. It is easily verifiable from the comparative textual material as arranged by Bakker in the respective chapters of the Māhātmya—the Janmasthāna, Sītā-Pākasthāna, Kaikeyī Bhavana and Sumitrā Bhavana, and Sītā Kūpa.
26. Cf. Bakker's discussion, op. cit., pt. II, Intro, pp. XXIV-XXVII and p. 143.
27. See also Bakker, op. cit., Pt., I, p. 136 and n.5.
28. Manasāra, ed. P.K. Acharya, Ch. 40, vv. 49 ff.
29. Fasanah-i Ibrat, cited in Harsh Narain, "Rāma-Janmabhūmi temple: Muslim testimony", in Arun Shouri, et. al, *Hindu Temples-What Happened to Them*, p. 59 (reprint of the article earlier published in *The Pioneer*, 5.2.90 and in slightly modified form in *The Indian Express*, 26.2.90). This account of the Urdu writer is appended to Shykh Azmat Ali Kakorawi Nami's (1811-1893), *Amir Ali Shahid aur Ma'rkah-i Hanuman Garhi*, about the history of publication of which, see again Harsh Narain, op. cit.
30. As cited in Koenraad Elst, *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid*, pp. 73-74; see also Bakker, op. cit., Pt. II, p. 147.
31. Cited in Harsh Narain, op. cit., p. 57. The petition refers to the courtyard rear the arch and the pulpit within the boundary of the mosque as 'Maqam Janmasthan'.
32. See Harsh Narain, op. cit., p. 57.
33. A. M. 17.1 (Bakker, op. cit., Pt. II, p. 122).

34. *Bhuṣuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.102, 118 ff.
35. *Vividha-ūrtha-kalpa* (Singhi Jaina Series), p. 24.
36. Cf. Bakker, op. cit., pt. I, p. 137 and Pt. II, p. 147.
37. AM. 21.5 ff (=AM.10.21-23 in the Kshemaraj Shrikrishadas edition of the Skanda Purāṇa).
38. *Rāma-charita-mānasa, Bāla-Kāṇḍa*, 33-34.
39. *Kavitāvalī*, Uttara-Kāṇḍa, 106.
40. *Pratimā-nāṭaka*, Act III; see also A.D. Pusalkar, Bhāsa, (1943), pp. 185-87.
41. See John M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley 1967), pp. 138 ff; esp. 149-151; see also coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 48.
42. See Radhe Shyam, Babar, Appendix VI, inscription nos. VIII-X, pp. 505-507; also *Babarnama*, tr. Mrs. A.S. Beveridge (London 1922), vol. II, p. LXXVII f.
43. Radhe Shyam, op. cit., App. VI, no. 2, pp. 499-500; also pp. 452-457.
44. *Babar-nama* (tr. Mrs. Beveridge), vol. II, pp. 601-02; Radhey Shyam, op. cit., pp. 357, 458.
45. See Radhey Shyam, op. cit., Appendix IV, pp. 487 ff; also pp. 458-459.
46. Mrs. A.S. Beveridge, "Wasiyat Nama-i Makhfi", JRAS, Jan. 1923, pp. 78-82.
47. On the basis of the script of the manuscript, Mrs. Beveridge dated it to the 18th century.
48. See Vincent A. Smith, *Akbar-the Great Mogul*, p. 220; also J.M. Shelat, Akbar, 219-221.
49. V.S. Agrawala and J.K. Agrawala, "A Rāma-Sītā Silver Half-Rupce of Akbar", JNSI, vol. IV (1942), pp. 69-70; also Rai Anand Krishna, "Rāma-Siya Mudrā" (in Hindi), Kalā-Nidhi (Quarterly Bulletin of the Bharat Kala Bhavan), Year 1, part 3, pp. 44-47.
50. Bīkrama Jit Hasrat, *Dara Shikoh : Life and Works*, pp. 216 ff.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.



# THE AYODHYĀ TEMPLE-MOSQUE DISPUTE : FOCUS ON URDU AND PERSIAN SOURCES

By

HARSH NARAIN

I

## The Dispute

All relevant British government records, followed by the *U.P. District Gazetteers-Faizabad*, compiled and published by the Congress government in U.P. in 1960, declare it with one voice that the so-called Bābarī mosque at Ayodhyā is standing on the debris of an old temple, styled Rāmājanmabhūmi temple, demolished at the behest of Bābar in 935 A.H./1528 A.D. Hindus have long been fighting for recovery of the temple. On the other hand, Muslim leaders as well as so-called secular historians and politicians have, since the last decade, been proclaiming that existence and demolition of such a temple is a myth floated by the British in pursuance of their policy of divide-and-rule.

The Muslim scholars further contend that, being a true Muslim, Bābar could not have tampered with any temple that way, for, they argue, a mosque erected on the debris of a demolished temple would be no mosque in the eye of the *Sharī'ah*. On this ground, they have offered time and again to hand over the 'Bābarī mosque' to the Hindus, provided it be shown independently of British sources that it has displaced a temple. Sayyid Ṣabāḥu'd-Dīn 'Abdu'r-Raḥmān modifies the stand thus : 'It is also thinkable that some mosque was erected close to or at a short distance from a temple demolished for some special reason, but never was a mosque built on the site of a temple anywhere.'<sup>1</sup>

Well, granting for the nonce that the 'Bābarī mosque' cannot be shown to have displaced a temple, there are thousands of mosques which can indisputably be<sup>2</sup>.

Will the offer hold good for them? And what about the Ka'bah? Was it not converted from an idol-temple, a temple housing as many as three hundred sixty idols of gods and goddesses ?

The position of the *Sharī'ah* on the issue will be explored in Chapter ; VIII, *infra*.

In connexion with the temple-mosque dispute, the so-called secular scholars tend often to belittle or ignore the relevance, value, and power of the Hindus' indomitable faith in Rāma and his place of birth and question the historicity of Rāma, antiquity of the Rāma cult, antiquity of the existing Ayodhyā, and the mosque-site's being the birth-place of Rāma. These are important topics for historians but not very germane to the problem in hand. Existence or non-existence of some temple, believed by millions to be the Rāma-Janmabhūmi temple, followed by forcible replacement with the present mosque, is the only point at issue. Innocuous religious beliefs must be respected in a democratic spirit, even where they are found unacceptable. Otherwise, similar questions will begin to be raised on the dogmas of Islam and other religions and solution of our problem will become an impossibility.

We accordingly leave these side-issues here and proceed to consider the question of evidence adduced or adducible in regard to the temple-mosque dispute.

## II

### Types of Evidence

There is no evidence whatever that the Bābarī mosque has not displaced a Rāma-Janmabhūmī temple or any other temple or that such a temple did not exist at all. That, had it existed and been demolished, Tulasīdāsa and other contemporary Hindu writers would have referred to it, is no argument. Alexander's invasion of India is a fact, though it finds no reference in any contemporary Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, or Apabhraṁśa record. As for Tulasīdāsa, he does not take note of Akbar's even pro-Hindu reforms. The position is that Hindus of old were bad at history, worse at geography, and worst at cartography. Hence such omissions on their part are quite understandable.

Be it as it may, we have ample positive evidence to go upon of the existence and demolition of the temple. The evidence is categorizable as under :

1. Oral traditon
2. A priori reasoning
3. Archaeological finds
4. Architectural and art-historical findings
5. Documentary evidence

(1) Documents testifying to the bare existence of the temple  
*Rāmakoṭ*

(1) Sanskrit works

- (i) *Bhuṣuṇḍi-Rāmāyaṇa*
- (ii) *Badrikāśramamāhātmya*
- (iii) *Ayodhyāmāhātmya*

(2) Jaipur State records

(3) Arabic and Persian sources

- (i) Albīrūnī
- (ii) Abu'l-Faḍl
- (iii) Chitraman/Chhatraman Dās Kāyastha

(4) Travelogue of William Finch

(5) Revenue records

(2) Documents testifying to demolition of the temple

(1) British Government records

- (i) Montgomery Martin, British Surveyor, *History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, Vol. II, 1838, pp. 355-356.
- (ii) Edward Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of the East India Company*, vol. IV, 1854, pp. 739-740.
- (iii) A 10000-page manuscript by Francis Hamilton Buchanan (1807-1814) entitled *Survey of Gorakhpur District*, Vol. I, British Library, London, MS No. Eur D91, vide Sher Singh, 'Who Built the Babri Masjid?', *Daily Telegraph* for 31.10.1991, read with Durga Prasad Bhattacharya's letter in the Statesman for January 11-12, 1991. Its microfilmed set is available at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, and summary in records Nos. (i) and (ii) above.
- (iv) Surgeon General Edward Balfour, *Encyclopaedia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia*, 1858, p. 56.
- (v) P. Carnegle, *A Historical Sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad, with the Old Capitals Ajudhia and Fyzabad*, Lucknow, 1870, pp. 5-7, 19-21.
- (vi) Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh, Vol. I, 1877, pp. 6-7.
- (vii) A.F. Mettall, Report of *Settlement of the Land Revenue-Fyzabad District*, Allahabad, 1880, pp. 216-217, 220-221, 234-235, 238.

- (viii) *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, Vol. II, pp. 338-339.
- (ix) A. Fuhrer, *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Archaeological Survey of India Report, 1891, pp. 296-297.
- (x) H.R. Neville, *Barabanki District Gazetteer* (Lucknow, 1902), pp. 168-169.
- (xi) H.R. Neville, *Fyzabad District Gazetteer* (Lucknow, 1905), pp. 172-177.
- (xii) Report of the *Archaeological Survey of India* (1934).
- (xiii) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
- (2) E.V. Joshi, *U.P. District Gazetteers-Faizabad* (Lucknow, 1960), p. 352.
- (3) Order dated March 26, 1886, of Col. J.E.A. Chambier, District Judge, Fyzabad, in Civil Appeal No. 27 of 1885, Mahant Raghubīr Dās vs Secretary of State for India and Muḥammad Aṣghar.
- (3) Joseph Tieffenthaler, *Description Historique et Geographique de l'Inde* (History and Geography of India) in Latin, French translation by Jean Bernoulli in 1786. Joseph Tieffenthaler (1710-1785) toured in Oudh during 1766-1771.
- (4) Urdu and Persian Records
- (i) Application dated November 30, 1858, filed by Muḥammad Aṣghar, Khatib & Mu'adhdhin, Bābarī Masjid, for initiation of legal proceedings against 'Bairāgiyān-i Janmashhān'.
- (ii) Maulānā Ḥakīm Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-Ḥayy, *Jannah al-Mashriq wa Maṭl' an-Nūr al-Mashriq*, translated in Urdu by Shams Tabrez Khān under the title *Hindustān Islāmī 'Ahd mein* and introduced by Maulānā Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī ('Alī Miān) (Lucknow, 1973).
- (iii) Lachhmi Narain, *Asrār-i Ḥaqīqat* (assisted by Maulavi Hāshim, Lucknow, 1923).
- (iv) Muḥammad Najmu'i-Ghanī Khān Rāmpūrī, *Tārīkh-i Awadh*, five volumes (Lucknow, 1919).
- (v) Sayyid Kamālu'd-Dīn Ḥaydar Ḥasanī al-Ḥusaynī, *Qaysaru 't-Tawārīkh*, two volumes (Lucknow, 1896).
- (vi) Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan, *Diya'-i Akhtar* (Lucknow, 1878).

- (vii) Munshī Rām Sahāy, *Aḥsanu 't-Tawārīkh*, Vol. II (1879).
- (viii) Shaikh Muḥammad 'Aẓamat 'Alī Kākorwī Nāmī, *Muraqqā'-i Khusrawī* (written in 1869 but published about a century later). Its section published under the title *Amīr 'Alī Shahīd and Ma'rakah-i Hanumāngarhī* only separately in 1987 by Dr. Zaki Kakorwi is relevant.
- (ix) Mirzā Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr, *Fasānah-i 'Ibrat* (Lucknow, written about 1860 but published first in 1884).
- (x) Maulawī 'Abdu'l-Karīm's book in Persian, written probably in the beginning of the last century. Urdu translation by Maulawī 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār under the title *Gumgashṭah Ḥālāt-i Ajodh, ā Ya'nī Tārīkh-i Pārīnah-i Madīnatu 'l-Auliya* was published first at Ayodhyā before 1932 and then at Lucknow in 1979.
- (xi) Nizāmu'd-Daulah's statement in the *Awadh Akhbar*, 1876.
- (xii) Mirzā Jān, *Ḥadīqah-i Shuhadā* (Lucknow, 1856).
- (xiii) *Ṣaḥīfah-i Chihal Naṣā'ih-i Bahādurshāhī* (1707 or earlier).

### III

#### A Bird's Eye View of the Evidence from Non-Urdu-Persian Sources

The first type of evidence, evidence of tradition, is clearly in favour of the temple demolition thesis. It is malicious to ascribe the origin of the tradition to British propaganda pursuant to their (more mythical than real) 'divide and rule' policy. Apart from the questionability of imputing anything and everything to such a policy, the tradition is found to pre-exist the inception of British rule in this country. It will go home as we proceed.

No texts were composed concerning the life of the Prophet of Islam till after about 125 years of his death. Almost all we know about him comes from tradition. Likewise, the mosque built by him at Medīnah, *Masjid an-Nabiyy* as it is called, out of mud-walls, palm-leaves, and palm-trunks, is no longer visible or even traceable, thanks to the drastic overhauling and modernization it has since undergone. It is only the tradition that holds the mirror up to its identity.

It is also to be borne in mind that Hindus have never been interested in laying claim to others' places of worship in any way whatsoever, much less shedding their blood in trying to usurp them.

It may be pertinent to point out here in passing that the Rāma cult or worship of the idol of Rāma is not too non-ancient to preclude the possibility of an old enough Rāma temple predating the inception of Muslim rule in Avadh/Ayodhyā. From the way Samudragupta remembers Rāghava, viz. Rāma, it is not illegitimate to infer that he did not look upon Rāma as a god or an incarnation of Viṣṇu. His partly broken Eran stone inscription purports to say that in giving away gold in charity etc. he brought low Pṛthu, Rāghava and others<sup>3</sup>.

Yet, not long after him, in the sixth century A.D., Varāhamihira is found laying down rules for carving out images of Daśaratha's son Rāma (*Daśaratha-tanayo Rāmaḥ*) and Viṣṇu separately in temples<sup>4</sup>. Which means that Rāma's Avatārahood or divinity was taken for granted in his time, as also that Rāma temples were already in existence then. Apart from the Rāma temples dating back to the 12th and 11th centuries A.D., there is at least one temple dedicated to Rāma on the Rāmāgiri hill by the Vākāṭaka king of Deccan in the fifth century A.D., known today as Rāmṭek, near modern Nandardhan, 30 km. north-east of Nagpur<sup>5</sup>.

Indeed, uncontradicted tradition does deserve to be given due weight.

The second type of evidence is an a priori one : It is usual for temples to be built on mounds and mounts overlooking a town. On the other hand, it is a rule with mosques to be erected within easy reach from the members of the locality, for the simple reason that they are supposed to visit it at least five times a day for offering prayer. Even Jāmī mosques are sited near markets and other such places for facility of congregational prayer. And the 'Bābarī mosque, occupies the Ramkot mound and that, too, despite the fact that its neighbourhood is said to have all along been devoid of Muslims by and large. Indeed, in his judgement in Civil Appael No. 27 of 1885, Mahant Raghubir Das versus Secretay of state for India, Col. F.E. Chambier, District Judge mentions that there are no dwelling houses in the vicinity of the mosque.<sup>6</sup> It is indeed unthinkable that the mound was not used for building a temple while for building a mosque it was. Again, association of Ayodhyā with the birth of Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu predates the advent of Islam much more so of Bābar and even earlier Muslim marauders on Indian soil. Some Gupta king is traditioned to have discovered and determined the present Ayodhyā to be the birth-place of Rāma. It is unbelievable, therefore, that Hindus

could not have thought of erecting a suitable temple for facility of his devotees.

The third type of evidence, archaeological evidence, cannot be said to be conclusive, in that Dr. B.B. Lal, who claimed to have dug out such evidence of the existence and demolition of the Rāma temple seems to have relented a little. As reported in the *Times of India* for February 12, 1991, he has come out with the suggestion to carry out further excavations at the disputed site for more light towards verification of his findings. He has remarked that 'unless further excavations are carried out, the two contending parties will continue to harp on the respective stands already taken by them.' (*loc. cit.*) His finding, however, now provisional only, is that in the disputed structure there are over a dozen pillars bearing typical Hindu sculptures and motifs which, on stylistic grounds, were assignable to the eleventh-twelfth century A.D. Besides, in a trench in the south of the structure, parallel rows of brick-bases of pillars have been found which are ascribable to the fourteenth-sixteenth century A.D. Also, it is probable that the stone-pillars incorporated in the mosque and the pillar bases found in the excavation hardly half a metre below the surface may belong to a structure that existed at the site prior to the construction of the mosque. But, disturbingly enough, Professor Suraj Bhan of Kurukshetra University reveals in the *Hindustan Times* for March 18, 1991, that Professor Lal agreed, in a personal discussion with him, that he found no evidence that the brick pillar structure in the trenches was a Hindu temple and that the stone pillars in the mosque stood on the pillar 'bases' found in the excavation. Professor Suraj Bhan stands uncontradicted till today.

The fourth, architectural and art-historical evidence has been adduced by Dr. R. Nath of Jaipur University. He has studied and compared all the ten 'Bābarī Masjid'-s, which are:<sup>7</sup>

1. the Sambhal mosque, built on a temple site with temple pillars, inscriptionally by Mīr Hindū Beg by order of Bābar in 933 A.H./1526 A.D.;
2. the Kābulī-Bāgh mosque at Panipat built by order of Bābar in 934 A.H./1527-28 to 935 A.H./1528-29 A.D. according to the three inscriptions on it as read together;
3. the mosque at Agra on the left bank of the Jamunā in the close vicinity of Bābar's Bāgh-i Zar-Afshān near the tomb of I'timād ad-Dawlah. It has no inscription. It has been thoroughly renovated and beyond recognition;

the temple. But, then, same is the case with the Sambhal mosque, which is admitted on all hands to have replaced a temple and which displays unmistakable temple features.

Out of the documents bearing upon the temple-mosque dispute under consideration, we may consider first those testifying to the existence of either the temple or the mound Ramkot, on which it is standing. There are only two Sanskrit works which can be said to be somehow germane to our enquiry. Of these the *Bhuṣuṇḍi-Rāmāyaṇa* does not go beyond mentioning Hanumān, Sugrīva, Lakṣmaṇa, and Vibhīṣaṇa as guards of the forts (*koṭa-s*) of Ayodhyā<sup>11</sup>. A rather clear indication of the existence of the Rāma temple is available in the *Badrikāśramamāhātmya* of the *Skanda-purāṇa*. The word used therein for the temple is *Rāmālaya* (Rāma's house temple). It says that one who visits Ayodhyā the way enjoined sheds all one's sins and finds his abode in the house of Hari<sup>12</sup>. Likewise, for one who takes bath in the Svargadvāra and visits the Rāma temple. (*Rāmālaya*) nothing remains to be done here and he becomes perfect (*Kṛtakṛtya*)<sup>13</sup>. Another work, *Ayodhyāmāhātmya*, of the same Purāṇa refers to 'Ramajanma' (*-sthāna*) once, 'janmasthāna' twice, and 'janmabhūmi' twice<sup>14</sup>. Since paying a visit to them (*pradarśana*) is said to be infinitely meritorious, one may be inclined or tempted to take them for names of some shrine or place of worship.

The *Bhuṣuṇḍi-Rāmāyaṇa* is assignable to early 16th century. As regards the *Ayodhyāmāhātmya*, it is found quoted in the *Tīrtha-prakāśa*, being Vol. X in the *Vīramitrodaya* of Mitramiśra; in the *Kṛṣṇasandarbhā*, being the fourth Sandarbha of the *Ṣaṭsandarbha* of Jīva Goswāmin (16th century); and in a late Sanskrit work *Satyopākhyāna*, pertaining to the Rasika branch of Rāmabhakti<sup>15</sup>. The work cannot, therefore, be later than the fourteenth century A.D.

The newly discovered Jaipur State records are reported in the dailies to contain references to the *Janmasthāna* site at Ayodhyā. But I have not inspected them personally.

The oldest European traveller to Ayodhyā is William Finch (1608-1611), who refers to 'the ruins of Ramchandra's castle and houses, which the Indians acknowledge for the great God, saying that he took flesh upon him to see the tamasha of the world.' He mentions neither the mosque nor the temple and instead writes: 'In these ruins remayne certaine Bramenes, who record the names of all such Indians



as wash themselves in the river running there by...,<sup>16</sup>. It is also evident that the river Sarayū/Ghāgharā then flowed by the Ramakot.

Now about the verdict of revenue records, the first regular settlement report (1861) and later records confirm that these records are in continuation of the Summary Settlement (1858–59) as well as of the records of the Nawābī regime. Therein Janmashāna, a large complex, serves as a landmark in Kot Rāmachandra. In the first settlement report (1861), the entire complex of Janmashāna shown under *ābādī* (populated) is covered under khasrā No. 163 with ten plots with superior ownership declared in the name of Sarkār Bahādur Nazūl, and the Mahants of Janmashāna have been shown with subordinate proprietary right (*mālikān-i mātaḥat*). The map of Ḥadbast of the village Kot Rāmachandra appended to the Settlement Report (1861) shows only Janmashāna with no symbol of the mosque indicated anywhere on the plot in question. This position is maintained in later three Settlements (1301F./1893 A.D., 1344F./1939 A.D., 1397F./1989A.D.), with plot Nos. changed as per revenue practice. Even though the amended khasrā records of Nazūl Department (1931) under No. 580 put the mosque and the chabūtarā temple in Waqf possession, Mahant Raghunāth is declared as subsidiary proprietor of the entire plot. These records have not been followed, however, in the regular revenue settlements of 1936–37 and 1989–90.<sup>17</sup>

As regards British government records listed under 'Documents testifying to demolition of the temple', they are at one in the testification. It is significant that even the Faizabad District Gazetteer revised and published by the Congress government in U. P. in 1960 endorses the statement on the subject in the earlier British government records. Yet they are all suspect in the eyes of the pro-mosque agitators on the ridiculous ground that they were designed to subserve the British policy of 'divide and rule'.

These records notice, by and large, the fourteen pillars bearing Hindu religious motif, in the disputed mosque, and the tradition of the mosque's having replaced the Rāma temple at the hands of Bābar/Aurangzeb. The tradition was rife as early as 1813–14, in which it has been noted by Dr. Francis-Hamilton Buchanan in his *Survey of Gorakhpur District*, Vol. I, under No. MSS Eur D91, vide Sher Singh, 'Who Built the Babri Masjid?'; published in the *Daily Telegraph* for 31.10.1991. P. Carnegie's happens to be the oldest exhaustive account of the vandalism of Bābar and Aurangzeb *vis-a-vis* Ayodhyā temples

including the temple—mosque. A much more significant information we gather from him is that prior to the British rule in Avadh 'the Hindus and Mohammedans alike used to worship in the mosque—temple' and that 'Since British rule a railing has been put up to prevent disputes, within which in the mosque the Mohammedans pray, while outside the fence the Hindus have raised a platform on which they make their offerings.' An even fuller account may be found in the Fyzabad and Barabanki District Gazetteers by H. R. Neville (1902, 1905).

More importantly, Col. J. E. A. Chambier, the then District Judge, Fyzabad, remarked in the course of his appellate order dated March 26, 1886, on the application filed on November 30, 1858: 'It is most unfortunate that a Masjid should have been built on the land especially held sacred by the Hindus. But as that occurred 356 years ago, it is too late now to remedy the grievance.' The Judicial Commissioner W. Young supported Col. Chambier but denounced in stronger works 'the bigotry and tyranny of the emperor who purposely chose this holy spot' as site of the mosque. It is all the more significant that the pro—mosque litigant does not appear to have contested the claim that the mosque has displaced a temple. The current contest is a contemporary claptrap calculated to camouflage the issue.

The first European traveller to mention the destruction of the Ramakot castle, and construction of the mosque thereon, and the Sītā kī Rasoī and Rāma Chabūtārā by name to be in the possession of the Hindus; and to ascribe the destruction and construction to Aurangzeb/Babar was Josesh Tieffenthaler. Writes he: 'The emperor Aurangzeb destroyed the fortress called Ramkot and built at the same place a Mohammedan temple with three domes. Others say it has been built by Babar....On the left one can see a square box elevated five inches above the ground covered with lime—stone approximately 5 aunes long and 4 aunes wide. The Hindus call it Bedī which means a crib. The reason is that here existed formerly a house in which Beschān (Viṣṇu) took birth in the form of Rāma and where it is said his three brothers were also born. Subsequently Aurangzeb, and some say Babar, destroyed the place in order to prevent the heathens from practising their ceremonies. However they have continued to practise their religious ceremonies in both the places, knowing this to have been the birth place of Rāma by going around it three times and prostrating on the ground. The two areas are surrounded by a low crenelled wall. One

can enter the front room through a small door in the middle.....On the 24th of the month of Chait a great gathering of people takes place here to celebrate the birthday of Rāma and this fair is famous all over India<sup>18</sup>. It is noteworthy that the author also describes the '14 columns made of black stone 5 spans in height which occupy the site of the fortress. 12 of these columns now support the inside arcades of the mosque. Two out of these twelve are placed at the door of the cloister. Two others form part of the tomb of a certain moor. It is said that these columns, or rather the pieces of columns, which bear carvings by craftsmen have been brought from the Lanka.....by Hanuman the King of monkeys<sup>19</sup>.

Now, evidence yielded by Urdu and Persian sources appears to us to be much more important, rather conclusive, wherefore it would be worthwhile to deal with it separately.

#### IV

#### Urdu and Persian Records

The 'Bābarī, mosque at Ayodhyā bears three Persian inscriptions, which have been studied by Maulawiyya M. Ashraf Hussain in the *Epigraphia Indica* (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1965, pp. 58-62.<sup>20</sup> One of these, the epigraph of 8 couplets, says that the mosque was built by Mīr Bāqī, a noble of Bābar's court. The other two epigraphs affirm that the mosque was built by Mīr Bāqī by order of king Bābar (*ba-farmūdah-i Shāh-i Bābar*) in one epigraph and at instance of Bābar (*ba-manshā'i Bābar*) in the other.

Out of Arabic records, we are aware of only Albīrūnī who refers to Ayodhyā. He, too, however, does not go beyond roughly indicating the location of Ayodhyā: 'Marching from Bārī along the Ganges on its eastern side, you pass the following stations:—*Ajodaha* (Ayodhyā, Oudh), 25 *farsakh* from Bārī; the famous Banārasī, 20 *farsakh*<sup>21</sup>.

Now Persian sources. Abu 'l-Faḍl adverts to Ayodhyā thrice. 'Ayodhyā, commonly called Awadh. The distance of forty *kos* to the east, and twenty to the north is regarded as sacred ground. On the ninth of the light half of the month of *Chaitra* a great religious festival is held<sup>22</sup>. Again: Rāma 'was accordingly born during the *Tretā Yuga* on the ninth of the light half of the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) in the city of Ayodhyā, of Kausalyā wife of Rājā Daśaratha<sup>23</sup>. And finally : *Awadh* (Ayodhyā) is one of the largest cities of India. It is situated in longitude 118, 6', and latitude 27, 22'. In ancient times its populous site covered an extent of 148 *kos* in length and 36 in breadth, and it is

esteemed one of the holiest places of antiquity. It was the residence of Rāmachandra who in the *Tretā* age combined in his own person both the spiritual supremacy and the kingly office.<sup>24</sup> The author adds : 'At the distance one *kos* from the city, the *Gogra*, after the junction with the Sai, (*Sarju*) flows below the fort. Near the city stand two considerable tombs of six and seven yards in length respectively. The vulgar believe them to be the resting-places of Seth and the prophet Job, and extraordinary tales are related of them. Some say that at *Ratanpur* is the tomb of Kabīr, the assertor of the unity of God<sup>25</sup>.

There is another, later writer, Chitraman/Chhatraman Dās Rā'izadah Kāyatha, who in his *Chihār Gulshan*, written in Persian in 1173 A.H./1759-60 A.D., makes a similar observation in these words : 'Oudh is an ancient city. In olden times, it had a populated area of 48 *kos* in length and 38 *kos* in breadth. They count it amongst important sanctuaries. Close to this city, there are two tombs seven yards long each. People describe it as the tombs of Seth and Job, relate tales, and sifting the ground obtain gold. It is the birth-place of Rājā Rāmachandra, who was one of the ten *Avatāra*-s, that is, a perfect manifestation of God. Sītā was married to him<sup>26</sup>.

Now we take up documents throwing light on the replacement of the Rāma temple with the 'Bābarī mosque'. We should like, at the outset, to warn our readers that the Urdu authors to be discussed have invariably erred in dating the event as 923 A.H./1517 A.D. instead of 935 A.H./1528 A.D. The source of the error is a misreading of the date given in one of the inscriptions of the disputed structure in the form of Arabic/Persian letters arranged into words, which are : 'b u w a d k h a i r b ā q ī'. Rendered into cardinal numerals, the expression comes to 935 (A.H.), as under :

b	=	2
w	=	6
d	=	4
kh	=	600
i	=	10
r	=	200
b	=	2
a	=	1
q	=	100
i	=	10
		935

The authors' error lies in omitting 'b u w a d'. (The 'u', 'a', 'a', are diacritical marks, which are not counted.)

The first document from a Muslim pen bearing upon the existence and demolition of the Rāma temple howsoever indirectly is an application filed by Muḥammad Aṣghar, Khaṭīb (preacher) and Mu'adhdhin (caller), 'Bābarī Masjid', on November 30, 1958, praying for initiation of legal proceedings against '*Bairāgīyān-i Janmashān*', calling the mosque '*masjid-i Janmashān*' and the courtyard near the arch and the pulpit within the boundary of the mosque '*maqām Janmashān kā*'. The Bairāgī-s had raised a platform in the courtyard which the applicant wanted dismantled. He mentions that the *Janmashān* area had been lying unkempt/in disorder (*parīshān*) for hundreds of years and that Hindus carried on worship there (*maqām Janmashān kā ṣad-hā baras se parīshān parā rahtā thā. Ahl-i Hunūd pūjā karte the.*)<sup>27</sup>.

Now, if the mosque (once described by the applicant as '*masjid-i Bābarī*'), is the *Janmashān* mosque, its courtyard is the *Janmashān*, and Hindus had all along been carrying on their worship (and all that it implies) there, it can safely be presumed that there used to be some construction there as part of a (*Janmashāna*) temple, which came partly to be destroyed and partly converted into the existing mosque. And the Hindus had no alternative but to make do with the temple-less courtyard. It is indeed unthinkable that they might have been carrying on worship without a proper temple on such a sacred place and for such a long time.

Our second, Urdu document is *Jannah al-Mashriq wa Matl 'an-Nūr' al-Mashriq*, Arabic original by Maulānā Ḥakim Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-Hayy, translated by Maulānā Shams Tabrez Khān under the title *Hindustān Islāmī 'Ahd mein* in Urdu, and introduced by the author's illustrious son Maulānā Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī alias 'Alī Miān. The author describes the 'Bābarī Masjid' thus : 'This mosque was constructed by Bābar at Ajodhyā which Hindus call the birth-place of Rāmachandrajī. There is a well known story about his wife Sītā. It is said that Sītā had a temple here in which she lived and cooked food for her husband. On that very site Bābar constructed this mosque in 923 A.H.'<sup>28</sup>.

Our third Urdu document is the *Asrār-i Ḥaqīqat* by Lachhmi Narain Ṣadar Qānūngo assisted by Maulawī Hāshimī, published at Lucknow in 1923. This book also gives details about the replacement of the temple by the mosque.

Our fourth Urdu document is Muḥammad Najmu 'l-Ghanī Khān Rāmpūrī's *Tārīkh-i Awadh* in five volumes, published at Lucknow in 1919. The author writes : 'At Ajodhyā, where there stood the temple of Rāmachandraji's *Janmashān*, and there is Sītā Jī kī Rasoī adjacent to it, king Bābar got a magnificent mosque built there, which is the *Jāmi' Masjid*, in 933 A.H. under the patronage of Sayyid Mūsā 'Āshiqān, the date of which is *Khayr-i Bāqī* (923). Till date the mosque is called Masjid-i Sītā kī Rasoī. And that temple is extant by the side....Bābar got the mosque built after demolishing the *Janmashān*, and used in his mosque the stone of the same *Janmashān*, which was richly engraved and precious *kasauī* stone and which survives even today'<sup>29</sup>.

Our fifth Urdu document is the *Qayṣaru 't-Tawārikh*, published at Lucknow in two volumes in 1869 by Sayyid Kamālu 'd-Dīn Ḥaydar Ḥasanī-u 'l-Ḥusaynī. It gives a lot of details about the demolition of the temple.

Our sixth Urdu document is Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan's *Diyā'-i Akhtar*, published at Lucknow in 1878. It says: 'Sayyid Musā 'Āshiqān built a mosque after levelling down Rājā Rāmachandra's palace and Sītā's kitchen by order of Zahīru-'d-Dīn Bābar, king of Dihlī, in 923 A.H., and king Muḥiyū 'd-Dīn Aurangzeb 'Ālamgīr built another mosque at the same place'<sup>30</sup>.

Our seventh Urdu document is the *Muraqqa'-i Khusrawī*, otherwise known as *Tawārikh-i Awadh*, by Shaykh Muḥammad 'Aẓamat 'Alī Kākōrī Nāmī (1811-1893), who happened to be an eye-witness to much that took place during king Wājīd 'Alī Shāh's regime. The work was completed in 1869 but could see the light of day as late as 1986, short, however, of its section published separately in 1987 under the title *Amīr 'Alī Shahīd aur Ma'rakah-i Hanumāngarhī*, which section alone is germane to our enquiry. The opening paragraph of this separately published part is reproduced here, omitting very few details : 'According to old records, it has been a religious rule with Muslim rulers, after the triumph of Sayyid Sālār Ma'ūd Ghāzī, to build mosques, monasteries, and inns, spread Islam, and put a stop to blasphemous practices (*bid'at*), wherever they found manifestation (of *Kuīr*). Accordingly, even as they cleared up Mathura, Bindraban etc. from the rubbish of non-Islamic practices, the magnificent Bābarī mosque (*masjid-i sar-baland-i Bābarī*) came up in 923 A.H. under the patronage of Sayyid Musā 'Āshiqān in the *Janmashān* temple (*butkhāne Janmashān meīn*) in Faizabad-Awadh which was a great

place of (idol-worship) and the capital of Rāma's father<sup>31</sup>. Again: 'Among the Hindus it was known as *Sītā kī Rasoi*'<sup>32</sup>.

Our eighth Urdu document is the *Fasānah-i 'Ibrat*, written by Mirzā Rajab 'Alī Beg Surur (1787-1867) in 1860 circa but published first in 1884. It says that 'a glorious, sky-high mosque was built up during king Bābar's regime on the spot where *Sītā kī Rasoi* tomb (?) is situated, in Awadh. During this Bābarī (dispensation), Hindus had no guts to be a match for the Muslims. (The mosque) was built in 923 A.H. under the patronage of Sayyid Mīr 'Āshiqān.....There (on the Hanumāngarhī) Aurangzeb constructed a mosque.....The Bairāgī-s effaced the mosque and erected a temple in its place. Then they intruded into the '*Maṣjīd-i Bābarī*' where the *Sītā kī Rasoi* is situated.'<sup>33</sup> The author adds that 'formerly, it is Shaykh 'Alī Ḥazīn's observation which held good' and quotes his Persian couplet :

*Bi-biñ karāmat-i butkhānah-i marā ay Shaykh !*

*Ki chūn kharāb shawad khānah-i Khudā gardad.*

Translation : 'O Shaykh ! just witness the miracle of my house of idols : When desecrated/destroyed, it becomes a house of God (i.e. a mosque).' Purporting to mean that formerly temples were demolished for construction of mosques, Surūr laments that 'times havē so changed that now the mosque was demolished for construction of a temple (on the Hanumāngarhī)'<sup>34</sup>.

The ninth in this series of documents is a work in Persian by a Muslim saint named Maulawiyy 'Abdu 'l-Karīm, who belonged to the line of Sayyid Mīr Mūsā, 'Āshiqān at whose instance Bābar is said to have ordered destruction of the temple and construction of a mosque at its site. It appears to have been written in the beginning of the last century. It was translated into Urdu by Maulawiyy 'Abdu 'l-Gnaffār under the title *Gungashtah Ḥālāt-i Ajodhyā ya'nī Tārikh-i Pārīnah-i Madīnatu 'l-Auliyyā*, which saw the light of day before 1932<sup>35</sup>. Its second edition was brought out by the Nāmī Press, Lucknow, in 1981. The first edition carried an account of how Bābar chose to demolish the Rāma temple and build a mosque on its site under the influence of Sayyid Mīr Mūsā 'Āshiqān. But the entire account is conspicuous by its absence from the second editon. I have a xerox copy of the last, 1981 edition as well as of page 40 only of the earlier edition. This page contains a reference to the '*Koṭ Rājā Rāmchandra Jī* (Rāmakoṭ), '*makān-i paidā'ish*' (birth-place), and '*bāwarchikhānah Rājah-i mauṣūf kā*, (the said Rājā's kitchen), and adds: 'And now they call it

*Janmasthan* and *Rasoī-ī Sītā Jī*. Having demolished these structures, king Bābar got a majestic mosque constructed. The reason for construction of this mosque will follow in the sequel<sup>36</sup>. The tragic tale of vandalism and its subsequent details promised here have been totally excluded from the 1981 edition (if not from the 1979 edition also) for obvious reasons. This edition, too, contains certain relevant indications, however. According to it, for example, Bābar came all the way from Kabul to Awadh in disguise, donning the garb of a faqīr. Here he met Shah Jalāl and Sayyid Mūsā 'Āshiqān and took some pledge before these saints in lieu of their blessings to conquer Hindustān. The pledge has not been spelled out here, but it has been made plain that it is in pursuance of this pledge (*iqrār*) that he got the mosque raised after conquering this country<sup>37</sup>. It is obvious that construction of just a mosque of normal size and shape is nothing compared with the conquest of India to secure which Bābar had to undertake the arduous journey from Kābul to Ayodhyā in disguise. We may, therefore, take it for granted that demolition of the Rāma temple did form part of the pledge.

The information contained in Maulawiyya 'Abdu' l-Karīm's book is so germane to our enquiry and so pregnant with implications that I consider it necessary to discuss its relevant text in full. The author says: 'When a boy, Sulṭān Bābar, who belonged to the family of Amīr Timūr, came from Kābul to the town of Awadh in disguise, donning the garb of an ascetic. These days, the town of Awadh was under the Sultanate of Sikandar Lodhī and the place was a (second) capital of the Sultanate. Sulṭān Bābar paid a reverential visit to His Holiness Shāh Jalāl and Sire Musā 'Āshiqān and solicited occult favour from them, so that the ancestral Sultanate of Hindustān might come into his hands thanks to the blessings of those saints. Prince Bābar took leave of those personages, went to Kābul, mustered an army, brought it to Hindustān, and fought with Sulṭān Sikandar Lodhī (sic) at the (battle-) field of Pānipat.....'<sup>38</sup>. A little later, the author adds: 'Accordingly, in fulfilment of the pledge king Bābar had take before those saints, Bābar appointed Mīr Bāqī to it and got a magnificent mosque constructed.....'<sup>39</sup>. Here the pledge taken by Bābar has not been specified. Avadhvasi Lala Sita Ram uses the original edition of the work, from which it appears that the latest edition leaves out the saints' reaction to his request, which is to this effect: "The faqīr-s answered that they would bless him if he promised to build a mosque after



demolishing the *Janmasthan* temple. Bābar accepted the Faqīr-s' suggestion and returned to his homeland<sup>40</sup>.

This anecdote lights up an unsuspected corner of Bābar's career, not reflected in his memoirs. Yet it receives confirmation from the *Tārīkh-i Dā'ūdī* by 'Abdu 'llāh, which contains a remarkable account of Bābar Qalandar (Faqīr)'s meeting with Sulṭān Sikandar Lodī. Writes 'Abdu 'llāh : 'In one of the histories it has come to notice that in those very days Bābar Bādshāh, whose name was Bābar Qalandar, came to Dihlī adorning himself with the garb of an ascetic and entered the royal palace. One of the courtiers brought it to the royal ears that a *qalandar* from among sages is standing in the court feasting on the elegance of the Sulṭān. Sulṭān Sikandar bade some of his courtiers bring him in. When Bābar Qalandar emerged from the door, he immediately shook hands with the Sulṭān, by the Sulṭān's taking his hand into his inferred the greatness of fortune in the Sulṭān's hand, and felt in his heart that the affluence of his Sulṭānate is still abundant. Sulṭān Sikandar asked him, "With what are faqīr-s exalted?" Bābar Qalandar said, "With Qalandar-hood." The Sulṭān uttered this couplet extempore (rather sardonically):

*Hazār nuktah-ī bārik-tar 'zi mū īn-jā 'st*  
*Na har ki sar ba-tarāshad qalandarī dānad.*

(Here there are thousand finesses finer than hair. Not everyone with shaven head knows *qalandar*-hood.) Bābar Qalandar glanced at the Sulṭān with the feeling of being humbled and uttered this couplet :

*Na har kasī ki kulah kaj nihād-o tund nashist*  
*Kulāh-dārī-o ā'in-i sarwarī dānad.*

(Not everyone who puts on an awry cap and sits tight knows cap-wearing and the way of kingship.)<sup>41</sup> The Sulṭān was pleased at this and asked his courtiers to take due care of board and lodging of the *faqīr-s* including Bābar Qalandar. After a few days, the Sulṭān wanted to see Bābar Qalandar, but the latter had left the very first day. The Sulṭān began to squeeze his hands in repentance and remarked that *Humā* (a bird of paradise) had fallen into his hand.<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting that Bābar is mentioned as Bābar Qalandar in one of the inscriptions of the 'Bābarī' mosque, which is rather too clumsy for translation :

*Fasānah dar jahān Bābar Qalandar*  
*Ki shud dar daur-i gīfī kāmrānī.*

In fact, Bābar himself appears to be responsible for the epithet Qalandar, none else would have dared to call him so. Abu 'l-Faḍl quotes a quatrain of Bābar which reads as under :<sup>43</sup>

*Darwīshān rā 'garcheh na az khwīshānam*  
*Laik az dil-o jān mu 'taqīd-i īshānam*  
*Dūr ast ma-gu-i shāhī az darwīshī*  
*Shāh īm walī bandah-i darwīshānam.*

(Though I do not belong to the fraternity of *darwīsh*-es, yet I am their follower in heart and soul. Say not kingship is a far cry from *darwīsh*-hood. I am a king but yet the slave of *darwīsh*-es.) It would be pertinent to point out here that Firishtah accounts for Bābar's reputation as a *qalandar* thus: 'Whatever the monarchs had amassed over long years, (Bābar) spent out in one sitting, (whereby the cause of his reputation as a *qalandar* became known to the world.' (*Ān-cheh bādshāhān ba-sāl-hā-i darāz andokhtah būdand dar yak majlis šarf numūdah wajh-i shuhrat-i ān-ḥaḍrat ba-qalandarī ma'lūm-i 'ālamiyān gasht.*)<sup>44</sup>

The foregoing ninth was a Persian-Urdu document, throwing a flood of light on the temple demolition and erection of the mosque in its stead. The same document contains a statement of Nizāmu 'd-Daulah, the Kashmir ambassador to the court Awadh, published in the *Awadh Akhbār*, 1876, according to which there did stand temple of Mahārājā Rāmachandra's birth (*Mahārājā Rāmachandra ke tawallud kā mandir*), testified to by Bābar Shāh's constructing the temple on the same site (*maqām-i tawallud ka thubūt to isī jagah par Bābar Shāh ke masjid banāne per hotā hai*), while according to the Hindus this sign of birth has been extant for lakhs of years and appears to be so (*jab-ki ba-qaul Hunūd ke lākhoṅ baras kā yah nishān-i tawallud bāqī hai aur ma'lūm hotā hai*).<sup>45</sup> Thus, this may be treated as our tenth document.

Now the eleventh in the series, an Urdu document, viz. the *Ḥaḍīqah-i Shuhadā'* by Mirzā Jān, published at Lucknow in 1856. Mirzā Jān was an eye-witness as well as active participant in the crescentade (*Jihād*) led by Amīr 'Alī Ameṭhawī during Wājīd 'Alī Shāh's regime in 1855 for recapture of Hanumāngarhī (a few hundred yards from the 'Bābarī' mosque) from the Hindus. The fight spread to the 'Bābarī' mosque, which came into repossession of the Hindus—for a while, it seems. From a private letter of the Governor-General, Coonoor, October 6, 1855, it appears that the work was banned

immediately as one of the 'most inflammatory pamphlets on the Mussulman side.....being circulated throughout the country, notwithstanding the seizure of them wherever they can be found....' under the Governor General's ordinance<sup>46</sup>. Does it still lie in anyone's mouth to assert that the temple story is a creation of the British with a view to setting Hindus and Muslims against each other ?

Well, the work is extremely rare these days, though I possess a xerox copy of it. An abridgement of the work appears as chapter IX in the *Wājid 'Alī Shāh aur Un-kā 'Ahd* (Lucknow: Kitab Manzil, 1957).

Mirzā Jān writes: 'From old records and the tradition it is gathered...that after the triumph of Sālār Mas'ūd Ghāzī, wherever in the territory of heavenlike Hindustan they found magnificent Hindu temples, Muslim rulers of the past constructed mosques, monasteries, and inns, greatly spread Mohammedanism by appointing mu'adhdhins, teachers, care-takers, devastated the paraphernalia of idolatry and bell-ringing, gave grace and glammer to Islam, and vanquished the army of *Kāfir*-s. And this to such an extent that all over Hindustān no trace of. Infidelity was left except Islam and no practice of idol-worship survived except worship of God. And the few Hindus who remained safe from the hands of the Muslims became the slave of Islam, began to pay *Kharāj*, became subdued and subjects all.....In short, even as the Muslim rulers cleared up Mathurā, Banaras etc. from the dust and dross of *Kufr*, they cleared up Faizābād and Awadh also from the filth of false belief, inasmuch as it is a great place of worship and was the capital of Rāma's father. Here they broke the temples and left no stone-hearted idol intact. Where there was a big temple, there they got a big mosque constructed, and, where there was a small pavilion, there they erected a plain camp mosque/enclosure. Accordingly, what a majestic mosque Bābar Shāh has got constructed in 923 A.H. under the patronage of Sayyid Mūsā 'Ashiqān: Its date is 'Khair-i Bāqī'<sup>47</sup>. It is still known far and wide as the *Sitā kī Rasoī* mosque<sup>48</sup>.

The oldest extant and most interesting Muslim testimony to the replacement of the temple by a mosque is still to come. Besides stating, as we have seen, on the basis of old records (*kutub-i sābiqah*), that the Muslim rulers of the past used to demolish temples and break down idols at Ayodhyā in pursuance of their policy of rooting out *Kufr* and that Bābar did replace the Rāma temple by the 'Bābarī mosque', Mirzā Jān harks back to a Persian text entitled *Ṣahīfah-ī Chihal Naṣā'ih-ī Bahādurshāhī* (the Bahādurshāhī Book of Forty Sermons), ascribes it

to a daughter of Bahādurshāh 'Ālamgīr (full name Bahādurshāh Shāh-i 'Ālam, here surnamed 'Ālamgīr either inadvertently or on the basis of his being Aurangzeb 'Ālamgīr's son), claims to have found a copy of the book, made in 1231 A.H./1816 A.D. in the library of Mirzā Ḥydar Shukoh s/o Mirzā Sulaymān Shukoh (s/o Prince Dārā Shukoh), and quotes from it verbatim (*hū ba-hū*) a passage in original of some twelve lines setting out the twentyfifth out of the forty sermons, to the effect that, keeping the triumph of Islam in view, devout Muslim rulers should keep all idolaters in subjection to Islam, brook no laxity in realization of *Jizyah*, grant no exemption to Hindu Rājā-s from dancing attendance on 'īd days and from waiting on foot outside mosques till the end of prayer (*namāz*) and discourse (*khuṭbah*), and 'keep in constant use for Friday and congregational prayer the mosques built to strengthen Islam after demolishing temples of idolatrous Hindus situated at Mathura, Varanasi and Awadh etc., which the wretched *Kāfir*-s have, according to their faith, adjudged to be the birth-place of Kanhaiyā in one case, *Sītā Rasoi* in another, and Hanumān's abode in a third and claim that after conquest of Laṅkā Rāmachandra established him there. And, as has been stressed, idol-worship must not continue publicly, nor must the sound of bell reach Muslim ears<sup>49</sup>. It would be pertinent to point out that as indicated by Kamālu'd-Dīn Haydar, the mosque became known as *Sītā Rasoi* mosque<sup>50</sup>. Mirzā Jān does not mention the name of Bahādurshāh's daughter, nor does he indicate the date of composition/publication of her Persian book. The king had at least one daughter, Dahr Afroz Bānu Begam, who died at the age of 40 on January 25, 1703, at Kabul. If she is the writer of the book, the date of its composition/publication can be supposed to be the last decade of the seventeenth century or even 1703. There is one more fact which seems to bear upon this issue. According to Foreign Department Political Consultations, December 28, 1855, No. 450, the Chief Minister of king Wājid 'Alī Shāh 'referred to a book which existed in the King's library written in the reign of Bahādurshāh about the year 1707 A.D. which contained an account of the masjid at Hanumāngarhī<sup>51</sup>. And the Persian text under examination does contain, inter alia, an account of the Hanumāngarhī mosque, which appears to be the oldest extant record on the subject. In fact, while quoting the above passage from the work, Mirzā Jān prefaces it with a special mention of the Hanumāngarhī mosque in these words : 'In short, these four mosques ('Babari mosque', Rāma Darbār mosque, Fort

mosque, and Hanumāngarhī mosque) built by the rulers of the past were situated at Ayodhyā like four pillars of the faith. And there is clear description thereof in the books of history, particularly (existence of) the Hanumāngarhī mosque is established by a passage of the *Ṣaḥīfah-i Shāhī* (*Sahī fah-i Chihal Naṣā'ih-i Bahādurshāhī*), which the/a daughter of Bahādurshāh 'Ālamgīr has written (comprising) forty sermons.....<sup>52</sup>. This creates a strong presumption in favour of the view that it is this book which the Chief Minister of king Wājid 'Alī Shāh had in mind and that, therefore, its composition/publication can be dated to circa 1707 A.D. But, in that case, its authorship will have to be ascribed to some other daughter of Bahādurshāh I.

In fact, Mirzā Jān is not the only medieval writer to refer to the *Ṣaḥīfah-i Chihal Naṣā'ih-i Bahādurshāhī*. While relating the tale of destruction of the Rāma temple, Mirzā Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr, whom we have had occasion to notice earlier, hints at his sources including the work under examination thus: 'It has been dealt with in books of history. And in the *Ṣaḥīfah-i Bahādurshāhī* it has come to be described in detail, with reference to year and date. Whoever may choose may look into it<sup>53</sup>. The last sentence of the excerpt seems to suggest that the work referred to therein under a shortened title was easily available during the first half of the last century, may be in print.

If the Persian work, constituting our twelfth document in the series of documents in Urdu and Persian, is extant anywhere in print or in manuscript, it needs to be traced out and salvaged without loss of time. My personal attempt in this behalf, with the meagre resources at my disposal, has not yet borne fruit and I had to make do with furnishing to VHP and through them to AIBMAC only the passage quoted from it by Mirzā Jān.

## V

### Attempts to Sidetrack, Slight and Suppress Evidence

Of quite a few casualties of the standards of academic integrity at the hands of self-styled 'secular' academics, those in the field of medieval Indian historiography happen to be the worst. And, ironically enough, it is they who have begun to storm the world by raising the bogey of distortion of history. Broadly speaking, deliberate distortion of history is a phenomenon of recent growth, say of the current half-century. It has been unknown, by and large, to the main line of Indian historiography. Thanks to the growing politicization of the aristocracy of letters, the unwary are being fed on the misconception that tales of

tyranny over Hindus under the Sulṭāns and Mughuls are all fabricated by colonialistically motivated British and pro-British historians in pursuance of the much-maligned British policy of 'divide and rule', whereas the truth of the matter is that the tales have been told by medieval Muslim chroniclers—contemporaries, near-contemporaries, and eye-witnesses—as well as by some of the tyrants themselves. A veritable brain-washing of the nation is under way turning history upside down and writing off the persecution of Hindus through various subterfuges.

The method followed by such historians consists of a number of assumptions. Fir, Muslim tyranny over Hindus is sought to be ruled out. When researches of Sarkār and the like are referred to, they are dismissed as communal historians. When British historians, compilers and translators are referred to, they are brushed aside as colonialists interested in setting one community against the other. When medieval Muslim historians are referred to, they are discarded as Darbārī psychopants. When the Jihādīc zeal and even candid confessions of such Hindu-baitera as Maḥmūd Ghaznawī, Tīmūr, Fīrozshāh Tughluq, Aurangzeb and Ṭipū are referred to, they are laughed away as a cloak for politico-economic motive. As K.S. Lal would have it, 'If the medieval chronicler cries out "Jihad", it is not heard; but if he cries aloud persistently, it is claimed that he never meant it.'<sup>54</sup> Finally, if the Jihādīc character of the tyranny stands out in bold relief all the same, it is contended that religious persecution was the order of the day.

Quite in keeping with it all, Professor 'Irfān Ḥabīb<sup>55</sup> adjudges the Rāma temple demolition story as a myth and ascribes its creation to 'Muslim communalist bravado' in order to score a point, viz. in order to proclaim the superiority of Muslim power over Hindu, though there is not a single example of any Muslim author creating the fiction of demolition of any temple which either never existed or was never demolished. Cases can be cited of Muslim writers' ignoring or omitting facts of temple-demolition but not a single one of fabricating a fiction thereof. It must not be forgotten that Mirzā Jān was a crescentader for recovery from the Bairāgi-s of the two Ayodhyā temple-mosques in question and that his case would have greatly bolstered in the court of the king of Awadh if the demolition story had been denied altogether as is being done today. The irony of the situation is that, when people were not in a position to produce evidence of the temple-demolition, they were criticised for sustaining something without evidence. When

Britishers' evidence was produced, it was rejected as being motivated. When other evidence is also forthcoming, it is being rejected in its own way. God knows what type of evidence will satisfy people of this ilk. The historian has the knack of extracting history from brick and stone. And, here, we have a lot of direct literary evidence, and even from the pen of pro-mosque authors.

Critics would do well to remember that demolition of the Rāma temple has never been doubted save in our own time. They sometimes resort to argument from silence. Bābar, Mīr Bāqī and Tulasidāsa mention neither the temple nor its demolition, hence, they conclude, there was neither the temple nor its demolition. If Bābar and Mīr Bāqī had mentioned the same, they would have been dubbed liars displaying Muslim communal bravado! As regards Bābar, who does not know that his diary, *Tuzuk-i-Bābarī/Bābarnāmah*, for the period April 3 to September 17, 1528, has been missing ever since, presumably, the last days of Bābar, with the result that it could not find place even in the Persian translation by 'Abdu-r Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān?<sup>56</sup> And from the *Bābarnāmah*, it appears that Bābar reached Awadh or thereabout after March 28, 1528, and went out a-hunting in its vicinity on April 2, 1528. As for Mīr Bāqī's silence, it is nothing out of the way. Bābar's general Hindū Beg demolished the Hari Mandir at Sambhal and built a mosque on its site, but the inscription thereon is silent about the demolition, nor does Bābar himself diarize this fact. Prudence suggests itself to be one reason behind the silence.

Again: If non-mention of the demolition of the Rāma temple by Bābar in his diary be proof positive of its non-demolition or non-existence, non-mention of the 'Bābarī' mosque at Ayodhyā would amount to disproof of the existence of the mosque itself, for it is inscribed with the words that it was built by order of Babar ! Indeed, non-mention is seldom a safe anchorage for such conclusions.

There has for sometimes past been in evidence a sinister move in certain quarters to suppress, conceal, or eliminate primary sources in Urdu and Persian testifying to the replacement of the Rāma temple with the 'Bābarī' mosque. Examples follow :

We have referred to the *Hindustān Islāmī 'Ahd mein*, an Urdu translation of an Arabic book by 'Alī Miān's father, containing a reference to the demolition of the Rāma temple. The book is found to have been taken out of circulation and even removed from certain libraries. An English version of the Arabic text appeared in 1977.

Undue liberties have been taken with the translation. Mr. Arun Shourie writes: 'Each reference to each of these mosques (of Ayodhya, Jaunpur etc.) having been constructed on the sites of temples with, as in the case of the mosque at Benares, the stones of the very temple which was demolished for that very purpose have been censored out of the English version of the book! No accident that Mr. Shourie adds : 'Indeed, there is not just censorship but substitution. In the Urdu volume we are told in regard to the mosque at Qannauj for instance that "This mosque stands on an elevated ground inside the fort of Qannauj. It is well known that it was built on the foundation of some Hindu temple (that stood) here." In the English volume we are told in regard to the same mosque that "It occupied a commanding site, believed to have been the place earlier occupied by an old and decayed fort."<sup>57</sup>

Another such example is the fate of the *Muraqqa'-i Khusrawī* by Shaikh Muḥammad 'Azamat 'Alī Kākorwī Nāmī, an eye-witness to much that happened during Wājid 'Alī Shāh's regime. The work was completed in 1969 but could see the light of day only in 1986, and that, too, after axing one whole section from it. Only one manuscript of the work is extant and that is in the Tagore Library of Lucknow University. A press copy of it was prepared by Dr. Zakī Kākorwī for publication with the financial assistance of the Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad Memorial Committee, U.P., Lucknow. The Committee vetoed the publication out of its funds of the section dealing with the crescentade led by Amir 'Alī Amethawī for recapture of the Hanumāngarhī as also the 'Bābarī' mosque, on the ground that its publication would not be opportune in view of the prevailing political situation.<sup>58</sup> The result was that Dr. Kākorwī had to publish the book minus that section in 1986. Later, however, he made bold to publish the section separately under the title *Amir 'Alī Shahīd aur Ma'rakah-i Hanumāngarhī* in 1987 from the Markaz-i Adab-i Urdu, 137, Shahganj, Lucknow-3. We have quoted from it earlier. Dr. Kākorwī rightly laments that 'suppression of any part of any old composition or compilation like this can create difficulties and misunderstandings for future historians and researchers.'<sup>59</sup>

Dr. Kākorwī has one more such reather to his cap. The original edition of Mirzā Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr's *Fasānah-i 'Ibrat*, comprised of a historical narrative of the last four rulers of Awadh, was compiled around the middle of the last century but saw the light of day in 1884



A.D. It contained a reference to the replacement of the Rāma temple with the 'Bābarī, mosque. Sayyid Mas'ūd Ḥasan Rizwī Adīb omitted the reference altogether in its second edition in 1957. Had Dr. Kākorwī not thought it fit to supply the omission in his third, 1977 edition, we would have been deprived of a significant source of our knowledge of the temple's destruction. It redounds to Dr. Kākorwī's credit that he has drawn pointed attention to this valuable source by also including the account as an appendix to the *Amīr 'Alī Shahīd aur Ma'rakah-i Hanumāngarhī*.

A fourth such case of suppression of evidence is the latest edition of the *Gungashtah Ḥālāt-i Ajodhyā Ya'nī Tārīkh-i Pārīnah-i Madīnatu 'l-Awliyā'* by Maulawī 'Abdu 'l-Ghaffār, which came out in 1981. Its original edition carried an account of how Bābar was led to replace the temple by the mosque under the influence of Sayyid Musā 'Āshiqān and Sayyid Jalāl Shāh. The whole account has been excluded from the current edition. I have a xerox copy of page 40 of the earlier edition, quoted by me earlier.

It is a pity that, thanks to our thoughtless 'secularism' and waning sense of history, such primary sources of medieval Indian history are presently in danger of suppression or total extinction. Instead of launching sustained research in the matter, historians of a particular persuasion are going about rejecting relevant data out of hand, imputing unfounded motive to the recorders themselves. The state in general and ICHR in particular must do something to protect and retrieve such invaluable documents from unscrupulous hands.

## VI

### Was Bābar too Tolerant to Demolish the Temple ?

No, Bābar was anything but too tolerant to demolish the temple. Temple demolition had been the order of the day ever since the advent of Islam, and there is no reason to believe that Bābar struck out a new line for himself and anticipated his grandson (Akbar). By all accounts, he continued the policy of his predecessors in an orthodox fashion, except possibly for hitting Hindus a little harder by subjecting them to pay stamp duties (*tamaghah*) over and above the *Jizyah* and Pilgrimage Tax already imposed on them to the exclusion of Muslims.

An officer of Bābar, Hīndū Beg, converted a Hindu temple at Sambhal, Hari Mandir, into a mosque.<sup>60</sup> His Ṣadr, Shaikh Zain, demolished a number of temples when he occupied it<sup>61</sup> And his

destruction of Jaina idols at Urwa near Gwalior?<sup>62</sup> He was exhorted by a noble at Kabul to conquer India with the remark that God and Muḥammad engaged you to extinguish the idolatry of the Indians.<sup>63</sup> He raised a tower of Hindu skulls at Fatehpur Sikri and Chanderi and assumed the title of *Ghāzī* (victor in *Jihād*). He makes no bones about it. He writes: 'After this victory I use the epithet "*Ghāzī*" in the imperial titles. On the *Fathnāmah* (official account of the victory), I write the following verse :

For the love of the faith  
I became a wanderer in the desert  
I became the antagonist of pagans and Hindus  
I strove to make myself a martyr  
Thanks to the Almighty God who has made me a Ghāzī.<sup>64</sup>

Bābar's memoirs are full of contemptuous references to Hindus. Ordering gold and silver goblets and cups and other utensils used for drinking parties to be broken down, he remarked that the skulls of the *Kāfir*-s would, God willing, be broken likewise<sup>65</sup>.

And why not? 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangohi, a Muslim divine and Ṣūfī of repute, taught him in a long letter to humble and humiliate *Kāfir*-s in all possible ways, compel them to hide their *Kufr* and not to practise it publicly, and thereby bring the glory of Islam to perfection<sup>66</sup>.

With a strong sense of belonging to the line of Chingīz Khān, Bābar followed his custom of setting fire to towns for good omen and did so at Lahore. (*Bābar qarīn-i fath-o zafar ba-bilād-i Lāhore dar-āmadah chunān-ki rasm-o ādāb-i Chingīziyān ast bāzār-hā jihat-i fāl-o shagūn ātish zad*).<sup>67</sup> While condemning Bābar for his tyranny in strongest terms, the great Guru Nānak makes a clear reference to the arson and massacre, including burning of temples, carried out by him at Aimanābād thus:<sup>68</sup>

*Thān mukām jale bij mandar muchhi muchhi kuir rulāiyā.*

As regards Bābar's attitude towards temples, enough has been said by now. One objection remains to be taken care of by us, however. Bābar admired the beauty of the Telī/Tilaṅgānā Mandir at Gwalior.<sup>69</sup> On this ground it is contended that such Bābar cannot demolish temples. But it is forgotten the even Maḥmūd Ghaznawī was impressed by temple architecture. He was all praise for the temples of Mathura, the like of which, according to him, it would take full two centuries to build up and that, too, at the cost of one lakh gold coins for temple.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, he tired himself out by smashing them all. It is rather the

way of the vandals and philistines to make works of art the first target of their attack.

## VII

### Waṣiyyatnāmah-I Makhftyy

N.C. Mehta, an eminent scholar-artist-statesman, discovered at Bhopal a document entitled '*Waṣiyyatnāmah-i Makhfiyy-i Zahīru -d-Dīn Muḥammad Bābar Bādshāh-i Ghāzī ba-Shāhzādah Naṣīru 'd-Dīn Muḥammad Humāyūn Ṭawwala 'llāhu 'Umrū-hū'* (secret Testament/Will of zaḥīru 'd-Dīn Muḥammad Bābar Bādshāh-i Ghāzī to Shāhzādah Naṣīru 'd-Dīn Muḥammad Humāūn—May Allah prolong his life).<sup>71</sup> It runs as under: 'This is written to strengthen the empire. O son! the empire of Hindustān is full of different religions. Praise be to Allāh that God the Great and Almighty confers the sovereignty upon thee. Cleanse the tablet of thy heart of religious bigotry and administer justice in accordance with the custom of each creed. In particular, abstain from cow-sacrifice, for that is the way to win the hearts of the people of Hindustān, and the ryots of this land are bound (to the throne) by royal favours. And do not desecrate/destroy temples and shrines of every community that is under the royal command. Administer justice in such a way that the king rest content with the ryots and the ryots with the king. Islam is advanced better by the sword of favours than by the sword of oppression. Close thy eyes to the quarrels of Sunnī and Shī'ah, otherwise Islam will get weakened. Hold the ryots of many minds on the pattern of the four elements, so that the body of the kingdom remains immune from various distempers. The *Kārnamah* of His Highness Amīr Tīmūr Ṣāhib-Qirānī should be kept before the eyes, so as to become expert in statecraft.'<sup>72</sup>

On the basis of this testament, it is claimed that only a tolerant Bābar could leave such a testament of tolerance to his son. But the bulk of historians have declared the testament a forgery. Reasons are not far to seek.

For one thing, this testament never came to anybody's notice before its recent discovery. For another, a number of faults have been found in it on the score of language, grammar, style, royal seal, script, dating (on the top 933 A.H. and at the bottom 935 A.H.), titles used for the father and the son both, and what not<sup>73</sup>. While there can be no two opinions about the spuriousness of the document on these grounds as well as on those adduced by me below, we have no means to detect the motive behind the forgery.

In the testament, Bābar is all tolerance, quite contrary to what he actually was. His memoirs contain not one word of tolerance towards Hindus, who are always referred to as *Kāfir-s*, an expression conspicuous by its absence from the testament. Far from promulgating an ordinance against cow-slaughter, he has not left to us even the remotest indication towards it even in the Turuk. He wants Humāyūn to emulate Tīmūr, who was oppression personified. Bābar pats himself on emerging as a crescentader (*mujāhid*) and conqueror of infidels (*ghāzī*) in his memoirs and teaches his son to show kindness to infidels in the testament.

As regards Humāyūn, it is noteworthy that he appears, by all accounts, to have followed in the footprints of his father. On his way to conquest of Gujārāt, he received a letter from its ruler, Bahādurshāh, to the effect that 'he had laid siege to Chetur, and hoped very shortly to subdue the *Infidels* and exalt the fame of the *Mussulmān* faith, and therefore hoped his majesty would not interfere.' What was Humāyūn's reaction? 'The King, from his attachment to the true faith and his heroic spirit, complied with the request'<sup>74</sup>. Another episode which throws light on Humāyūn's attitude towards Hindus. Humāyūn entered the territory of Māladeva, ruler of Jodhpur. Māladeva took exception to it. This was not all: Humāyūn 'killed a number of these sacred animals' (cows), for which he was condemned by Māladeva. And, instead of feeling sorry for the act of indiscrimination, Humāyūn marched against him.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, Humāyūn appears to have scant regard for the feelings of Hindus *vis-a-vis* their sacred symbols. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān writes that the summer house (*bārahdarī*) called *Nīlī Chhatarī* at the Nigambodh ghāṭ below Salīngarh was built by Humāyūn with bricks bearing broken images (of gods/goddesses) pulled out (*ukhār-kar*) of some Hindu building/place.<sup>76</sup> This fact speaks for itself.

As a matter of fact, the precedent of temple-destruction set by Bābar continued to be followed by not only his son but even his grandson in the latter's early years of reign. The *Fatḥnāmah* of Chittor issued from Ajmer in 1568 and dedicated to Akbar, after his conquest of Chittor,<sup>77</sup> duly reflects and represents Akbar's stiff attitude towards *Kāfir-s* during the first phase of his religious career,<sup>78</sup> summed up by Prof. Khaliq Aḥmad Nizāmī as under :<sup>79</sup>

'(1) It contains more than two dozen quotations from the *Qur'ān*.

'(2) The Chittor campaign has been presented as a "religious war against infidels" and Akbar's zeal for *Jihād* has been highlighted.

'(3) The *Fath-Nāma* begins, with slight variations, with the opening lines of the Prophet's speech after the conquest of Mecca.

'(4) Subjugation of the "forts and towns of the infidels" and the "idol-temples of the polytheists" has been presented as the main concern and pre-occupation of the Emperor.

'(5) The words *Khalīfa* and *Khilāfat* have been used for Akbar's authority several times.

'(6) All victories are presented as the result of Divine help received by the Emperor. Greater power to wage further *Jihādia* prayed for.....'

In fact, in his letter to 'Abdu 'llāh Khāñ Uzbek, who had charged him with indifference to Islam, Akbar rejects such an accusation as slanderous and refers to his services to Islam thus: 'During these thirty years, such an effort has been made (by me) to cleanse the land of Hindustan (of *Kufr*) that temples of Hindus the irreligious have turned into shrines of God-fearing *darwīshes* and instead of the sound of idolaters' bell the sound of *Namāz* is running high (*dar īn sī sāl dar pāk kardan-i zamīn-i Hindustān chandāñ koshish ba-jā āwurdah ki...butkhānahhā-i Hinduān-i bad-kāsh khānqāh-i darwīshān-Khudā-andesh gardīd, wa ba-jā-i āwāz-i nāqūs-i butparastān bāng-i namāz balandī girift*).<sup>80</sup>

It needs no saying that Akbar's son, grandson, and arch temple-destroyer great-grandson followed suit with increasing impunity. There is reason to believe, besides, that examples of temple-destruction by royal decree are available till the regime of Muḥammād Shāh.<sup>81</sup> Incidentally, Sher Shāh Sūrī, who marked a break for a short while in the continuity of Mughul rule, did not mark a break in the continuity of the convention of temple-destruction. He, too, had the ambition of converting temples into mosques at any rate in Jodhpur (*ma'bad-i kuffār rā Islāmābād sāzam*).<sup>82</sup> Also, there is a local tradition that his conquest and occupation of Jodhpur was followed by conversion of the Hindu temple in the fort into a mosque, in all probability into the Sher Shāh mosque there<sup>83</sup>.

## VIII

### Verdict of the Shari'ah

What could be the verdict of the *Shari'ah* on the Rāma Janmabhūmi temple replaced by or converted into 'the Bābarī

mosque' by Bābar ? The following eight issues appear to arise in this behalf :

1. Can a mosque be raised on a usurped site ?
2. If there does exist such a mosque, can prayer be offered therein ?
3. If one does offer prayer in such a mosque, will he earn merit ?
4. Can such a mosque be allowed to stand ?
5. Is land conquered in *Jihād* land usurped ?
6. Did Bābar conquer India in general and Ayodhyā in particular in *Jihād* ?
7. If not, was he a usurper so as not to be within his rights according to the *Sharī'ah* to raise 'the Bābarī mosque' by forcibly displacing the Rāma temple ?
8. If so, should the illegitimate mosque be allowed to stand ?

Reply to the first two issues is in the negative.<sup>84</sup> As regards issue No. 3, there is a difference of opinion amongst "*Ulamā'*". Even those, however, who are inclined to replying in the affirmative, grant that the merit earned will be only partial.<sup>85</sup> No clear verdict has come to our notice on issue No. 4. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī would be inclined to think that such a mosque may be kept safe and closed.<sup>86</sup> But getting rid of such a mosque will alone meet the ends of Islamic justice, I believe. It will be clear as we proceed.

So far as issue No. 5 is concerned, there can be no two opinions about it: land conquered in *Jihād* is by no means land usurped. The Qur'ān declares that 'the earth belongs to Allāh. He causes it to be inherited by whom of his servants He will.'<sup>87</sup> The Prophet declares that all land belongs to Allāh or himself<sup>88</sup>, and through him to the *Ummah* (Muslim community), which the Qur'ān declares to be the best community and one raised up to guide and govern humanity<sup>89</sup> as vicegerent of Allāh on earth.<sup>90</sup> Listen, in Iqbāl's words, to what Ṭāriq bin Ziyād told his soldiers who felt home-sick on the shores of Spain, which they had reached in a bid to conquer the land:

*Har mulk mulk-i mā 'st ki mulk-i Khudā-i mā' st.*

That is, 'all land belongs to us, because it belongs to our God.' This serves to vouchsafe to Muslims the moral right to appropriate others' lands in *Jihād*. Indeed, as Ibn Taymiyyah, the fourteenth-century jurist-theologian, would have it, *Jihād* simply restores lands to Muslims, who enjoy a kind of Divine over these. Thus, such land is not usurped land.

Now about the sixth issue. Reply to it has to be in the negative. Being ruled by Ibrāhīm Lodī, India was already a *Dāru 'l-Islām* when

Bābar came. He simply stepped into the shoes of the Lodī emperor, who was vanquished and killed on the battle-field, with the result that the country continued to be Dāru-'l-Islām. He captured Ayodhyā, too, not from Hindus but from Afghān-s. Thus, it was a Dāru 'l-Islām before Bābar and continued to be so. This being the case, the status of Hindus before and after Bābar was that of *Dhimmī-s*, namely such *Kāfir-s* as earn the right to subsist and follow their religion in lieu of payment of Jizyah and several other taxes as subjects of the Muslim state.<sup>91</sup> Their life, property, and places of worship are duly protected by the state, as provided by the *Sharī'ah*. According to the *Sharī'ah*, therefore, it was incumbent upon Bābar to protect the Rāma temple rather than tamper with it, much less erect a mosque on its site by force of arms.

Accordingly, reply to the seventh issue, has to be in the affirmative. Bābar was a usurper and the 'Bābarī mosque' is no mosque in the eye of the *Sharī'ah*.

Finally, the last issue: should the illegitimate mosque be allowed to stand? '*Ulamā*' appear to fight shy of expressing themselves on this issue unequivocally.

Some have shown the audacity to rule that once a mosque always a mosque. There are others, like Imām Muḥammad, disciple of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, who have no objection to transfer of a mosque to a different site. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī would also have little or no objection to it. And there is a consensus of opinion among the '*Ulamā*', that in the event of difference of opinion among the '*Ulamā*', anyone of them may be followed without incurring sin. On this basis, the said Maulānā has passed the *Fatawā* (decree) that an emergency situation may call for transfer of a mosque and the call may be met.<sup>92</sup>

But the foregoing controversy centres round deserted, dilapidated, disused mosques. And our concern is an illegitimately constructed mosque, a mosque constructed in contravention of the provisions of the *Sharī'ah*. Here it is futile to run after '*Ulamā*'. The Qur'ān is there to give us clear guidance. Let us see how.

The law of the Qur'ān is more exacting than laws of other religions in dealing with cases of its violation. It would brook no delay in righting a wrong done in violation of its mandates. The Qur'ān contains no well defined law, however, on the specific point at issue. Yet there is a pious precedent in it to go upon. It refers to a mosque built by a section of Muslims at Qubā' near Medinah and petitioned the Prophet to inaugurate it by offering prayer. He promised to it on return

from the Tabūk war. On return, he was given to understand that the mosque had been erected by traitors (*munāfiqūn*) with a view to sowing the seeds of discord among his followers. So, he got the mosque smashed and burned down. Later, tells Ibn Hishām, the earliest biographer with Ibn Ishāq of the Prophet, the Prophet received condemnation of the mosque from on high.<sup>93</sup> The Qur'ānic verses so received by the Prophet<sup>94</sup> indicate that prayer must not be offered in a mosque built from an impious motive and that only one founded on piety ought to be used for the purpose. The mosque so burnt down and demolished by the Prophet is called the mosque of misfortune (*masjidu 'd-ḍirār*).

It is noteworthy that the mosque of misfortune had no faults *qua* mosque. Even then it was effaced. This cuts the ground from under the feet of those who assert that once a mosque always a mosque. Further, if that mosque could be blotted out of the pages of the history of the world, the 'Bābarī mosque', built by displacing *Dhimmī-s'* temple in contravention of the *Sharī'ah*, would merit a harsher treatment.

It is further noteworthy that the site of that mosque was not covered till today by erecting another mosque instead, which means that the much publicised sacrosanctity of all mosque-sites *per se* has no legs to stand upon, Qur'ānically speaking.

Indeed, there are other examples, too, to go upon. The Umayyad Caliph 'Umar got a church restored to Christians out of the hands of the Muslims of Banū Naṣr.<sup>95</sup> The same Caliph, 'Umar bin 'Abdu 'l-'Azīz, created a more glaring precedent in another case. When Mu 'āwīyah bin Abū Sufyān became Caliph, he intended to include the church of John in the mosque of Damascus; but Christians did not agree. Caliph 'Abdu 'l-Malik bin Marwān in his own time offered a lot of wealth for the church, but the Christians refused again. Finding them adamant, Caliph Al-Walīd bin 'Abdu 'l-Malik threatened them with dismantling the church by force. Being provoked by a Christian with the remark that the Caliph's attempt to dismantle it would turn him mad and involve him in troubles, the Caliph damaged part of the church himself and got it dismantled altogether by engaging labourers. He also extended the mosque so as to cover its site in toto. When 'Umar bin 'Abdu 'l-'Azīz became Caliph, the Christians petitioned him and he ordered restoration of the church-site to them. Upon this, the great theologian Sulaymān bin Ḥabību 'l-Muḥāribiyy persuaded the Christians to forego their demand and, in lieu thereof, get back all



the churches of Al-Ghūt conquered in *Jihād* ('*anwatan*). The Caliph approved of the compromise formula and action was taken accordingly.<sup>96</sup>

There is at least one more precedent like this. During the regime of Caliph Mahdī, governor of Egypt, 'Alī bin Sulaymān, dismantled a number of churches including one of Mary. But during the Caliphate of Hārūnu 'r-Rashīd the new governor Mūsā bin 'Īsā 'Abbāsī restored them all.<sup>97</sup>

In fact, it is never too late to mend and right the wrong done especially to a nation and continuing to prove an eyesore to it. The Osmanli Turks converted Constantinople's great Cathedral of Santa Sophia into a mosque named Apa Suphea in the fifteenth century. The Cathedral had been the centre of the Greek Orthodox Church for nine hundred years and the greatest achievement of the Byzantine art. But Kamāl Atā Turk took the earliest opportunity to right the historical wrong by converting the mosque, in 1935, into a museum of Byzantine glory.

On a visit to Riyādh and Jeddah at the invitation of the Su'ūdī government, Mr. Inder Jit found that mosques, howsoever big or historic, were shifted or demolished, nor were graves allowed to pose any problem, in order just to replan, modernize, and beautify the Su'ūdī capital of Riyādh. In fact, there are many sources to confirm such a report.<sup>98</sup>

The spirit of Islam has always to be kept in view. The Qur'ān is all for uprooting infidelity (*kuf'r*), and temples are the greatest symbols of infidelity. The Prophet himself, under inspiration from Allāh, converted the Ka'bah into a mosque by cleansing it of the 360 idols worshipped in it.<sup>99</sup> It is preposterous to assume that *Jihād* is just a defensive warfare. What could be the relation between defence and breaking idols? Or between defence and conquest, rather world-conquest? Yet, once infidels accept subjection and payment of *Jizyah*, *Kharaj*, 'Ushur pilgrimage tax etc. they become *Dhimmī*-s or protected ones and are permitted to retain their places of worship, though they may not be permitted to build new ones.

To conclude: Capture of Delhi and Ayodhyā by Bābar was not an act of *Jihād*. India was already a *Dāru 'l-Islām* before Bābar: Bābar did not make it so. Likewise, Hindus were already *Dhimmī*-s before Bābar: Bābar did not make them so. Hence their temples were entitled to protection, not destruction, by him. Therefore, the Rāma Janmabhūmi temple merits restoration to the Hindus, according to the *Sharī'ah*.

## IX

## Opening out Historical Wounds?

History is not, cannot be, and must not be a record of goody-goody things: it is bound to be a record of things good, bad and indifferent. Trouble starts when a section of people begin to identify themselves with and idealize tyrants, *Ghāzī*-s, and suchlike to the entire neglect and sometimes to the wholesale condemnation of those who strained every nerve to achieve national integration or defend national honour. Today everybody is out to whitewash the anti-Hindu image of Aurangzeb's and *Ṭīpū*-s and consign the non-communal Sultān Zaynu 'l-Ābidīn of Kashmir (1420-70), Sultān 'Alāu 'd-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh of Bengal (1493-1519), Sultān Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh II of Bijapur (1580-1627), Jalālu 'd-Dīn Akbar (1556-1605), and Prince Dārā Shukoh (d. 1659) to the folds of oblivion. Europe has had its share of religious tyrants, but nobody holds a brief for them, with the result that today there is hardly any animosity between the Catholics and Protestants, between religious and scientific establishments. They do not go about finding fault with history. They take lesson from history and live in peace.

When, after the Napoleonic wars, the Czarist Russia occupied Poland, they built a Greek Orthodox Church in the heart of Roman Catholic Warsaw. But, when after World War I Poland regained its freedom, it promptly demolished the Russian Church. Arnold J. Toynbee drew pointed attention to this fact in his Azad Memorial Lectures in New Delhi in 1950 and said that Muslim monuments still standing on hoary holy Hindu sites could only exacerbate Hindu-Muslim feelings.

Here we cannot resist the temptation of giving an Indian example of restoration of a temple converted into a mosque. It is a record (*Akhbārāt*, 9th year, sheets 49-7) that as governor of Gujarat Aurangzeb converted the Jaina temple of Chintāmani Pārasnāth at Saraspur of Ahmedabad into a mosque, named it Quwwatu 'l-Islām, and ordered a cow to be slaughtered therein. But Shāh Jahān, on complaint by the Hindus, ordered demolition of the minarets and handed the temple back to them after 1647. It is a different matter, however, that on coming to power Aurangzeb revoked the decree of his father.

1. Sayyid Ṣabāhu 'd-Dīn 'Abdu'r-Raḥmān, *Bābari Masjid: Tārikhī Pas-Manṣar aur Pesh-Manṣar kī Raushanī meīn* (3rd ed., Azamgarh: Dāru 'l-Muṣannifīn Shibli Academy, 1987), p. 19.
2. Arun Shourie & others, *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them* (A Preliminary Survey) (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1990); Sita Ram Goel, *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them*, Vol. II (The Islamic Evidence) (ed., cit., 1991).
3. ....सुवर्णदाने  
.....(न्यक्का) रिता नृपतयः पृथु-राघवाद्याः । ॥ 2 ॥  
Eran Stone Inscription of Samudragupta, middle of the fourth century A.D. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III: Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and Their Successors, by J.F. Fleet, Part I, reprinted by the authority of the Belyedere Steam Printing Works, Allahabad, by E. Hall, 1914, Śloka 2. It will be seen that the whole of the first Śloka, and the first two lines of this second Śloka, almost the whole of the third line of this Śloka, and part of its fourth line are broken away and lost.
4. दशरथतनयो रामो बलिश् च वैरोचनिः शतं विंशम् ।  
द्वादशहान्या शेषाः प्रवरसमन्यूनपरिमाणाः ॥  
कार्योऽष्टभुजो भगवांश् चतुर्भुजो द्विभुज एव वा विष्णुः ।  
श्रीवत्साङ्कितवक्षाः कौस्तुभमणिभूषितोरस्कः ॥  
Varāhamihira, *Brhatsamhitā*; 58.30-31.
5. Abhas Kumar Chatterjee, 'Ram Janmabhoomi: More Evidence', *History versus Casuistry* (New Delhi : Voice of India, 1991), p. 114.
6. Ṣabāhu'd-Dīn 'Abdu'r-Raḥmān, *Bābari Masjid* (Azamgarh, 1987), p. 67.
7. R. Nath, *Architecture of the Baburi Masjid of Ayodhya* (A Historical Critique) (Jaipur: the Historical Research Documentation Programme, 1991), chapter 3.
8. *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
10. *Loc. cit.*
11. हनुमन्तं च सुग्रीवं लक्ष्मणं च विभीषणम् ।  
अयोध्या-कोटपालांश्च प्रातरुत्थाय यः स्मरेत् ॥  
कल्याणं समवाप्नोति दुःस्वप्नादींश्च नाशयेत् ॥  
*Bhuṣundī-Rāmāyaṇa*, Bh. P. Sirmha (Singh), ed., introduced by V. Raghavan (Varanasi, 1975; Gorakhpur, 1982), I. 102. 118-119.
12. अयोध्यां विधिवद् दृष्ट्वा पुरीं मुक्त्येकसाधनीम् ।  
सर्वपापविनिर्मुक्तः प्रयाति हरिमन्दिरम् ॥  
Badarikāśramamāhātmya (3), Skanda--Purāṇa, II, Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa (2), 1.24.
13. स्वर्गद्वारे नरः स्नात्वा दृष्ट्वा रामालयं शुचिः ।  
न तस्य कृत्यं पश्यामि कृतकृत्यो भवेद् यतः ॥  
*Ibid.*, 1.26.
14. तस्मात् स्थानत ऐशाने रामजन्म प्रवर्तते ।  
जन्मस्थानमिदं प्रोक्तं मोक्षादिफलसाधनम् ।  
विजेश्वरात् पूर्वभागे वासिष्ठादुत्तरे तथा ।  
लोमशात् पश्चिमे भागे जन्मस्थानं ततः स्मृतम् ॥  
कपिला गोसहस्राणि यो ददाति दिने दिने ।  
तत्फलं समवाप्नोति जन्मभूमेः प्रदर्शनात् ॥

नियमस्थं नरं दृष्ट्वा जन्मस्थाने विशेषतः ।  
मातापित्रोर् गुरुणां च भक्तिमुद्बृहतां सताम् ॥  
तत्फलं समवाप्नोति जन्मभूमिः प्रदर्शनात् ॥

- Skanda-Purāṇa*, Vol. II, Vaiṣṇava-Khaṇḍa (2), *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* (8), 10. 18, 19, 22, 24, 25.
15. Hans Bakker, *Ayodhyā* (Groningen: Egbert Forstern, 1986), part I, pp. 129–130.
  16. William Foster (ed.), *Early Travels in India, 1583–1619*, London, 1921, p. 176.
  17. *History and Casuistry*, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 23–24.
  18. Joseph Tieffenthaler, *Description Historique et Geographique de l' Inde*, p. 253; as translated in *Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir*, VHP, New Delhi.
  19. *Loc. cit.*
  20. R. Nath, *Architecture & Site of the Baburi Masjid of Ayodhya* (A Historical Critique), Jaipur, 1991.
  21. *Alberuni's India*, Edward C. Sachau, tr., London, 1888, Vol. I, p. 200.
  22. Abu 'l-Faḍl, *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, Col. H. S. Harret, tr., 2nd ed., Delhi, Vol. II, p. 334.
  23. *Ibid.*, pp. 316–317.
  24. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 182.
  25. *Loc. cit.*
  26. "Oud shahrī 'st qadīm. Dar peshīn-i zamān ba-ful chihal-o hasht karoh wa 'ard sī-o hasht ābādī dasht. Az guzīn ma 'ābid shumurand. Nazdīk-i īn shahr do qabr-i haft-gāzī sākhtah and, mardum khwābgāh-i Shīth-o Ayyūb gūyand, wa afsānah-hā khwānand. Khāk-bīzī kardah īlā ba-dast ārand. Zād-gāh-i Rām Chandar ki az jumlah dah autār ya' nī mazhar-i atm-i Īzdī 'st būdah. Sītā badū mansūb būd." Chitraman/Chhatraman Dās Rā'izādah Kāyastha, *Chihār Chaman*, 1173 A. H. /1759–60 A. D., (V.L. Udaipur MS), p. 58.
  27. Ṣabāḥu 'd-Dīn Abdu 'r-Raḥmān, pp. 29–30.
  28. Maulānā Ḥakīm Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-Ḥayy, *Jannah al-Mashriq wa Maḥla' an-Nūr al-Mashriq*, Maulawī Shams Tabriz Khān, tr. in Urdu under the title *Hindustān Islāmī 'Ahd mein*, Lucknow, 1973, 141.
  29. 'Allāmah Muḥammad Najmu 'l-Ghanī Khān Rāmpūrī, *Tārīkh-i Awadh*, Lucknow, 1919, Vol. V, pp. 200–201.
  30. Ḥājī Muḥammad Ḥasan, *Ḍiyā'-i Akhtar*, Lucknow, 1878, pp. 38–39.
  31. Shaykh Muḥammad 'Aẓamat 'Alī Kākorawī Nāmī, *Amūr 'Alī Shahīd aur ma 'rakah-i Hanumāngarhī*, Zakī Kākorawī, ed., Lucknow, 1987, pp. 9–10.
  32. *Ibid.*, p. 10
  33. Mirzā Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr, *Fasānah-i 'Ibrat*, Zakī Kākorawī, ed., Lucknow, 3rd ed., 1977, pp. 121–122.
  34. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
  35. Cf. Avadh-Vasi Lala Sita Ram, *Ayodhyā kā Itihāsa* (Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1932), p. 3.
  36. Maulawīyy 'Abdu 'l-Ghaffār, *Gumgashtah Hālāt-i Ajodhyā ya 'nī Tārīkh-i Pārīnah-i Madīnatu 'l-Auliyā'*, Lucknow, 1st ed., 1979.
  37. *Ibid.*, Lucknow, 2nd ed., 1981, pp. 61–62.
  38. 'Sulṭān Bābar ki jo Amūr Taimūr kī nasl se apne bachpan ke zamānah mein khufīyyah ṭaur par libās tabdīl kar ke faqīron kī ṭarah Kābul se shahr-i Awadh mein āyā. Us waqt shahr-i Awadh mein Sikandar Lodhī kī salṭanat thī aur maqām salṭanat kā ek ṣadr maqām thā. Sulṭān Bābar ne Shāh Jalāl Ṣāhib qadasa sirru-hū aur Haḍrat Mūsā 'Ashiqān kī khidmat mein ḥādir

- ho-kar bāṭinī imdād ṭalab kī, ki in buzurgoñ kī du'ā se ābā'ī salṭanat-i Hindustān un-ke hāth ā-jāi. Shāhzādah Bābar in aṣḥāb se rukḥṣat ho-kar Kābul gaye aur wahān fauj muhayyā kar ke Hindustān kī tarāf lāye aur Pānipat ke maqām par Sulṭān Sikandar Lodhī se lare.....' *Gumgashtah Ḥālāt-i Ajoḍhyā ya'nī Tārīkh-i Pārīnah-i Madīnatu 'l- Auliyyā* (2nd ed., 1981), p. 61.
39. 'Chunānchēh Bābar Bādshāh ne jo iqrār un buzurgoñ ke rū ba-rū kiyā thā Mir Bāqī ko us kām par muqarrar farmā-kar ek 'ālīshān masjid...ta'mūr karā'i., *Ibid.*, p. 62.
40. 'Faḡīroñ ne uttar diyā ki tum Janmashhān ke mandīr ko tor kar masjid banwāne kī pratījñā karo to ham tumhāre liye du'ā karaiñ. Bābar ne faḡīroñ kī bāt mān lī aur apne desh ko laut gayā.' *Awadh-vāṣī Lālā Sītā Ram, B.A., Ayodhyā kā Itihāsa* (Prayāg: Hindustani Academy, 1932), p. 151.
41. 'Dar yake az tārīkh-hā ba naẓar dar-āmadah ki ham-dar-in roz-hā Bābar Bādshāh ki nāmash Bābar Qalandar-i bud khud rā ba-libās-i qalandarī ārāstah ba-Dihlī āmad wa ba-bārgāh-i Sulṭān dar-āmad. Jam'-ī az muqarrabān ba-'arḍ rasānidand ki qalandar-ī az ahl-i ma'rīfat ba-darbār istādah ba-naẓzārah-ī jamāl-i Sulṭān ast. Sulṭān Sikandar ba-muqarrabān-ī chand ḥukm farmūdand ki ba-durūñ ārand. Chūñ Bābar Qalandar az dar dar-āmad, fi 'l-ḥāl ba-Sulṭān muṣāfahah kard, ba-mujarrad dast-girīftan girānī-i iqbal dar dast-ī Sulṭān dar-yāft, ba-khāfir āwurd ki hanūz farr-i salṭanat-i ū farāwān ast. Sulṭān Sikandar pursid, "Darwīshān ba-cheh musharraf and?" Bābar Qalandar guft, "ba-qalandarī." 'Abdu 'llah, *Tārīkh-i Dā'ūdī*, Shaikh Abdur Rashid, ed. (Aligarh Muslim University, 1969), p. 63. The poetic prelude, given in my translation, came immediately after.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.
43. Abu 'l-Faḡl, *Akbarnāmah*, Vol. I (Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal Beni Madho, n. d.), p. 137.
44. *Tārīkh-i Firīshṭah* (Nawalkishore Press), p. 206.
45. *Gumgashtah Ḥālāt-i Ajoḍhyā*....., p. 20.
46. J. G. A. Baird, *Private Letters of the Marquis of Dalhousie* (Edinburgh, 1911), p. 357.
47. Mirzā Jān, *Ḥadīqah-i Shuhadā* (Lucknow, 1856), pp. 4-5.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
49. 'IBĀRAT-I NAṢĪḤAT-I BIST-O PANJUM AZ ṢAḤĪFAH-Ī CHĪHAL NAṢĀ'ĪH-I BAHĀDURSHĀHĪ KI BA-TĀRIKH-Ī PĀNZDAHAM SHA 'BĀN 1231 HIJRĪ NAQL SHUDAH DAR KUTUBKHĀNAH-Ī MIRZĀ HYDAR SHUKOH IBN MIRZĀ SULAYMĀN SHUKOH DĀKHIL SHUD AZ KITĀB-I MADHKŪRAH NAQL KARDAH SHUD: Bādshāhān-i ulu 'l-'azm rā lāẓīm ki...ghalbah-ī dīn-o Islām malhūz dāshṭah hamah mushrikān rā ma'ī-ī Islām dārānd, wa az akhdh-i jīzyah ki bar kuffār-i fuḡār-ī yfūrā yāftah ast dar na guzarānd, wa jamū' rājgān rā az ḥukm-i iḥḍār-ī roz-ī 'īdain wa piyādah istādah māndan bairūn-ī masājīd ki dar ma'mūlah-ī khud-hā ba-farmān-ī bādshāhī sākhtah and tā inqīdā-ī namāz-o khuṭbah mu'āf na dārānd. Wa ma'ābid-hā-ī mushrikīn-ī Hunūd wāqī-ī Mathurā wa Banāras wa Awadh waghayrah rā ki kuffār-ī nābakār ba-īṭiqād-ī khud-hā jā'i rā mauladgāh-ī Kanhaiyā wa maqām-ī rā Rasōī-ī Sītā wa makān-ī rā qarārgāh-ī Hanumān qarār dādah and wa mū-gūyand ki ba'd fath-ī Lanḡā Rāmachandra Hanumān rā dar ān-jā nishānidah ast mismār gashtah barā'i

- taqwiyyat-i Islām dar ān hamah jā masājid ta'mūr shudah and, ān masājid rā az jum'-o jamā'at khālī na dārānd, chunān—ki qadghan ast ki rasm-i but-parasū ba-i'lān na shawad wa ṣadā-i nāqūs ba-gosh-i ahl-i Islām na rasad.' Ṣaḥīfah-i Chihal Naṣā'ih-i Bahādurshāhī, quoted in Mirzā Jān.*
50. Kamāla'd-Dīn Haydar, p. 117.
  51. G. D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wājid 'Alī Shāh* (Varanasi: 1968), pp. 136–137.
  52. '*Gharāḍ yeh chāron masjideh banwā'i hu'īn salāfīn-i meḍīyyah kī chār arkān-i imān kī taraḥ awadh mein wāqī 'thīn aur kutub-i tawārīkh mein taṣrīḥ hai, khusūṣan Hanumāngarhī kī masjīd 'ibārat-i Ṣaḥīfah-i Shāhī se ki Bahādur Shāh 'Ālamgīr kī beṭī ne Chīṭal Naṣā'ih likhī hai.*' Mirzā Jān, p. 6.
  53. Surūr, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
  54. K. S. Lal, *Studies in Medieval Indian History* (Delhi: Ranjit Printers & Publishers, 1966), p. 86.
  55. in his lecture at the Aligarh Historical Society, on February 15, 1991.
  56. Sayyid Aṭhar 'Abbās Rīḍwī, *Mughul-Kālin Bhārat: Bābar* (Aligarh, 1960), pp. 10–13.
  57. Arun Shouric & others, *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1990), p. 9.
  58. Nāmī, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
  59. *Loc. cit.*
  60. *Archaeological Survey Report*, XII, 26–27.
  61. *Tārīkh-i Bābarī* (MS), 145, cited in Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors*, p. 9.
  62. *Memoirs of Bābur*, II, 340.
  63. S. R. Sharma, *Mughal Empire in India* (9th ed., Agra), p. 16.
  64. Rizwī, *Mughul-Kālin Bhārat*, p. 249.
  65. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
  66. *Maktūbāt-i 'Abd al-Quddūs Gaṅgohī* (MS) No. 104 (Taṣauuf) University Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Letter No. 169.
  67. *Tārīkh-i Firishtah* (Nawalkishore Press); Urdu tr. (Deoband, 1983), Vol. I, p. 121.
  68. *Guru Nānak Rachanāvalī*, Ratan Singh Jaggi, ed. & tr. (Patiala, 1970) *Bābar-Vānī*, 3, p. 246.
  69. *Mughul-Kālin Bhārat*, p. 276.
  70. Firishtah, p. 588, al'Utbi, *Tārīkh-i Yamīnī*.
  71. S.K. Bannerjee, 'Babur and the Hindus', *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*, 9, ii (1936), 93.
  72. *Ibid.*, p. 94. The translation is mine. See the original in Appendix : I.
  73. A. S. Beveridge (Mrs.), *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Britain and Ireland*, January, 1923, pp. 78–82.
  74. *Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, WRITTEN in the Persian Language by Jouher (a confidential domestic of his majesty), tr. by Major Charles Stewart of the Honourable East India Company's Service, originally published by Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, London. The edition used is published by Pustak Kendra, 72, Hazratganj, Lucknow, 1971, p. 2.
  75. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

76. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Āthāru 'l-Ṣanādīd*, Khālid Hāshimī, ed., Delhi, 1965, p. 232.
77. Khaliq Aḥmad Nizāmī, *Akbar and Religion*, Delhi, 1989, p. 363.
78. Nizāmī spells out three phases of Akbar's religious career: 1556–1574, 1575–1580 and 1581–1605. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 383–384.
80. *Maktūbāt-i Abu 'l-Faql*, I, pp. 11–26, Akbar's letter reproduced in Nizāmī, p. 357.
81. Sita Ram Goel, *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them*, II, pp. 130 ff.
82. 'Abdu 'llāh, *Tārīkh-i Dā'ūdī*, Shaikh 'Abdu 'r-Rashīd, ed., Aligarh, 1969, p. 156.
83. Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, pp. 11–12.
84. *Fatāwā-i 'Ālangīrī*, Urdu tr., Lucknow, 1932, Vol. IX, p. 26.
85. Maulānā Muḥammad Ḥafīru 'd-Dīn, *Islām kā Nizām-i Masājīd*, Delhi, 1951, p. 165.
86. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī, *Da'bu 'l-Masājīd fī Ādāb-i 'l-Masājīd*, quoted in Maulānā Muḥammad Ḥafīru 'd-Dīn, p. 166.
87. Al-A'rāf (7) 128.
88. Bukhārī, II, Kitābu 'l-Jihād wa 's-Siyar, Ḥadīth, 406.
89. Āl 'Imrān (3) 110.
90. An-Nūr (24) 55; an-Naml (27) 62.
91. Harsh Narain, *Jizyah and the Spread of Islam*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 19–20.
92. Thānawī, *Al-Fatāwā*, Vol. II, Aḥkāmū 'l-Masājīd, Su'āl (Question), No. 810.
93. Ibn Hishām, *Sīratu 'n-Nabiyy-i Kāmil*, Vol. II, pp. 635–636.
94. At-Tawbah (9) 107.
95. Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥu 'l-Buldān*, Urdu tr., Karachi, 1962, p. 189.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 190–191.
97. Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, Vol. IV, p. 424.
98. Inderjit, 'A Lesson from Islamic History', *The Pioneer* (Lucknow), for October 2, 1990.
99. Ibn Hishām, Vol. II, pp. 494–495.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE REVENUE DOCUMENTS RELATING  
TO JANMSTHAN (RAM JANM BHOOMI) VERSUS 'BABURI  
MASJID' AT KOTRAM CHANDRA, AWADH (AYODHAYA)

IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By

**B.R. GROVER**

During the course of the last few years stormy controversy over the title to the Ramjanmbhoomi versus 'Baburi Masjid', Copious literature comprising monographs and News Paper articles in English, Hindi and regional languages has been produced on an unprecedented scale. Based upon ancient, medieval and modern literary sources, archaeological evidence and 19th-20th centuries judicial records, the writers have dealt with various aspects ranging from the identification of historic Ayodhya, its association with Lord Rama, the God incarnate of the Ramayana, the Rama cult and the fact whether a Vaishnav Rama temple existed on the very site whereupon, after the demolition of the latter, the superstructure of a 'mosque' (named as 'Baburi Masjid' during the second half of the 19th century) was raised in 1528 A.D. by Baqi Tashkandi (i.e. Mir Baqi), the local commander of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, the first Mughal ruler in India or it was built by the latter out of his pious wish on a vacant plot of land for the 'angels to descend on earth'. Further controversy has been raised about the itinerary of Babur in the territories of Awadh and as to whether the demolition of the Rama temple took place on the basis of his personal order or by Mir Baqi's own initiative at the behest of some local Muslim faqir. Even though the entire issue has been, unfortunately, sufficiently communalised, a dispassionate appraisal on scientific lines based on historicity and facts is rather imperative.

After the communal riot at Ayodhya in 1855 AD, during the 19th century, numerous independent and judicious writers, both Muslims and Hindus, specialised in the past history of Awadh dealt with many of the above mentioned issues relating to Janmsthan and 'Baburi Masjid'<sup>1</sup>. Some of them claimed to have utilised the authentic 16th-18th centuries works enumerated by them in support of their narrations. They were all of the unanimous view that on the basis of Babur's order, the Janmsthan of Shri Ram Chandra at Kot Ram Chandra, *pargana haveli* Awadh



comprising residential palace (*mahal sarai*) of King Dashrath and Shri Ram along with a temple and a kitchen—the latter portions popularly known as *Sita ki Rasoi*—were all demolished and a 'mosque' constructed thereupon in 1528 AD under the guidance of Baqi Tashkandi (Mir Baqi), the local commander/administrator of Awadh and Syed Musa Ashikan, a Muslim faqir. This version has continued to prevail uncontested in all works on the regional history of Awadh, even by the most eminent scholars, all through in the 20th century inclusive of the post-1947 era of Independent India till the early 1980's when due to sudden change in the concept of Indian historiography and for political reasons, the above mentioned views about the demolition of the Janmasthan temple and construction of the 'mosque' thereupon have been expunged in the revised editions of the earlier 19th-20th centuries published works<sup>2</sup>. A mushroom growth of historians has come up who call such a version about *Janmasthan*'Baburi masjid' a myth based on tradition, local belief, the British 'Divide and Rule' policy and its legacy in Free India rather than a historical fact.

Notwithstanding the fact, a vast number of the original official records of the Nawabi rule in Awadh during the 18th-19th centuries (till 1846 AD) have vanished, a few documents still extant touch upon Hindu-Muslim tussle not only over Hanuman Ghari/Mosque but also *Janmasthan*'Masjid'<sup>3</sup>. Quite significantly, they refer to the old judicial/revenue documents which are not available today. At the time of the 1855 Hindu-Muslim riot in Ayodhya, an official letter (*Purcha*)<sup>4</sup> from Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the king of Oudh to Major James Outram, the British Resident dated 12th August, 1855 appended by five original documents received by the king of Oudh from Hafeezullah, the *Darogha* of Fyzabad and Maulvee Mehamed Nchaloodeen and others refer to the Hindu-Muslim conflict not only with regard to Hanuman Ghari/'mosque' but to *Janmasthan*'Masjid' as well. One of the appended documents traces a similar riot in the first half of the 18th century during the period of Boorhonoal moolk (Burhan ul Mulk), the *Subadar* (Governor) of Oude<sup>5</sup>. (The title of Burhan ul Mulk was held by two *Subadars* of Awadh during the reign of Muhammad Shah, the Mughal Emperor. Firstly, by Nawab Saadat Khan who died in 1739 AD and secondly by his son Nawab Safdar Jang, 1739-1744 AD. The latter had also acted as governor of Awadh in 1738, during the absence of his father, Saadat Khan. As known from the contemporary sources, during this year, there was considerable violence and lawlessness in the *Subah*. Earlier too,

during Saadat Khan's tenure of governorship, there has been much turbulence, apparently in Ayodhya as well, which is fully confirmed by the inclusion of the *kazi's* report mentioned hereafter). Another significant document comprises a copy of paper sealed with the seal of *Kazee (Qazi)* of Fyzabad dtd. 1735 A.D.<sup>6</sup> These referred to documents fully bear out the fact that the Hindu-Muslim conflict over the territorial jurisdictions of the above mentioned temples/mosques was a long drawn battle even during the Mughal rule in Awadh in the early 18th century. Still another significant note covering the opinion of Hafizullah, the *darogha* of Faizabad, submitted to the Awadh Royal Court (19th century) clearly states that "the mosque constructed by Babur was situated at the birth place of Rama, son of Raja Dashrath, and adjacent to the kitchen of Sita, wife of Rama (i.e. *Sita-ki-rasoi*)". Apparently, in the official brief submitted to the Royal Court, Hafizullah relied upon the past records supported by the revenue documents. In fact, in all matters relating to property disputes, there is an integrated relationship between the judicial records and the revenue records for as per procedure of the Mughal/Nawabi judicial system, the relevant attested copies or at times even in original were always appended for the perusal of the court before the judgment was given. It is apparent from the available judicial records of the British administration in Awadh that in the case of *Janmsthan* versus 'Baburi Masjid', the same procedure was followed. Similar is the position even today in the same case pending before the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court.

For matters relating to land rights during the medieval or modern periods, the importance of the original revenue documents, for whichever region available in series or in fragments, cannot be underestimated. They command primacy over the literary sources or archaeological theories. Of course, the latter sources can be well utilised, if correctly interpreted, to support the evidence deduced from the revenue documents. For the issue of *Janmsthan*/'Baburi Masjid', as at present, the earliest revenue documentary evidence is traceable to the early 18th century. A Map of Ayodhya, painted on white cotton fabric (with a size: 213x178cm) forms a part of the *Kapad-Dwara* Collection (Private collection of the rulers of Amer/Jaipur state) preserved at the City Palace Museum, Jaipur (Rajasthan).<sup>7</sup> This map depicts *Janmsthan* along with various other religious places of Ayodhya and the river Saryu. It shows the structure of the *Janmsthan*/'Masjid' on the western corner of the fort (i.e. *kot* Ram Chandra) along with the crenellated *parkota* (rampart). The

complex has a rectangular plan with an arched entrance in the middle of the eastern side, a vast open court on the one side of which is a *chabutara* (raised platform) marked as *janmsthan*. Figures representing the visiting pilgrims are shown circumambulating and worshipping the *janmsthan/chabutara*. By its Western side, with some gap, stands the main structure (claimed as main *Janmsthan*/'Masjid') divided into three bays, each containing a *chowki* with *masnad*, the central one marked as *chhathi*. Unlike the present superstructure, the map depicts the latter composed of three *shikaras* (curvilinear like temple spiers), the central one of these being larger and higher. It seems in the context that the present day domes and their finials of the structure were built in the later period of the 18th century, which replaced the earlier *shikaras*, probably with corbelled ceilings.

Even though the above mentioned map of Ayodhya is undated, it may be taken up with the other early 18th century revenue documents relating to Ayodhya, which equally form a part of the *Kapad-Dwara* Collection. A *chaknama* (a document detailing the measured land along with land marks and boundaries in all the four geographical directions, duly attested by the local revenue officials) dated 2 *Rajab*, A.H. 1129/1st June, 1717 A.D. (reign of Eurrukh Siyar, the Mughal Emperor) records the assignment of land (983 acres in present day measurement unit) to Swai Jai Singh (Amer Chief, the Mughal *mansabdar*) for a garden and a *pura* (small township/settlement at Ayodhya)<sup>8</sup>. It is well known that Swai Jai Singh, the Amer Chief (*zammidar-i-umda*) occupied high status as the Mughal *mansabdar* and was assigned vast *jagirs* in lieu thereof. He also remained posted as the *subadar* (governor) in various *subahs*. The Mughal archives record number of *Jaisinghpuras* inhabited by him in the *subahs* of Malwa (Ujjain), Patna, Agra (Mathur, Vrindaban), Awadh (Ayodhya, Banaras), Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Kabul and in the Deccan at Burhanpur, Aurangabad, Elichpur and other places. The settlement of the *puras* essentially required the preparation of various revenue documents and a map for the purpose. So it is evident in the context that the map of Ayodhya was prepared for the pilgrims as well during the same period when Swai Jai Singh inhabited a *pura* and the *chaknama* dated 1st June, 1717 AD was prepared by the local revenue officials for this purpose. In fact, similar maps for the towns in other *subahs* where Swai Jai Singh established *puras* are also available in the *Kapad-Dwara* collection, Jaipur (Rajasthan).

Most significantly, about half a century later, the visual depiction of the above map is well confirmed by the European traveller, Joseph Tieffenthaler, a Jesuit Austrian, who travelled the Awadh region around 1766-71 AD<sup>9</sup>. While briefly narrating the past facts about the demolition of the birth-place temple of Ram and utilisation of its pillars for the construction of the 'mosque' by Babur, Tieffenthaler states that despite the prohibitive efforts of the Mughals, the Hindus continued to visit the place for worship and consequently they had constructed the *Ram Chabutra* in the main courtyard of the *Janmsthan*/'Mosque' complex, which they used to parabolate thrice, then prostrate on the ground. The Hindus used to practice their devotion at the *chabutra* as well as in the main structure of *Janmsthan*/'Mosque'. That the Hindus had been not only worshipping at the *chabutra* for hundreds of years but the *Biraghis* would even enter the premises of the 'Mosque' structure and write the words "Ram, Ram" with characool on the inner walls of the main structure is further confirmed by Muhammad Asghar, the *khatib* and *muazzan* of the 'Baburi Masjid' in his representation dated 30.11.1858 to the British Government for alleged interference in the 'Baburi Masjid'<sup>10</sup>. All this well confirms that despite the construction of the 'Mosque' on the *Janmsthan* site, the Hindus never surrendered their claims of worship at this site all through the centuries.

In the field of Mughal historiography, Abul Fazl, an eminent court chronicler, the author of *Akbar Nama*, of which *Ain-i-Akbari* is an integral part, provides the earliest reference to the association of Shri Ram Chandra with Awadh (Ayodhya)<sup>11</sup>. He describes the city of Awadh (Ayodhya) as the sacred place of pilgrimage of the Hindus, the birth place of Lord Rama, the reincarnation of God. He testifies that Awadh (Ayodhya) was the residential place (*bangha*) of Raja Ram Chandra during the *Treta* age and that it was a place of antiquity.

However, since the *Ain-i-Akbari* is mainly concerned with the institutional and administrative system of the Mughals, it makes no mention of the construction of the 'mosque' in the dispute under the command of Babur or the demolition of the pre-existing temple at the site. At the same time, even when it provides *subah/pargana* wise revenue data, it does not include villagewise record of rights.

For administrative purpose, the *subah* of Awadh under the Mughal king Akbar was divided into five *sarkars*, the *sarkar* of Awadh being one of them. Further, of the division of the *sarkar* Awadh into 21 *mahals* (for revenue administration), *haveli* Awadh comprising two *mahals*,

i.e., the proper city (*shahar*) and the suburban district was the headquarters of *sarkar* Awadh. As such, *haveli* Awadh served as the capital of the entire *subah* of Awadh, the headquarters of the *sarkar* of Awadh as well as that of the proper Awadh *paragana*.

The revenue documents of the Nawabi period and the British phase (from 1856 onwards) during the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries have a direct linkage with the Mughal pattern of revenue administration. Kot Ram Chandra was one of the villages (*mauzas*) of the suburban *mahal/pargana* of Awadh and as per revenue records was quite distinct from the city (*shahar*) of Ayodhya. It was Kot Ram Chandra which was the residential headquarters of Sri Ram Chandra. As explained further, the *Janmasthan* (the name used both by the 19th century revenue records and literary sources) being a large complex comprising the palace, inclusive of the birthplace area of Sri Ram Chandra, temple, kitchen (*Sita-ki-Rasoi*), etc., was situated in Kot Ram Chandra.

The revenue records relating to village Ramkot, *Haveli* Awadh, District Faizabad, are extremely significant and clarify the factual proprietary position of *Janmasthan* Vs. 'Baburi Masjid'. As per land revenue procedure, they offer details of the numered plots (*khasras*) of the entire village Ramkot in respect of nature of land rights, their topographical position, the nature of the soil along with the area of each plot with complete further details, whether inhabited with *abadi* (population) or a graveyard or arable land growing particular crops along with fruit bearing trees, if any and paying land revenue or treated as *muafi* (exempted from revenue payment). The plots of land traditionally associated with *Janmasthan* complex are mostly shown as settled with *abadi* (population) and constructions thereupon. All these records are available at the District Record Office (*Mahafaz Khana*/Tehsil Office/Nazul Office) Faizabad. In fact, the records comprise various categories of revenue documents, i.e., survey, *bandobust* (settlement), *kishtwar khasra*, *abadi*, *khewats*, *khasra khataunis* and maps etc., right from 1861 A.D. till 1990-91 AD).

A few records of Summary Settlements are also available for the years 1858-59 A.D. The earliest regular Settlement of 1861 A.D. as well as the later reports confirm the fact that these had been prepared taking into consideration the past records of the Nawabi period as well<sup>12</sup>. As a matter of fact, as per the original documents, the entire complex of *Janmasthan* is covered under *khasra* No. 163 with 10 plots, with total

area of 5 bighas and 4 biswas. However, under column No. 16 of *Kaifiyat* (i.e. general remarks comprising even the changes effected later on with dates of entries, if any, till the next settlement operation), it is stated that in the area of *Janmasthan*, there is one *pacca* well, trees whose number is recorded in  *khasra abadi* and *pacca* graveyard (*qabaristan*). As distinct from the  *khasra kishtwar*, in  *khasra abadi* No. 431 (as recorded corresponding to No. 163 of the former) shows  *abadi* (population) in this area<sup>13</sup>. It does not mention the existence of any 'mosque', though, in the *kaifiyat* it mentions the prevalence of a *pacca* graveyard in the campus. The superior ownership of the land has been declared in the name of *Sarkar Bahadur Nazul* (Government). However, in the Settlement of 1301 *Fasli*/1893 AD, in the  *khasra kishtwar*, the same  *khasra* number (163) remains, though the entire area is shown under 5 plots instead of 10 as previously in the 1861 Settlement Report<sup>14</sup>. Both in the *khata khatauni/khewat* the Hindu Mahants of *Janmasthan* have been shown with subordinate proprietary rights as *malikan-i-matahit* along with their respective shares. But later on these Nos. undergo a change during the *Fasli* 1344-45/1936-37 A.D. Settlement Operation<sup>15</sup>. Such is the position not only in the 1861 Settlement Report but even later Settlements effected from time to time during the 19th and 20th centuries. It is also clear that the area on which the structure of the 'Baburi Masjid' stood is a part of the *Janmasthan*.

This position was inherited by the early British administration from the earlier records of the Nawabi and the Mughal periods. However, in the Settlement Record of 1861 of the *Mahafazkhana*, certain later alternations have been made wherein the name of *Jama Masjid* and the word *muafi* has been inserted. In plot No. 163/1 the words *Jamai Masjid*, *muafi* and Azhar Hussain under columns No. 2, 3 and 4 respectively have been added<sup>16</sup>. But the copies of the same document prepared during the same year available at the Tehsil Office<sup>17</sup> clearly prove that the later additions are interpolations, done perhaps during the past few decades of the controversy. This is also confirmed by the fact that the  *khasra kishtwar* records of the second Revenue Settlement effected in the year 1301 *Fasli* (1893 A.D.) do not carry out such alterations or additions<sup>18</sup>. These records still show the area on which 'Baburi Masjid' had been earlier constructed as *Sita Ki Rasoi* forming a part of the *Janmasthan* complex and there is no mention of any 'mosque' and the land assigned to it in *muafi*.

As already stated, according to the revenue settlement effected in 1861 A.D., the total area covered by  *khasra*  No. 163 relation to  *Janmasthan*  has 10 distinct plots. There have been three more settlement operations since then. However, in the revenue settlements effected from time to time, the  *khasra/khewat/khata khatauni*  Numbers as well as the Nos. of plots undergo a change and there are also adjustments with the neighbouring plots. However, the table of equivalent past Numbers and parts thereof along with the current ( *hal* ) Numbers, ( *Farad Mutabaqat* ) is always appended and forms a part of the Settlement Report. In the latest Settlement 1397 Fasli/1989-90, the erstwhile  *Janmasthan*  complex has been shown in four  *khasra*  Nos., i.e., 159, 160, 146 and 147 R<sup>19</sup>. The major portion of the  *Janmasthan*  complex comprising Ram Janmabhoomi, the so-called Baburi Masjid as well as the new  *Janmasthan*  falls under  *khasra*  Nos. 159, 146 ( *vide khata khewat*  No. 35) and 147 R wherein the names of the Mahants along with the areas in their ownership have been recorded. Only a small portion of the complex falls under No. 160, which too is shown under  *mahal Nazul Sarkar* . In brief, Janmabhoomi/'Baburi Masjid' have been recorded under No. 159 and 160. The entire  *khasra*  No. 159 has been entered in the ownership of 'Shri Danesh Dhari Bhagwan Bara Asthan, Ajodhya' whereas some portion falling in  *khasra*  No. 160 has been recorded in the ownership of  *Sarkar Nazul* . There is no  *muafi/waqf*  of any type associated with the 'mosque'.

The complex named as  *Janmasthan*  in the 19th century covered not only the Ram Janmabhoomi (birth place) of Ram and  *Sita-Ki-Rasoi*  on which the 'mosque' was constructed but even the outer parts of the main structure i.e. the courtyard where  *Ram Chabutra*  is situated and was described by Tieffenthaler in the 18th century<sup>20</sup>, and also the area lying to the north which is today covered by a separate monument still known as  *Janmasthan* . In fact, all through the centuries, right till the 19th century, the latter monument comprised only one of the plots of  *Janmasthan*  and formed a part and parcel of the entire  *Janmasthan*  complex and the road dividing the two portions, i.e.,  *Ram Janmabhoomi/Sita-Ki-Rasoi/' Mosque'*  and the present day misnomered  *Janmasthan*  was constructed during the British period. This is well established both by the revenue records of the late 19th and 20th centuries<sup>21</sup>.

Briefly it may be stated that the revenue records of the village ( *mauza* ) Ramkot, pargana haveli Awadh, District Faizabad comprising various categories, i.e., survey,  *bandobast*  (settlement) recording the

*kishtwar khasra, abadi, khewats, khata khataunis (Jamabandi)* and maps, etc., available at the District Record Office (*Mahafazkhanal Tehsil Office*), Faizabad, from 1861 A.D. to 1990 A.D., distinctly cover the nature of land rights of the Mahants in the entire *Janmasthan* complex. The first Regular Settlement Report (1861 A.D) of Kot Ram Chandra, appended by two maps, is the most comprehensive document relating to the *Janmasthan* complex comprising Ram Janmbhoomi.<sup>22</sup> The Report reflects the position as inherited from the Nawabi period. In the revenue documents, the superiod ownership of the land has been declared in the name of *Sarkar Bahadur Nazul* and the Mahants have been declared as the under proprietors (*malikan-i-matahit*) in the entire *Janmasthan* complex. The Settlement Report of 1893 A.D. distinctly mentions the sub-plot on which Masjid is situated as *Sita Ki Rasoi*.<sup>23</sup> The subsequent Settlement Reports of 1936-37 and 1989-90 maintain the same position.

For proper scientific study of the land rights of *Janmsthan*'Baburi Masjid', it is rather essential to refer to the revenue maps, either appended to the past Settlement Reports or otherwise officially prepared by the District Administration, Faizabad, Uttar pradesh. These have been listed below:—

(i) The *Had Basta* map appended to Settlement Report (1861) vide Basta No. 132 of 1861, *mauza* Ramkot, *pargana haveli* and *zilla* Faizabad. This map shows only the temple at *Janmasthan* in a significant manner and the 'Baburi Masjid' is not even indicated, even though undeniably the physical structure of the 'mosque' did exist on a part of the plot of the *Janmasthan* where only temple has been shown.

(ii) The latest official map of the Revenue village 'Ramkot' for the years 1344-45 *Fasli* corresponding to the year 1937 A.D.

(iii) The map of the 'Ram Katha Park' superimposed on the *Shajra* plan of Ayodhya town consisting of Revenue villages named 'Kot Ram Chander', 'Awadh Khas' and 'Jalwanpur'. Ram Janmabhoomi alongwith the mark of a temple is shown on plot No. 160.

(iv) The map of the disputed site prepared by the Ayodhya Special Area Development Authority. It is headed as 'Ram Janma Bhumi Sthal' at Ayodhya. The original of it is signed by the District Magistrate, Faizabad, Chairman of the said authority and other concerned officers.

(v) The official map of the towns of Ayodhya and Faizabad. It shows Ram Janmabhoomi but does not show any 'Babri Masjid'.



The entire Revenue Records dating from the first Settlement (1861 A.D.) have been examined. There is no record of any of 'Babri Masjid', anywhere in the documents maintained by the Revenue Department of the Government of U. P. at the Collectorate and the Tehsil at Faizabad, that were made available during the course of long search extending to a period of over two months during 1990.

As distinct from the above mentioned revenue records, the Nazul Department of the District Faizabad, (U.P.) also prepared its own amended *khasra* records of the *abadi* settlements (*tarmimi khasra abadi*) in 1931 A. D.<sup>24</sup> In these revised *khasras* of village Ramkot, both 'masjid' and *chabutra* indicating the temple at *Janmasthan* have been recorded in *khasra* No.583. The 'mosque' has been shown in *waqf* under column 'Name of the present possessor' (*Nam Hal Qabiz*). At the same time, Mahant Charan Das in 1931 and thereafter Mahant Raghu Nath Das in 1941 has been declared under-proprietors (*malik matahit*) of the entire plot. Moreover, in these *khasra* records, *arazi* No. 586 with an area of 11 *biswas*, 16 *biswanis* and 16 *kachwanis* (11-16-16) being in *abadi* is shown as graveyard (a *pacca qabaristan* known as Ganj Shahid) and assigned in *waqf* (*waqf ahad Shahi*).

A note of caution is necessary with regard to the alleged *Khasra* and map maintained by the Nazul department in the Faizabad Collectorate which is relied upon by the plaintiffs of Suit No. 12 of 1961 (now O.O.S. 4 of 1989 before the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court), *Sunni Central Board of Waqf and others Vs. Gopal Singh Visharad and others*. The map maintained by the Nazul Department is not authenticated, nor prepared under any law, nor is it according to any ascertainable scale. The survey made on the basis of the *khasra abadi* and that map of the Nazul department at the instance of the plaintiffs in that Suit has been rejected by the High Court's Full Bench which is trying the case and a fresh survey has been ordered on the basis of revenue records in order to ascertain the exact situation of the land involved in that Suit. It is noticeable that the plot numbers given in the plaint of that Suit are based on the said *khasra abadi* of the Nazul department. There is no *Fard Mutabiqat* comparative table between the plot numbers given in the *khasra abadi* of the Nazul department and the *khasra abadi* maintained by the Revenue Department of the Government.

In fact, the purpose of the Nazul (Municipal) survey and the map prepared in 1931 AD was to identify the encroachments made on the Nazul property. Such a survey map cannot take precedence over the

regularly conducted revenue settlement operations and the maps prepared thereupon, especially when the title to land is involved. In its order dated 10.1.1990, the High Court directed the Board of Revenue, U.P. State, to survey the site and make report with the assistance of the Municipal records and such other records which it considered to be useful and in its further order dated 23.5.1990 directed it to execute the commission and locate the plots with reference to documents on record only<sup>25</sup>. The commissioner, Shri J.P. Srivastava, appointed by the Board of Revenue for the purpose, submitted his report on 25.7.1990 wherein he had located the disputed property with reference to the Nazul map of 1931, even though he conceded that the Nazul map and the settlement maps were on different scales and that it was not possible to juxtapose the two maps and prepare *Fard Mutabiqat* and correspond the Nazul *khasra* numbers with the settlement *khasra* numbers<sup>26</sup>. Thereupon, the Hon'ble court passed another order directing the commissioner to submit supplementary report surveying and locating the property with reference to settlement maps of 1861 and 1937 AD. The commissioner submitted his supplementary report dated 8.2.1991 appended by 14 Annexures, to which serious objections were made by the Defendants to the effect that in gross violation of the directions of the court, the land had been surveyed primarily on the basis of Nazul map and not settlement maps, consultation of the records not on file in the case, non location and checking of proper fixed point and faulty measurement of land which was not done even according to the improperly fixed point<sup>27</sup>. In fact, the commissioner instead of surveying the land on his own had just accepted the fresh map supplied by the Plaintiff, which in matters of details offered a completely inaccurate position in respect of *Janmsthan*/'Baburi Mosque', graveyards, the *shilanyas* site and various other plots. Such an act on the part of the commissioner for having accepted the Plaintiff's map and adopting it as his own official map for submission to the court was characterised by the latter as "wholly unwarranted"<sup>28</sup>. The commissioner's plea that he could not undertake full survey of the disputed land of his own because of the iron barricades erected by the Government for security purpose was not accepted by the court. More than this, the commissioner in his report had found various faults with the settlement map of 1861 which according to him had not made correct delineation of the boundary of village Ramkot and that the second settlement of 1937 had adopted the earlier map of 1861 without meticulous field survey and spot verification. He also stated that the

original map of the village Ramkot of the 1861-70 settlement operation had been washed away by the floods of river Gomti and that the map appended to the settlement was prepared on 17th October, 1873 and was not attested by the Settlement Officer. As such, according to the commissioner, the settlement maps of 1861 and 1937 tally with each other but they do not tally with Nazul map of 1937 and that the latter map is correct and the settlement maps are wrong. Having gone through the pros and cons of the entire case, the Hon'ble court in its judgement on 8.8.1991, even though it refrained from calling the commissioner's report as 'motivated', described it as "absurd"<sup>29</sup>. It refused to accept the commissioner's view that correct map and report about kot Ram Chandra were possible only in reference to Nazul map and that the Settlement Maps were not correctly prepared. In its judgment, it refused to keep the report of the commissioner on record in the pending case.

A thorough examination of the 1861 Settlement Report would show that it is not only the most comprehensive document but meticulously prepared after an on the spot survey and measurement of the *khasras* relating to *kishtwar* and *abadi* but also in accordance with the erstwhile Nawabi and Mughal practice duly attested in every respect by the local zamindars/*pattidars* of various *mahal* units, the local revenue officials and witnesses etc<sup>30</sup>. The 1861 Settlement Report, also based upon the earlier 1858-60 summary settlements, depicts the exact position about *Janmsthan*/ 'Baburi Masjid' and the neighbouring plots as inherited from the pre-British rule in Awadh. The commissioner's observations in respect of the survey and measurement of the village kot Ram Chandra adopted in the 1861 Settlement Report are completely untenable.

As per revenue records, the *Shilanyas* site on which the foundation of the proposed construction of the Ram Janmbhoomi Mandir was laid by Sri Ram Janma Bhumi Nyas in November, 1989 with the consent of the then Government of India and *karseva* was performed on 30th October, 1990 does not fall in the disputed areas around *Janmsthan*/ 'Baburi Mosque' declared as such by the Injunction Order of the Allahabad High Court, Lucknow Bench on 14.8.1989 and subsequent order dated 7 November, 1989 for the maintenance of "status quo" and not changing the "nature of property in question" by the parties to the suit. The parties in suit are Sunni Waqf Board versus various Mahants in five suits registered since 1950, 1959, 1961 and 1989 but filed in 1989 at present pending for decision before the High Court. The Vishva Hindu Parishad is not a direct party to any of the above suits as the parties involved are the Mahants Vs

Sunni Waqf Board, U.P. and a few Mahants against each other. However, the V.H.P. has been supporting a couple of Mahants from outside. All the same, the Muslim Personal Law Board Working Committee made statements to the effect (dated 6 and 8 December, 1990) that the *shilanyas* and *karseva* site chosen by Sri Ram Janma Bhumi Nyas was the property of the U.P. Waqf Board and that "the *shilanyas* on the dispute land surrounding the Mosque (Baburi) was illegal as the dispute is pending before the court and that the court has ordered the maintenance of *status quo* until the decision".

An examination of the official revenue records shows that the view point of the Muslim Personal Law Board Working Committee and the U.P. Waqf Board that the *shilanyas* site claimed to be a part of the Nazul *khasra* No. 586 (stated in *waqf*) is a disputed one and that the performance of the *shilanyas/karseva* by Sri Ram Janma Bhumi Nyas in November, 1989/October, 1990 was in violation of the orders of the court is not tenable. A perusal of the records in respect of holdings in the village kot Ram Chandra since the 1301 *Fasli* (1893 AD), even the Nazul Department's revised *khasras* (1931) and the third Regular Settlement of 1344 *Fasli* (1936-37) shows that there have been numerous mutations, even in respect of the desolate graveyards (*qabaristan*) areas<sup>31</sup>. All these amendments have to be discerned carefully as reflected in the relevant columns of the varying categories of the revenue records. It has already been stated that the High Court in its order dated 23.5.1990 that the commissioner's survey report based upon the Nazul records was defective and not according to law. In fact, for property issues, only the revenue records based upon the settlement reports are the proper records. Since the 1936-37 settlement, all amendments/mutations have been recorded in the yearly *khata khataunis* and *khewats*. The *shilanyas* site falls under *khasra* No. 865 and in July-December, 1981, the entries in the revenue documents stand in the name of Mahant Abi Ram Das<sup>32</sup>. After the death of Abi Ram Das, as per the latter's Will, the revenue entry was made in the name of his disciple, Mahant Dharam Das, who further bequeathed all his legal rights of the plot to Acharya Ram Nand of Ram Janma Bhumi Nyas under registered deed dated 29 April, 1986 as Ram Janmbhoomi *sthal* for the proposed construction of the temple<sup>33</sup>. All this is clear from the revenue documents/registered deed in the sub-Registrar's court as well.

A thorough study of the revenue documents from 1858-61 to 1991 AD shows that there was no *waqf* land associated with the 'Baburi Masjid'

situated at the *Janmsthan* site and the Janmsthan complex. Nor was there any regular *mutawalli* for it. However, a serious controversy about the nature of the land grant in the village of Bhuraipur and Sholapur earlier given by the British Government to the assignees (*khattib/muazzans*) which was also in a way connected with the 'Baburi Mosque' at kot Ram Chandra, Ayodhya arose in 1938 A.D.<sup>34</sup>. The District Waqf Commissioner, Faizabad (Eligible-S.M. Omais) vide his decision dated 16.9.1938 while interpreting the *sanad* earlier given by the British Government to the assigness (*khattib/muazzan*) maintained that even though the grant was conditional on the performance of duties of land holders in the matter of Police, Military or Political Service, etc., the object for which the grant was made was the maintenance of the 'mosque'<sup>35</sup>. Muhammad Zaki, the *khattib/muazzan* raised serious objections to the decision of the Commissioner, Waqf Board. He maintained that the particular grant of land in Sholapur and Bhuraipur had been made by the British Government which was a non-Muslim body and hence the grant could not be taken as a Muslim *waqf*. Moreover, as per *sanad*, it was a conditional grant subject to the performance of military, police and other duties, etc., and in case of non-fulfilment of the latter services, the grant was resumable and in view of these conditions, the grant could not be regarded as a Muslim *waqf*<sup>36</sup>. He contended that after the annexation of Awadh, the British Government in lieu of cash *nankar* and *madad-i-maash* (as inherited from the Nawabi period) granted land to Muhammad Asghar and Muhammad Afzal and in the first regular Settlement (1861), it was entered in the latter's *malkiyat* (ownership)<sup>37</sup>. Thereafter, on February 03, 1870 A.D., Muhammad Asghar and Muhammad Afzal got a decree in their favour whereby they were entered in the revenue records as superior proprietors and possessors in possession of the property (*malik-i-ala qabiz wa mutsarif jadaid*) and since then, their decendants have continued with the same status. As such, the property falling in the category of superior proprietorship (*malkiyat-i-ala*) did not fall in the definition of the Muslim *waqf*. He further contended the descendants of Muhammad Asghar, etc., had been bearing the expendes for the essential items of expenditure for the maintenance of the 'Masjid Baburi', the family property was outside the jurisdiction of the Muslim waqf Act., No. 12, 1936 as the major amount of the income had been spent by them on their own subsistence as *madad-i-maash*, etc. This had always been recorded in the *khewat* records as such.

Apart from the above valid arguments, Muhammad Zaki always maintained that Sayed Abdul Baqi, the first *muazzan/khattib* of the 'mosque' appointed by Babur was a Shia and his descendants all through the ages, till date belonged to the Shia sect and could not be coerced to accept the spurious contention that the 'Baburi mosque' might be put under the control of the Sunni Waqf Board. This position was taken by the *muazzan/khattib* family before the District Waqf Commissioner, Faizabad (1944). Muhammad Zaki and Malik Hussain, etc., the *muazzans/khattibs* vide their Application dated 26th Septemeber, 1943 A.D. serial No. 26, submitted to the Sunni Central Board of Waqf, U.P., Lucknow, took a clear stand that there was no *waqf* for their properties in the villages of Buharanpur and Sholepur with total annual income of Rs. 528/14 as (Rupees Five hundred and Annas Fourteen only), i.e., Rupees Three-hundred fifty one and annas six (Rs. 351/6 as) from the village of Bahoranpur and Rs. 177/8 as (Rupees One-hundred, seventy-seven and annas eight) from Sholepur<sup>38</sup>. They further maintained that the *khewatdars* (i.e., the revenue authorities/records) did not recognise this as *waqf* and that it had been recorded in the revenue records only as *nankar muafi*. Of course, in the past they had been looking after the white washing, lighting arrangements of the 'mosque' and as well making payment of the salaries of the *muazzans/Imams*, etc. Notwithstanding all this, the legal tussle continued and in 1945 A.D. it was considered that the *muazzan/khattib* family (at this time Kalab Hussain, the brother of the deceased Muhammad Zaki) had been all through Shias, even though the prayers in the past had been offered both by the Shias and the Sunnis. However, the legal battle has continued till 1981 A.D.<sup>39</sup>. and in fact, till date.

It is equally important to note that during the 30s of the 20th century, as per statement of Muhammad Zaki, the *muazzan/khattib* even though he was looking after some of the essential items of the maintenance of the 'mosque' (i.e., whitewashing, lighting and flooring, etc.), from the income of the *nankar/muafi* grant held as *malkiyat* in perpetuity, he did not spend any money on the repairs of the 'mosque' in the aftermath of the riot in Ayodhya in 1934 A.D.<sup>40</sup>. The Collectorate and the P.W.D. records of the District Faizabad bear out the fact that the entire expenditure for the repairs of the 'mosque' was met by the District admnistration/P.W.D. At the same time, a thorough scrutiny of the records especially as per various witnesses examined in the Shia versus Sunni Waqf Boards case (1945), the last collective prayers said in the 'Baburi mosque' were in 1932 and 1936

A.D. and never thereafter till 1947-49 A.D. or even till date. According to all the available information including that available in the court records of the Suits pending before the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court, there is no other registration of any *Waqf* having the remotest connection with the 'Baburi Masjid' in the records of the Sunni Central *Waqf* Board.

- 
1. For details, B.R. Grover, 'Janmsthan Versus 'Baburi Masjid', published by Bar Council of India, New Delhi/Allahabad, 1991.
  2. *Ibid.* also Evidence for the *Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir*, Vishva Hindu Parishad, New Delhi, 1991, p. 18.
  3. National Archives of India, Foreign, Political, 28th December, 1855, No. 355, Para No. 5, Purga from Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the king of Oudh to Major James Outram, the British Resident in own, dated 12th August 55.
  4. *Ibid.*
  5. *Ibid.*
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. G.N. Bahura and C. Singh, *Catalogue of Historical Documents in Kapad-Dwara Jaipur*, Part II (Maps and Plans), His Highness's Secretariat, Jaipur, p. 36, Serial No. 179; also *Kapad-Dwara Documents*, Private Collection Series, N.A.I., New Delhi.
  8. *Ibid.*, also G.C. Verma, 'Jai Singh puras' Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress, Vol. XI, 1978, pp. 74-83.
  9. Joseph Tieffenthaler, *History and Geography of India*, published in French by Bernoulli, *Description Historique et Geographique de a Province D'Oude*, pp. 253-254.
  10. Also Saiyyed Sabbaud Din Abdur Rehman, *Babri Masjid*, Azamgarh, 1986, 3rd edition, 1987, pp. 29-31.
  11. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* (Persian text) vol. II, Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1881, p. 78.
  12. District Record Office, (*Muhafazkhana*), Faizabad (U.P.), *Basta* No. 132 of 1861 pertaining to *khasra kishtwar, mauza Ramkot, pargana Haveli* and Zilla Faizabad); Hose's Note dated 1st April, 1905, No. 37, Nazul Office, Faizabad.
  13. District Record Office, Faizabad, *khasra abadi*, 1861.
  14. *Ibid.*, *Bandobast*; 1301 *Fasil*/1893 AD.
  15. *Ibid.*, *Bandobast*; 1344/45 *Fasli*/1936-37 AD.
  16. *Op. Cit.* No. 12.
  17. Tehsil Record Office, District Faizabad., *Basta* No. 132 of 1861 relating to *khasra kishtwar, mauza Ramkot, pargana Haveli* and Zilla Faizabad.
  18. *Op. Cit.* No. 14.
  19. Tehsil Record Office, Faizabad, District Faizabad.
  20. *Op. Cit.*, No. 9.
  21. Map appended to *Bandobast*, 1861, *Op. Cit.*, No. 12.
  22. *Op. Cit.*, No. 12.

23. *Op. Cit.* No. 14.
24. Nazul Office, Faizabad, District Faizabad, *Khasra Tarmimi Abadi*, kot Ram Chandra, *pargana Haveli* Awadh, District Faizabad., 1931.
25. Allahabad High Court, Lucknow Bench, Order on objections against Survey Commissioner's Report in Other Original Suit No. 4 of 1989 (Regular Suit No. 12 of 1961; Sunni Central Board of Waqfs, U.P. and others-Plaintiffs Versus Gopal Singh Visharad and Others-Defendants; Hon'ble Judges S.C. Mathur, Brijesh Kumar and S.H.A. Raza; dated 9.8.1991.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Op. Cit.*, Nos. 12, 13, 17.
31. *Op. Cit.* Nos. 14, 15, 24.
32. *Khasra/khata khatauni/khewat* Records, kot Ram Chandra, pargana *Haveli* Awadh, also Registration Deed, sub-Registrar's Office, Faizabad dated 29 April, 1986.
33. *Ibid.*, sub-Registrar's Office, Faizabad.
34. Daftar Sunni Central Board of Waqf, U.P., Lucknow Faizabad Waqf Papers.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, Form Registry Waqf No. 38, U.P. Muslim Waqf Act, No. 13, 1936 AD.
39. Judgment of the Supreme Court of India, the case of Gulam Abbas Vs. State of U.P., AIR 1981 SC 2196, pp. 2217-18, para No. 17. The Supreme Court declared that the claim of the Central Sunni Waqf Board that the 'Baburi Mosque' had been notified on 16.2.1944 as Sunni was "of doubtful validity and probative value."
40. *Op. Cit.*, No. 34.



## AYODHYA IN THE SULTNATE PERIOD

By

LALITA VATI

The City of Ayodhya has undeniably been a city of great antiquity and a sacred spot to the Hindus for a long time. The city was located on the bank of river Saryu and possessed prosperity and glory in the past<sup>1</sup>. Many Purans attest the fact that Ayodhya was considered one of the six holiest of the holy cities<sup>2</sup>.

Ayodhya, also called Oudh or Awadh, a city of ancient India was situated on the Ghaghara (Gogra) River in Faizabad. Other derivative of the name are Awadh and Oudh. According to traditional history it was the early capital of the kingdom of Kosala, while in Buddhist times (6th-5th Centuries), Sravasti became the kingdom's chief city. Scholars generally agree that Ayodhya is identical with the city of Saketa, where the Buddha is said to have resided for a time. Its later importance as a Buddhist centre can be gauged from the Chinese Buddhist monk Fahsien's statement in the 5th Century A.D. that there were 100 monesteries there. There were also a number of other monuments including a stupa (Shrine) reputed to have been founded by Asoka (3rd Century B.C.) Ayodhya is revered by Hindus because of its association in the Ramayana with the birth of Rama and with the rule of his father Dasaratha. According to this source, the city was prosperous, well fortified and had a large population<sup>3</sup>.

The Kanauj kingdom arose in Audh during the 11th and 12th centuries. The region was later included in the Delhi-Sultnate, and the Jaunpur kingdom in the 16th Century, in the Mughal-Empire. Audh gained a measure of independance early in the 18th century but became subordinate to the British East India Company in 1764. In 1856 it was annexed by the British and joined with Agra presidency in 1977<sup>4</sup>.

In the political field the thirteen to early sixteen centuries (under the Delhi Sultnate) saw a continous struggle between the governors of Awadh (Subedars) and their faction with on the one hand loca' chieftains and on the other hand central authority in Delhi. The Subahdars made their position secure by strengthening the fortification of the capital. The mounds at the southern side of the Ramkot indicate extensive defences; yet

it is not certain whether these remnants of a remote, past were reshaped into amilitary line in the early muslim period or retained their original position. The first European traveller to visit Ayodhya (Oudh; in 1608-11 A.D.), William Finch reports that the castle of the town was built four hundred years ago<sup>5</sup>, Jinaprabhasuri quotes a verse that says that the walls of the fort (gadha) of Ayodhya were washed by the water of the Saryu-river<sup>6</sup>.

The undertain situation of the governor and the usefulness of the (walls and) gates of the fortress for purpose other than defence of this precarious position became apparent from the fact that before the Subehdar of Awadh Aitgin-mu-i-daraz. Amin Khan as related in the Tarikh-i-Firuz-shahe of Ziya uddin Barni. 'When Tughril Beg, Viceroy of Lakhnauti and Bengal rebelled against Sultan Balban, Amin Khan an old slave of Balban, who had held the fief of Oudh was sent against the relief to crush him. However, Tughril Beg enticed the men of the force to join his army. As a result of this desertion of Amin Khan's army he was badly defeated by Tughril Beg. This greatly enraged the Sultan. All fear of the anger of God left his bosom and he gave way to needless severity. He ordered Amin Khan to be hanged over the gate of Oudh (1279 A.D.).

In the fourteenth century during the reign of the Tughlaq dynasty, Ayodhya rose to comparative prosperity. A Mohammedan quarter sprang up between the ghats of Svargadvara and the northern side of the Ramkot in the north western district of the town. Several mounds among which one that is known today as Shah Madar<sup>7</sup> due south of the Rnamochan ghat and the ruins of many buildings still testify to this once flourishing quarter. Under the reign of Mohammad Bin Tughlaq Malik, Ain-ul-mulk ably governed the city for a long time (A.D. 1325-51). Ain-ul-malik alongwith his brothers annexed this province for the sultnate by defeating the refractory local chieftains<sup>8</sup>. He also succeeded in securing the co-operation of the Hindu Population<sup>9</sup>. The sever behaviour of Sultan Mohammad deteriorated struck fear into the hearts of his subjects; as a result, many nobles and officials with their families migrated to Oudh and Zafrabad on the pretext. That grain was cheaper there. Some of them became connected with the Malik (Ain-ul-malik) and his brothers and some of them received villages<sup>10</sup>. The policy of the Sultan proved ruinous for the country and great famine broke out in the empire in about A.D. 1337. While in Delhi, man was devouring man<sup>11</sup>, the Sultan left the capital and went to Swargadwar on the Ganges. The comparatively well organized and prosperous state of affairs in Awadh at this time in proven

by the facts that it became an attractive refuge for many muslim nobles and their families and was able to supply cheap grain to the royal court in Swargdwar<sup>12</sup>.

The government palaces were built on the bank of the Saryu (due north of the Shah madar) where ruins still testify to the glorious past<sup>13</sup>. We may conjecture that with the emergence of the Muslim township in the north the old Southern ramparts of the Ramkot the Ramkot lost their function if any that little but ruins remained of the old citadel at the close of the 16th Century is attested in the report of William Finch<sup>14</sup>.

Mohammad Tughlaq's successor Firoz Tughlaq founded the present city of Jounpur in 1359 A.D<sup>15</sup>. After the invasion of Timur-in-lung confusion prevailed in the sultanate. At that time Wazir Khwaja-i-Jahan whose title was Malik-ush-Sharq was sent by Sultan Nasiruddin Mohammad to recover the eastern deominious in 1394 A.D. He took up his residence in Jaunpur and proclaimed his independance. Awadh remained a part of Sharqi till it was recovered by Behlol Lodhi, the Sultan of Delhi, who appointed his nephew Mian Kula Pahar Formuli governor of Awadh in the last year of the reign (1489) Ayodhya came under the control of the Lodhis. About the aforementioned Lodi governor, Abbas Khan Sarwani remarks.....'his Jagirs were never disturbed and during all this time he gave his attention to nothing else except the accumulation of wealth. I have heard from persons of varacity that he had assumed three hundred mans of red hard gold and he did not purchase any other but golden jewelery<sup>16</sup>. Ayodhya might have been the right place for this hoarder since gold was found in its environs.

Not much is known as to the historical situation in Ayodhya under rule of Sharqi's and Lodhis. Politically the town had to concede much ground to the city of Jaunpur. Due to the weakness of central authority the Hindu chiefs gradually strengthened their hold on the situation. With regard to this period Joshi remarks, 'under the Jaunpur kings Awadh was administered in a better way than under the Sultans of Delhi. The Local Zamidars and Rajas also appear to have strengthened their position and the sharq rulers (surrounded as they were by petty though independent principalities) had to placate them to maintain peace and order in their kingdom<sup>17</sup>.

In summarizing I may say that political and religious sources testify to a prosperous town in the 14th Century. This town was not only a growing centre of political & commercial activity but also a centre of pilgrimage. Periodical fairs served both commercial and religious ends.

The most important festivals was doubtlessly the birthday of Rama. On this and similar occasions the town attracted an increasing number of the Janamsthan<sup>18</sup>. The long tradition of Rama worship as evidenced by the numerous literary scriptural and archaeological sources culminate in the 12th/13th century in the Ayodhya Mahatmya forming part of the Skandapurān<sup>19</sup> which describes the various holy spots in Ayodhya, and extols the pilgrimage to the city as the best means to Salvation. Along with various other holy sites associated with Rama such as Goptar ghat Swargadwar, Sahasradhara all of which exist till this day as well as adjacent temples of Candrahari and Phamahari, Brahma kunda, Cakra tirtha with the temple of Vishnuhari and ghats<sup>20</sup>. Among the devotee saints like Ramananda, Saiva ascetics like Siddhgiri<sup>21</sup> or muslim pir like Badiuddin Madar Shah might equally have been found melas took place mainly on the bank of the river<sup>22</sup>. In the interest of peace and loyalty of the Hindu population, muslim governors tolerated these gatherings which also contributed to their own welfare noless. All resentment provocation of Hindus was strictly avoided this is evidenced by the fact that no mosques were raised on Hindu holy ground till the end of the 15th Century.

Archaeological evidences gleaned from the excavations conducted in the area immediately south of and adjacent to the Babri mosque under the Archaeological Survey of India directed by Prof. B.B. Lal in 1975-1980<sup>23</sup> show the existence of a series of burnt brick, pillar bases at regular intervals.

However stratigraphical evidence proves that these pillar bases were built in the 11th Century and continue to be in used till the end of the 15th Century. In the sixteenth century when the mosque was built at this very place, its builders used a number of these black stone pillars from the old temple existing here. Art-historical study of these pillars show that they bear a large number of images of gods and goddesses such as the Yakshas, Devkanyas etc. All which belong to the Hindu iconography.

In the end, I would say that scarcity of sources inevitably obscures the progress of the town during the fifteenth century. Subsequent history proves that the foundations were laid for a period of blossoming. An idea of the prosperity and religious prestige which was attained on the eve of the age of the great Mughals may be gleaned from the evidence left behind by the founder of the Mughal Empire.

1. 'कोशलो नाम मुदितः स्फीतो जनपदो महान् ।  
निविष्टः सरयुतीरे प्रभूतधनधान्यवान् ॥  
अयोध्या नाम नगरी तत्रासीत् लोकविश्रुता ।  
मनुना मानवेन्द्रेण या पुरी निर्मिता स्वयम् ॥  
आयता दश च द्वे च योजनानि महापुरी ।  
श्रीमती त्रीणि विस्तीर्णा सुविभक्तमहापथा ॥  
—रामायण, बालकाण्ड, 5, श्लोकाः 5-7.
2. अयोध्या मथुरा माया काशी कांची ह्यवन्तिका ।  
एताः पुण्यतमा प्रोक्ताः पुरीणामुत्तमोत्तमाः ॥  
—ब्रह्माण्डपुराण; 4/40/91.
3. Encyclopaedia Britanica, 15th Edition, 1910, page 693, Ayodhya.
4. Ibid., 693.
5. Foaster; 1921, 175.
6. Tirthakalpa a treatise on the sacred places by Jinaprabha Suri. "Esa Puri aujjha Sarayujalasisce amanagadha bitti/Jinasamayassatt atithhi Jattapavittiajanajayal. Edited by P.R. Bhandarkar and Kedarnath Sahityabhusana, Calcutta; 1923, Bibliotheca Indica," Page 79.
7. The mound contains a little mosque built in the 19th century. The name might refer to a legendary saint called Badiuddin Madarshah, whose grave local tradition knows to have been situated C 1 km. to the SE on the site of the present Birla temple about this figure Mujeeb 1967, 287 remarks : 'there can be no doubt in regard to his being venerated for his miraculous powers by very large numbers of people from the fifteenth century onwards., 303.
8. EHI, III, 246.
9. Mujeeb 1967, 93-96, gives a biography of this remarkable man, From which we may quote a few passages. 'He became prominent in the early years of 'Alauddin Khilji and died in 1352 AD when his age must have been well over eighty years.....He must have had a good education; a collection of his letters which has come down to us reveals his literary accomplishment (Insha-i-Mahru). Ain-ul-malik was successful in reducing Ujjain, Mandu, Dhar, Chanderi and Jalar and as a reward received appointment as governor of Oudh and Zafrabad. This was the only appointment he held long enough to give convincing evidence of his competence as an administrator. He brought the province completely under control giving it the prosperity that comes with peace and administrative benevolence.
10. Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi of Barni in EHI, III, 247.
11. Ibid., 245.
12. Ibid., 246. As to this Mujeeb 1967, 95 f remarks Ain-ul-Mulk supplied the enormous amount of provisions required with extraordinary efficiency and also gave money for the relief of distress in the Doab. But this performance proved disastrous for Ain-ul-Mulk himself. The Sultan was either so impressed by the administrative capacity that he thought of giving him another assignment where his talent would be of still greater service or he grew suspicious because of Ain-ul-Mulk's obvious influence over people. He therefore asked him to take over the governorship of Deogin. Ain-ul-Mulk on his part felt he was being uprooted with the object of being ultimately destroyed. His brothers and supporters insighted him to rebel and very universely he let himself be persuaded. The result was defeat and humiliation and the less of his brothers and other relatives.
13. The site of the govt. palaces, situated high above the Saryu affords a splendid view over the river and town. The ruins it contains may data from a some what later

period possible that of the Mughals, 100 south of this site due north of the Shah Madar mound a palace, gate, still stands. It may date from the 18th century and contains an as yet undeciphered inscription.

14. Foster 1921; 176.
15. Fuhrer; 1989. 3.
16. Tarikh-i-Sher-Shahi : EHI-IV, 352 f.
17. Faizabad, az. 46.
18. Ayodhya : Hans Bakker, Part II, Page 132.
19. Ayodhya Mahatmya : Skandpuran, Sloka 51, 109.
20. Ayodhya : Hans Bakker, Part I, P. 161.
21. According to Local tradition the oldest Hindu institution of Ayodhya is the Sidhagiri Mathiya which belongs to the Dasnami order. It is situated on the Swargdwara ghats (east of the Tretake-Thakur mosque) and said to have been founded in the 13th or 14th Century.
22. Besides the Skpur, Mitra Misra quotes a description of Ayodhya from the Nrsimhapurana (T P P P 497-500). That is to say that according to the edition of Vishnu Prasad this fragment is quoted for the most part from the Bharata. The passage is not found in the Mahabharata. It occurs, however, in a MS of the Nrsimhapurana kept in the India Offices Library (E. 3375, 10 918). It constitutes the 50th Adhyaya of this MS. This chapter is omitted from the Venkatesvara edition, but may be placed between its 52nd and 53rd Adhyayas after the chapter dealing with the Rama Pradurbhava. This adhyaya, called Tirthaprasamsa, is quoted by Mitra Misra in its entirety. It advocates in particular the worship of Nrsimha and has no direct links with the AM tradition. The chapter seems to be completed since, it mentions several tirthas of which it may be doubted whether they ever existed within the Ayodhyaksetra. This suspicion is raised by the fact that among one of these spurious tirthas the text mentions gomatyam rama tirtha (Tirtha Prakash by Mitra Mishra, p. 500). The other tirthas described in this Adhyaya conform to the most prominent bathing places mentioned in the S recension. We are therefore inclined to assign this Nrsimhapurana adhyaya to the same period as the S recension. The holy places described in the Tirthaprasamsa (Nrpur MS) are given—  
Paces in Ayodhyaksetra (names in italics : within Ayodhya town)  
Tirthas in Adhyaya 50 of AMS of the Nrsimhapurana (Quoted in TP, PP. 496-500).
23. Survey Report, Prof. B.B. Lal.

## "COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES IN AYODHYA DURING MUGHAL PERIOD"

By

CHANDRA SHEKHER PANDEY

In ancient time Ayodhya as a political and religious centre had its historical importance. In the time of Harsha, Ayodhya had become a part of his kingdom. Huen-Tsang wrote that Ayodhya was a prosperous city and famous centre of Buddhist activities<sup>1</sup>. Huen-Tsang used word 'Saket' for Ayodhya. In early muslim chronicles we found the word 'Awadh' for Ayodhya. It seems that Ibn-Battuta refers the whole area between the river Gomati and Ghaghara as 'Aud'<sup>2</sup>. Though in mughal period the word 'Awadh' has been used for the entire region covered by the subah Awadh of mughal empire but before Akbar it might be used for the historic city of Ayodhya and not for entire area. However the word 'Awadh' has been used by a large number of muslim historians for the city of Ayodhya<sup>3</sup>. Abul-Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* wrote that "Ayodhya was a famous and largest city of India. Its populous site covered an extent of 148 kos in lenth and 36 kos in breath and it is esteemed one of the holiest places of antiquity<sup>4</sup>. The present paper is an attempt to high light the trading and commercial activities in Ayodhya and as well as its neighbouring area under great mughals.

After the death of Harsha north-India was devided in several petty kingdom and Ayodhya might have been one of them. With coming of turks in India muslim peneteration began in Ayodhya. In 1130 A.D. Sayed Salar Masud Ghazi laid his army against it and subdued it without struggle<sup>5</sup>. It is said that Ahamad Niyatgin the Gazanvide governor of Punjab, either himself or one of his chief, went to Ayodhya<sup>6</sup>. After 1034 A.D. when turkish power become weak Ayodhya came under Rastrakuta and Gahadwal rulers till the attack of Muhammad Ghor. In 1198 Muhammad Ghor attacked Ayodhya accompanied by Makhdum Shah Juran Ghor who is said to have destroyed several places of worship in Ayodhya and occupied it<sup>7</sup>. But it seems that Ghorian control soon withdrew and political affairs remained unsettled in Ayodhya for a long time. When Iltutmish, the real founder of Delhi Sultanate, ascended the throne Ayodhya came under turkish control. Sultan Iltutmish was well known about the importance of Ayodhya and appointed his son

Nasiryddin Mahmud as governor of Ayodhya for establishing political affairs in this area<sup>8</sup>. To expend their power in east ward be stationed military and official centres in Ayodhya and constructed a fort for purpose of defence<sup>9</sup>. Soon after Ayodhya was used as an administrative centre by turkish rulers. During the reign of Muhamad-bin-Tughalaq it rose in prosperity. Malik Ain-ul-Mulk appointed as governor of Ayodhya who settled political affairs and also under took the construction of a fort. Several muslims nobles came from Delhi to Ayodhya for settlement. Military and administrative offices restrengthened and it became an important 'Iqta' of Delhi sultanate<sup>10</sup>. With the rapid down fall of turkish dynasties Ayodhya came under control of Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur. Soon after defeat of Ibrahim Lodi by Babar it became a part of Mughal empire<sup>11</sup>. Mughal retained their power till the defeat of Humaun by Shersshah and it remained in the hands of afghan nobles upto 1559. In 1559 Akbar ascended the throne, occupied Ayodhya and it again came under the mughals. When Akbar devided mughal empire in different administrative units subah Awadh was one of them and Ayodhya became the capital of subah till the governorship of Sadat Ali Khan<sup>12</sup>. In Nawabi rule Safdar Jung, the second nawab of Awadh, shifted the subah capital from Ayodhya to Faizabad<sup>13</sup>.

Through ancient times Ayodhya had been an important centre of administrative and commercial activities. Being on the main trade route it emerged as an important market. It was situated at the junction of two important high ways of ancient India. The North-South route from Srawasti to Pratisthan (Maharashtra) and the East-Ward from Rajgrih through Varanasi to Sravasti and thence to Taxila<sup>14</sup>. With the establishment of muslim rule in India the political as well as economic significance of Ayodhya grew. It was the capital city of subah Awadh under mughal rule. Soon after muslim colonisation began and it became an important centre of trade and commerce<sup>15</sup>. Describing commercial, and trade activity at Ayodhya Babar tells about variety of cloths prepared in the area. Shersshah established a mint in the town when he defeated Humaun in 1539. <sup>16</sup>Abul-Fazl tells us that the "In the vicinity of the town their is a village called 'Dogon' which for a long time possessed a mint for copper coinage<sup>17</sup>. William Finch, an English traveller of 16th century, noticed that town was a great centre of trade and famous for its abundance of Indian ass-horne<sup>18</sup>.

Though area around Ayodhya was predominantly agricultural but was well known for its commercial activities also. Bazar and Villages



mandis were brisk centers of trade. Cotton cloths and cotton wearing was the most popular home industries<sup>19</sup>. Abul-Fazl while describing adjoining area of Ayodhya tells us that internal exchange of goods was in full vigour;" peoples from northern mountains carried leads, musk, chuk (an acid composed of orange juice and lemon boiled together) long pepper wax, woollen stuff, wooden ware, falcon and other articles and in exchange they carry back white and coloured cloths<sup>20</sup>. According to Pelseart, Ayodhya furnished coarse cloth in pieces of 16 gaz<sup>21</sup>. There were many other centres of cotton textile industry in sarkar Ayodhya. Akabarpur, Dariyabad, and Sultanpur was among them<sup>22</sup>. Dariyabadi cloths was considered to be the best and it was exported to other country<sup>23</sup>. English merchants were active to export Dariyabadi cloths for England, Mecca and Basa via Agra and Surat<sup>24</sup>. Evidence contains in factories records and other primary sources tells that the cotton products of the area were sought both in Europe and south east Asia as well. Barnier mentions that Duch merchants had a house at Lucknow for purchasing of cloths to export<sup>25</sup>. In addition to different types of cloths miscellaneous goods like corpet were manufactured. Textiles trading activities in Awadh and outside Awadh show that cotton manufacturing was on large scale.

The art of dying cloths had indigenously developed and for it indigo was commonly used by weaver. Hence the culture and manufacture of indigo had developed as an ancillary to Indian textile industries. Abul-Fazl mentioned indigo as important crop while describing autumn harvest of subah of Awadh<sup>26</sup>. In mughal period production of indigo had been in flourishing condition. Terry remarks that "coarser-cloths either dyed or printed with a variety of well shaped and well coloured flowers of figures which was so fixed on the cloths that no water can wash them out<sup>27</sup>.

Production of sugar from sugar-cane was an important trade activities of Awadh. Cultivation of cane has been one of the occupation of the people and mentained its continuity through centuries. Abul-Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari gives us detail information about sugar-cane. He described two species of cane; hard and soft. 'Pandua', the first variety was used for making brown sugar while soft was tender and full of juice used for chewing<sup>28</sup>. Then bulk of raw materials was consumed in manufacturing of Gur, rab and khar. Many variety of sweet-meats were prepared by reason of the abundance of sugar growing in the country<sup>29</sup>. Sugar was also used for making wine. Terry remarks that 'Indian prepared a kind of wine called' 'Rack (arak) distilled from sugar<sup>30</sup>

Though mughal emperor were not in favour of making wine and it was baned by emperor Jahangir but foreign travellers accounts tells us that wine was prepared by distillation. In area under description wine was prepared by Mahua and Chowa<sup>31</sup>. Rice and Tari was also used for the manufacturing of wine<sup>32</sup>.

Woollen goods were not woven in the area. Kashmiri's and peoples of hill area brought woollen articles to Ayodhya and in exchange they carry back cotton cloths<sup>33</sup>. Perfumery was one of the most ancient Indian crafts and attained its great impotence. It was prepared by rose-leaves, musk and keora<sup>34</sup>. Musk was famous article of trade.

Besides these muslims chroniclers and European travellers bears testimony to various kind of handi-crafts prevalent during the mughal period. Utensil work, horne utensil work, wooden and earthen work may be there had<sup>35</sup>. William Finch describes about the trade activities at Awadh "Here is a great trade and much abundance of Indian ass-horne that they make her of bucklers and divers sorts of drinking cups. There are of these hornes, all the Indian affirms, some rare of great price, no jwels comperable some esteemating them, the right unicornes-horne<sup>36</sup>." Utensile work was very popular. Poor people used earthen pots and certain vessels for purpose of cooking and keeping grains etc. Pelseart described that horne-utensile work appears to have been on the same footing as at present<sup>37</sup>.

Ayodhya was also famous for its noted production of gold, copper and leads. Abul-Fazl in Ain mentions that 'gold was obtained from earth around old city. Around the environs of the city by shifting earth gold was obtained'<sup>38</sup>. In adjoining area of Awadh copper and lead were the important metals used for preparing coins and ornaments. Shershah established a mint for copper coinage in Ayodhya and it continued till the time of great mughals<sup>39</sup>.

Rivers as well as land route were used for the trading activities in the subah of Awadh. Finch mentions that from Agra merchants used to go to Jaunpur via Kanaūj, Lucknow and Awadh<sup>40</sup>.

During mughal period the economic position of the bulk of artisans was bad. They depend upon the merchants and mediatories for his daily needs. Bernier notes that lots of the artisans and crafts-men was not happy and that " They were subjected to Harsh treatment at the hands of the officers who forced them to sell at low price"<sup>41</sup>.

- 
1. Dr. V.S. Pathak : *History of Kosal*, See also, Hans Bakker-Ayodhya, 1987, p. 36.
  2. Ibn-Battuta, *The Rehela of Ibn-Battuta*; Trans. by Mahadi Hasan, Baroda, p. 105.

3. Dr. Radhe Shyam Saxena-*Muslim colonisation and social transformation in Awadh*, Unpublished article.
4. Abul-Fazl-*Ain-I-Akbari*, trans. H.S. Jarret, New Delhi, 1988. Vol. ii, p. 182.
5. Abdur Rahman Chisti -*Mirat-i-Masudi*, 1682 quoted in *A disputed Mosque*, pp. 61-66.
6. H.M. Elliot-*History of India as told by its own historians*, vol. ii, p. 123.
7. Nevill's-*District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh; District Faizabad*, 1905, p. 175.
8. Minhaj-Siraj-*Tabqat-i-Nasiri*, Trans. Elliot's *history of India*, vol. iii, p. 328.
9. W. Finch observed that a wall incircling the town was built four hundred years ago. *Early Travels in India*, 1608-11, London, p. 176.
10. Elliot-Vol. iii, pp. 246-48.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 57.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Irfan Habib-*Atlas of Mughal Empire*, Sheet-8A, p. 31.
14. P. Carnegy-*Historical Sketch of Faizabad Tahsil including capital of Ayodhya and Faizabad*,. Allahabad, 1866; Nevill, p. 150
15. Hans Bakker-*Ayodhya*, Holland, 1987, p. 12 Rhys; Davids- *Buddhist India*.
16. Serva was a ferry port situated south of Ayodhya. It was on the trade route of Agra and Jaunpur. I. Habib-*Atlas*, sheet 8B, p. 31
17. Abul-Fazl-*Ain*, p. 183, Vol. II.
18. W. Finch- *Early Travels*, p. 227
19. K. T. Shah- *The Bijak of Kabir*, pp. 102-125.
20. Abul-Fazl-*Ain*, vol. ii, p. 183.
21. W. H. Moreland- *From Akabar to Aurangzeb*, 1923, pp.127-128; H. K. Naqvi- *Urban centres and industries in upper India*, 1968, op. cit, Pelseart-*Jahangir's India*, p. 52
22. Petermundy mentions that Dariyabadi cloths were known as 'patan' cloths at Surat. *Travels of Petermundy in Europe and Asia*, Vol. II, p. 156; Bernier-p. 212.
23. In 1641 Dariyabad mercoolis were preffered to the broad baftas of Baroach, Naqvi-p. 36, Moreland, pp. 127-128.
24. *Ibid.*, *Factories Records-1642-47*, pp. 6, 137, 304.
25. Bernier-p.292.
26. Abul-Fazl-*Ain*, Vol. II, p. 83.
27. Edwerd Terry-*Early Travels*, pp. 108-109.
28. *Ain*, Vol. II, pp. 77-78.
29. Terry-*Early Travels*, p. 297, I.H.Q. Vol. xxviii, p. 193, *Kabir Sant Banim Sangrah*, p. 261.
30. R.C. Prasad-*Early English Travelers in India, Delhi*, 1980, p. 274.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
32. P.N. Chopra-*Some aspects of society and culture in mughal age*, p. 49.
33. *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 183.
34. Emperor Jahangir-*Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 5.
35. I. Habib-*Atlas*, pp. 31-32, sheet 8 B, Habib and R.C. *Roychaudhari-Cambridge Economic History of India*, Voi. I, p. 334.
36. Abul-Fazl-*Ain-I-Akbari*, Vol. II, Lucknow, 1869, pp. 145-46.
37. More Land, p. 164.
38. *Ain*, Vol. II, p. 183, I. Habib-*Atlas*, p. 32.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
41. Bernier, pp. 254-256.

# AYODHYĀ AS DEPICTED IN THE MEDIEVAL ORIYĀ LITERATURE

By

RENU MISHRA

Ramayana is considered as the oldest epic in India. It is often understood as the story of the war between the Aryans and the civilized people of pre-historic india. In the Puranas the legendary hero Rama is said to be the most ideal monarch of Kosala kingdom of ancient origin ruled by the Ikshvakus. Many heroic deeds have been attributed to the fore-fathers of Rama. In Rama we see a character considered divine in all respect.

In the Jataka stories, said to be compiled during the 6th century B.C. Rama Pandita reads as the son of Dasaratha and sita his sister. Dasaratha ruled over Benares and not Ayodhya as known to the epics<sup>1</sup>. The existence of the kingdom of Kosala in the 6th century B.C. has been conclusively proved. It was one among the sixteen Mahajanapadas very much near Kasi, Anga and Magadha. Its importance was considerably reduced in the 3rd century B.C. when the imperial hegemony of Magadha was established by Bimbisara and Ajatasatru. History is yet to recognise the existence of a kingdom of Kosala with its capital at Ayodhya. Thus, the story of Ramayana is conclusively proved as pre-historic-popularly known to literature as an epic.

Ayodhya has not been described as an important city in the inscriptions of ancient India as one reads about Lumbini, Taxila, Ujjani, Purusapura, Rajagriha, Pataliputra, Prayaga, Saketa and Magadha etc. The epics of India, specially Ramayana, to whatever extent be considered as a myth, its importance in history cannot be ruled out. As to the early historians, itihisas and puranas are taken in one group; and Ramayana is the basis. With this consideration efforts have been made in this paper to present a short sketch of Ayodhya as depicted in medieval Oriya literature. Facts available in various forms in correction with its location, topography, expansion, feudatory kingdoms and friendly monarchs have been presented in this paper so as to suggest a prospect of historical study.

Ramayana depicts the rule of the suryavansis over kosala with Ayodhya as the capital. The first in the list of these monarchs was Sagara. Bhagiratha could bring Ganga from the heaven ; Dilip earned a name for

servng Nandini; Raghu, Aja and Dasaratha were famous for their heroism. Their capital Ayodhya was never conquered by the enemy as the name itself suggests the meaning connotatively. The kings of this dynasty were good friends and allies to the king of Heaven—the Lord Indra. Thus we read about a group of kings with semi-divine origin and the first manifestation was Lord Rama.

Ayodhya was situated on the east bank of river Saraju<sup>2</sup>. It was all through the capital of Uttara Kosala<sup>3</sup>. According to Sarala Dash Ayodhya was a Mandala state in the North Kosala. The Kausika forest was at a distance of Nine hundred yojana from Ayodhya. The city of Ujjani-Kanti was at a distance of fifteen hundred yojana from Kausika, and there from Nirjhara was away about three thousand yojana. Kannauja, the famous city was connected to Nirjhara by a five hundred yojana long road<sup>4</sup>.

Sarala Dash has further given a list of kingdoms named Udanga, chudanga, Telanga, Nepala, Bhupala, Saunika, Kaunika, vaisali, Malava and Magadha which were friendly to the Kosala kingdom<sup>5</sup>. In the Jagmohana Ramayana of Balaram Dash, the king Lomapada of champabati has been described as a close friend of Dasaratha. He further describes Kasi, Varanasi, Banga, Kalinga and Utkala as the friendly states to Kosala<sup>6</sup>. There were three hundred and eighty five friendly states in all. Balaram Dash with all the authority to himself says that Ninadeva was the king of Utkala and he had given his daughter Nilamani in marriage to Dasaratha. Sumitra was the daughter of Sumantra, the king of Chandrakala<sup>7</sup>. The famous saints Jabali, Kashyapa, Markanda, Gautama, Bistraba, and Bhrigu lived in Ayodhya during the reign of Dasaratha. Kapila muni was the Acharya and Vashistha, the family priest<sup>8</sup>. Kausalya was the daughter of Kaushika, the king of Chandravati and Kaikeyi was the daughter of Kaikeya, the king of Chandadeipura.

The capital Ayodhya was established by king Manyendra Manu and its area was 12x3 yojana<sup>9</sup> which according to Balaram Dash is four thousand and eighty kosa<sup>10</sup>. The king Dasaratha had eight ministers—Sumantra, Asoka Dhrusti, Dharmapala, Jayanta, Vijaya, surastra and Rastravardhana. The chief among them was Sumantra<sup>11</sup>. The members of the cabinet were the most elite and qualified of the people of Ayodhya. Their ability, honesty and digaity has been described in a very conventional manner by N.P. Mishra<sup>12</sup>.

Dasaratha had a strong army consisting of eighteen crores of charioteers, twelve lakhs of mounted elephants, twenty two crores of cavalry and two crores of sarinas with thirty two lakhs of infantry<sup>13</sup>.

The defence strategy ran through a belt of deep canal surrounding the city guarded by three lakhs of venomous snakes and eighteen crores of sardars as described in Dandi Ramayana speaks very much about the strength of the state of Kosala<sup>14</sup>. The city, it is said, was well planned with a big highway of one yojana length intersected by sixty four lanes at right angles<sup>15</sup>. This has been corroborated in the valmiki Ramayana Katha. The people were divided into thirty six groups or varnas according to their trade and profession<sup>16</sup>. The ablebodied people used to be trained in the use of club, bow and arrow, discus, mudgara and kusti etc. as known from the traditional accounts of the period<sup>17</sup>. The machinery of administration was well-oiled and well-tuned. The kings were benevolent. People lived happily. Thus, Ayodhya was rich and prosperous socially, economically, politically and academically.

The literature on Ramayana available in Orissa goes back to the fifteenth century A.D. The facts presented there in are mostly borrowed from the Valmiki Ramayana. The authors of Oriya Ramayana and Rama Katha have made some efforts to bring into the body of their works some old and legendary states of ancient Orissa and the kings of Bhauna, Soma and Garga periods, obviously to cater to the local taste by its thematic nativity, of course, without derying the authority of valmiki.

- 
1. Ed. Francis and Thomas-Jataka Tales-Rama and sita-page 203-204.  
Published by Jaico publishing House-1987 Ashavini J. Saha, 121 M.G. Road, Bombay.
  2. Sarala Dash-Vilanka Ramayana-page 3 'Saraju kule jai milile sri Rama' Balaram Dash-Jagamohana Ramayana Page 370 Adya kanda " Ayodhya Saraju tire milile sarveasi" "Sarayu Gaᅅga kule Putra ku Bhata pai" page 56 "Sarobara ru jata hbaru saraju tara naama gangasagara sangame misi hela sama.....ganga saraju sagar eka jana raghu slisli page-302, jagannath Das-Bhagavata-Nabama Skandha-Dashava Adhyaya. page-59 "milile Ajodhya Nikate Saraju Nadi Purva tate"
  3. Upendra Bhanja-Vaidchisa vilasa-first part-sixth chhanda-first pada. sanatana Nath-Samkhipta Valmiki Ramayana first edition 1986 page 3, "Kosala naa mare sarajura tire Rajya eka subisala xxx Rajadhani jara Ajodhya Nagara Bikhayata sara Jagate."
  4. Sarala Dash-Vana Parva-dwitiya khanda. page -287.
  5. Sarala Dash-Sabha Parva-Prathama khanda page 576-pada 516 and 517 "udanga, chudanga Telang ji Nepala Bhupala, Saunika, kaunika, Dahala, Belala".
  6. Balaram Dash-Jagamohana Ramayana page 254

7. Ibid, page-47
8. Ibid, page-244
9. N. P. mishra-Valmiki Ramayana katha-page 22
10. Balaram Dash-Jagamohana Ramayana-Adyakanda-page 250 'chari shahasra Assi kosa Ajudhya secma Jana".
11. N. P Mishra-Valmiki Ramayana katha-page 22
12. Ibid-page- 22.
13. Balarm Dash-Jagamohana Ramayana-Adyakanda page 248.
14. Ibid-page 294
15. Ibid-page 294
16. Ibid-page 294
17. Ibid-page 276

## THE BEGUMS OF AWADH, ASAF-UD-DAULAH AND WAAREN HASTINGS

*By*

MADHAVI YASIN

Under the rule of the early Muslim kings of Delhi, Ayodhya or Awadh was the seat of the governor. In the time of Akbar, the city became the Subah or province. When Saādat Khan was appointed Governor of Awadh, he built a hunting lodge four miles west of Ayodhya, which was named Faizābād by Safdar Jang, the second Nawab. The third Nawab, Shiya-ud-daulah, moved permanently to Lucknow. The importance of Faizābād declined, but it still remained the home of Asaf-ud-daula's grandmother and mother, the nawab Begum and Bahu Begum, whose treatment was the subject of charges against Warren Hastings<sup>1</sup>.

Nawab Begum, whose name was Sader Jahan Begum,<sup>2</sup> was the daughter of Saādat Khan, who belonged to an illustrious family of Iran, and was the 23rd descendant of the prophet Musa Qazim.<sup>3</sup> He was appointed the Governor of Awadh in 1722 A. D.<sup>4</sup> He married his daughter to his sister's son Mirza Muhammad Mukim,<sup>5</sup> known as Safdar Jung, who after his death succeed him as the Governor of Awadh,<sup>6</sup> A son was born to them on January 19, 1738, who was named as Jalal-ud-din Haider, better known as Shuja-ud-daulah.<sup>7</sup> Nawab Begum was a great disciplinarian, and gave a good education to her son,<sup>8</sup> which was also testified by Warren Hastings.<sup>9</sup> She kept a strict watch on her son and severely reprimanded his delinquencies.<sup>10</sup> Shuja-ud-daulah was married to Umat-ul-Zohra Begum, alias Bahu begum, the foster daughter of the Emperor of Hindustan, Mohammad Shah,<sup>11</sup> in 1158th July/August 1745 A. D. with great astentation.<sup>12</sup> Though illiterate she possessed great abilities and sagacity. She won her husband's gratefulness,<sup>13</sup> when he was in dire need of money as a sequel to the debacle of Buxar, and was not even obliged by his own mother, who gave him a very small amount.<sup>14</sup> Bahu Begum gave him whatever she possessed.<sup>15</sup>

Bahu Begum was very rich, and her establishment was like an 'imperium in imperio; After his re-instatement to the Masnad, (he) Shuja-ud-daulah religiously gave to his wife half of his income. Moreover, whenever he failed to sleep in the palace of Bahu Begum, he



paid her Rs. 5000/- as a penalty for his indulgence. Her son, Asaf-ud-daulh shifted his capital to Lucknow, and thereafter Bahu Begum become the sole mistress of Faizabad.<sup>16</sup>

Bahu Begum lived with great dignity and decorum, which befitted her upbringing and status. About her it was very appropriately remarked: "There was not a woman left of so great distinction and rank, bearing and dignity, and no woman in all thirtytwo Subhas of India can be held up in these days as her rival in either the grandeur of her surroundings or the respect, she could command."<sup>17</sup>

### **Nawab Begum, Bahu Begum and Asaf-Ud-Daulah**

Shuja-ud-daulah, though was the only son of Nawab Begum, and was born at a time when the family had earned the distinction of being one of the topmost nobles at the Imperial court, but she with the help of her husband and father trained him to be a worthy sovereign<sup>18</sup>. Unlike her mother-in-law, Bahu Begum, was lenient and held a loose reign on Asaf-ud-daulah, Shuja-ud-daulah did not approve this, and was unhappy with his son. Once he wanted to kill him for his unsavoury behaviour but he has saved due to his mother's pleadings<sup>19</sup>. Shuja-ud-daulah being disillusioned thought of nominating Mirza Mangli, his son by another wife as his successor, who possessed the qualities of an administrator<sup>20</sup>.

Nawab Begum gave a timely warning to her daughter-in-law, Bahu Begum, about Asaf-ud-daulah's incompetence as a ruler, which would be detrimental to the state, if he became the Nawab-Wazir<sup>21</sup>. She advised Bahu Begum in the interest of the state to appoint Saadat Ali Khan alias Mirza Mangli as a deputy to Asaf-ud-daulah, who would efficiently manage the State. Bahu Begum blinded by inordinate love towards her son, spurned the advice<sup>22</sup>.

Soon after the death of Shuja-ud-daulah, Asaf-ud-daulah did not observe traditional mourning, and asked for money from his mother, who was still mourning the death of her husband<sup>23</sup>. The money was given, but it created a chasm between the two. After making demands for money several times Asaf-ud-daulah shifted to Lucknow. After his accession to the masnad, he paid a courtesy call to his grandmother<sup>24</sup>, who understood him well, and was pained when he made a demand for money on his mother, while she was still in mourning<sup>25</sup>. She advised him against appointing new and inexperienced officials in place of seasoned and trusted ones of his late father. But the advice had gone on deaf ears<sup>26</sup>.

Asaf-ud-daulah appointed Murtaza Khan and his brother Muhammad Beg, who were expelled from Awadh by his father on

account of their father's aspersions against his mother Nawab Begum. They began poisoning the ears of gullible Asaf-ud-daulah, and thus they started insulting the two Begums<sup>27</sup>. It was under these circumstances that Nawab Begum expressed her wish to go to Mecca<sup>28</sup>. Asaf-ud-daulah was apprehensive that the Begum would bequeath her wealth to Najaf Khan Imad ul-mulk, whom she loved like a son, commissioned the services of the new Resident Nathaniel Middleton to dissuade the Begum, Middleton understood the motive of the Begum in going to Mecca, and promised all help to her<sup>29</sup>. Middleton persuaded the Nawab wazir to sign the treaty of agreement with the Begum on the question of money and property<sup>30</sup>.

Like her mother-in-law, Bahu Begum also understood the wile machinations of Murtaza Khan, and started direct dealing with the new Resident of Awadh, John, Briston<sup>31</sup>. The Resident was sympathetic to her in the beginning, but under the pressure of the Nawab changed his stand<sup>32</sup>. Moreover Murtaza Khan had apprised the new Resident that the Begum had illegally deprived her son Asaf-ud-daulah, of his rightful claim in the property. If she gave the money, it would enable the Nawab to pay for the British brigade, which he had to pay for under the treaty of Faizabad, 1775<sup>33</sup>.

Later on Briston had gone over totally to Murtaza Khan, and the Begum was put under heavy pressure. Bahu Begum was forced to give Rs. 30 Lakhs, on the guarantee of the Resident that no further demands would be made on her by the Nawab<sup>34</sup>, though it was opposed by Warren Hastings,<sup>35</sup> Murtaza Khan wanted the total ruin of Begum, and in a bid to ruin her financially manipulated through his bankers to underestimate the Payment made by the Begum<sup>36</sup> by eleven lakhs,<sup>37</sup> Begum felt mortified and humiliated. She approached the Governor General, Warren Hastings, for justice and protection<sup>38</sup>. He asked for an explanation from Briston, who gave a biased report against the Begum.

### **Financial Bankruptcy of Awadh :**

Awadh was financially in a bad shape. The debt of the Nawab Wazir to the Company was increasing at a galloping speed. For this the Nawab, the British officials and the Company were equally responsible. The opium eater Asaf-ud-daulah could not control bigger Zamindars, and whatever revenues he could procure, was largely dissipated among favovrites and frivolities<sup>39</sup>. The Company's military officers serving in the two brigades stationed in Oudh for his protection, and other Englishmen employed by him in his own army cheated him over military contracts, sponged upon him for presents and perquisites, lent him money

at exorbitant rates of interest and wrung from him in return pensions and jagirs. The picture in Awadh has been best explained in the words of Hastings : "Every Englishman in Oudh was possessed of an independent sovereign authority. They learned and taught others to claim the revenue of lakhs as their right"<sup>40</sup>.

Asaf-ud-daulah met Warren Hastings at Chunar after the rebellion of Chait Singh and paid him ten lakh rupees as a gift according to oriental tradition<sup>41</sup>. A new treaty was concluded between the British Government and the ruler of Awadh. Its two articles are worth mentioning. The first, was to withdraw from Awadh the Company's second Brigade to alleviate his financial burden, but in fact it remained only on the paper. The second, and most important was resumption of Jagirs, so that Nawab-Wazir would be able to pay up his debts to the Company, which had already mounted up<sup>42</sup>. It ensued the harassment and resumption of the Jagirs of the Begums, and subsequently constituted one of the charges in the impeachment of Warren Hastings<sup>43</sup>.

#### Resumption of the Begums Jagirs :

Warren Hastings at this time was in dire need of money to save the British Empire in India from crumbling down. Egged on by Middleton his covetous eyes fell upon the treasure of Bahu Begum. Most fanciful charges were levelled at the Begums. The first was, that the Begums had not only been privy to Chait Singh's designs, but had assisted him to collect the means of carrying them into effect. The second, that the Begums acquired enormous wealth and Jagirs by a fraud<sup>44</sup>, the guarantee in favour of the arrangement of 1775 was withdrawn by Hastings<sup>45</sup>. Meanwhile the Nawab Wazir who was so enthusiastic in the beginning to usurp his mother's Jagirs and wealth, after-wards grew reluctant, fearing his mother's and grand mother's violent tempers. At this time he was pressurised by his minister Haider Beg Khan and the Resident that he sent the armies to coerce the Begums<sup>46</sup>, much against his will<sup>47</sup>.

The British troops were sent to support the Nawab, the eunuch stewards of the Begums were imprisoned for nearly a year and subjected to fetters, starvation, and threat of the lash. The eunuchs having been tortured resulted in the production of Rs. 55 Lakhs, and similar severities over the next few months induced them to disgorge nearly as much again<sup>48</sup>. Thus 100 lakhs of rupees were obtained by in the words of two English Residents : In February 1782 Middleton wrote 'no further rigour than that which I exerted could have been used against females in this country.....same year in June Bristow added the opinion of the officer

commanding the troops, 'all that force could do has been done'<sup>49</sup>. Bahu Begum left the palace and took shelter in the palace of her mother-in-law, Nawab Begum, who could not refuse it<sup>50</sup>. As a penalty the Jagir of the old lady were also confiscated<sup>51</sup>.

### Vindication

Thornton does not agree with Hastings contention that Begum's troubles were the outcome of the financial exigency. He says. A State like an individual, must apply its necessities by honest means.....The place of necessity is that of the sturdy mendicant or the vagrant freebooter, and it is disgraceful to rulers, professing to govern in the spirit of justice and civilisation, to have recourse to it<sup>52</sup>.

Hastings was impeached on May 10, 1787 for his administrative highhandedness in India, and the cases of Chait Singh of Benares and the Begums of Awadh formed the most damaging counts against him.

In this episode justice and fairplay were thrown overboard. The Begums were punished without apprising them of the charges<sup>53</sup>. Hence, no opportunity to defend themselves was given, The only charge with which they were aware of was that of the robbery of the baggage of Captain Gyordon. But this charge also holds no water, as captain Gyordon thanked Bahu Begum writing that due to her help in escorting him safely to Lucknow he owed his life to her.<sup>54</sup> Moreover Bahu Begum was always solicitors and hospitable towards the English<sup>55</sup>.

About the charge of their complicity with chait Singh, it could be impartially said that the judge himself was a party against him Sir Elijah Impey the Chief Justice scandalously manufactured the affidavits, and all the persons whose affidavits have been taken affirm that they had no evidence of Begums complicity, they only heard the rumour about it<sup>56</sup>. Buke says : "My Lords, in forming your judgment upon this nefarious proceeding, your lordships will not fail to advert to the fundamental principles, the acknowledged maxims, and established rules of all judgment and justice, that conviction ought to precede execution; and that trial ought to precede conviction; and that a prosecutors information and evidence ought to be preliminary step and substance of the trial. Here everything is reversed : Sir Elijah Impey goes up with the order for execution; the party accused is neither arraigned nor tried. This same Sir Eligah then proceeds to seek for witnesses and to take affidavits, and in the mean time neither the Nawab, the ostensible prosecutor, nor his mother and grand-mother, the parties accused knew one word of the matter<sup>57</sup>. A contemporary historian objectively says: "The only evidence against the

Begums in Chait Singh's rebellion is based on rumour and hearsay, and that this evidence is in the form of affidavits taken after Hastings decided to punish the Begums by withdrawing Company's support<sup>58</sup>. Even the court of Directors doubted the complicity of the Begums in the Chait Singh Affair.

The wealth and jagirs occupied by both the Begums were their own, as they had come from very illustrious families and married to the Subedars of Awadh, the post which carried great prestige and distinction<sup>59</sup>. Bahu Begum, the foster daughter of the Emperor of Hindustan, brought with her a fabulous dowry<sup>60</sup>. Thus the second accusation was only a fig of imagination.

The correspondence, i.e. the letters of Bahu Begum to Hastings and Gordon's letters and other records which would have proved Begum's innocence were never put before the council, and were kept in a trunk<sup>61</sup>. Thus from the onset justice was the first casualty in the total case.

The Solemn promise given to the Begum by the Resident John Bristow to the effect that in future she would not be harassed by the Nawab Wazir was violated<sup>62</sup>.

The letter of the Directors to the Governor General for assuaging the sentiments of the injured Begums, was never delivered to them, as the minute of Governor General explains : It will be to little purpose to tell them that their conduct has, in our estimation of it, been very wrong, and at the same time to announce to them the orders of our superiors, which more than indicate the revers, they will instantly take on such a declaration, proclaim the judgment of the Company in their favour, demand a reparation of the acts which they will construe wrongs.....<sup>63</sup>.

It was not the Nawab who was the persecutor or oppressor but "Mr. Hastings was the principal in the persecution and that the Nabab was only an instrument"<sup>64</sup>.

The seizure of the wealth and Jagirs of the Begums created a social upheaval. Lakhs of people subsisted on in the palaces of the Begums, and with the dispossession of the Begums they reached starvation point<sup>65</sup>. It is no exaggeration to say that the Begums were an institution in themselves. Bahu Begum though remained in Purdah was exquisite manager of her estate, and looked after carefully and conscientiously to her husbands co-wives, children and family<sup>66</sup>. Oriental women are known for the economy, and they had always helped their menfolk with their assets at the time of their need, exactly what Bahu Begum did to her husband Shuja-ud-daulah when she gave him even her nose-ring, which ordinarily a

married woman won't part with, and to reward with confiscation and label it as ill-gotten wealth is to destroy this very feminine trait.

Though Warren Hastings was censured for the despoliation of the Begums of Awadh by the parliament, yet after the long impeachment which ended in April 1795, he was completely exonerated of all the charges<sup>67</sup>.

What Cobbett had said a century later fits well in the case of Begums of Awadh : 'We must be actuated by a sheer love of gain, a sheer love of plunder I really believe, that the history of the whole world does not afford an instance of a series of aggressions so completely unjustifiable and inexcusable<sup>68</sup>.

- 
1. Imperial Gazetteers of India, Vol. II, Vol. V, New Delhi, 1984.
  2. Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Siyar-ul-Mutagherin*, Vol. I, translated by Briggs in 1832, and volumes ii and iii by Haji Mustapha (Raymond), Calcutta, 1789, Vol. II, p. 543, W. Hoey (tr.) *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, Govt. Press, N.W.P., 1888, originally written in Persian by Muhammad Faiz Buksh with the title of *Farikh-i-Farah Bukh*, Vol. II, p. 46; Amir Ali Khan, *Wazir Nama*, Kanpur, 1896, p. 30.
  3. Kamal-ud-din Haider, *Sawanihat-i-Salatin-i-Awadh*, Kanpur, 1907, p. 20.
  4. A.L. Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh*, Agra, 1954, 2nd ed., p. 19.
  5. Mir Ghulam Ali, *Imad-us-Saadat*, Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1808 p. 8, *Sawanihat-i-Salatin-i-Awadh*, op. cit., p.20.
  6. *Sawanihat-i. Salatin-i-Awadh*, op. cit., pp. 45-46.
  7. A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daulah*, Vol. I., p. 3.
  8. *Seir-ul-Mutakhirin*, op. cit., Vol. III pp. 4-16-17.
  9. Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and Rohilla war* London, 1892, p. 93 n.
  10. *Seir-ul-Mutakhirin*, op. cit., Vol IV pp. 66-67
  11. *Imad-us-Saadat*, op. cit., p. 35, She was the daughter of Motamn-ud-daulah Nawab Muhammad Ishaq Khan, the Governor of Gujrat.
  12. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
  13. *Seir-ul-Mutakhirin*, Vol. II., p. 585.
  14. *Ibid.* p. 585.
  15. *Ibid.*, K.S. Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, Varanasi, 1980, p. 63, Despite the warnings of her own kith and kin, Bahu Begum gave away everything she possessed including even her nose ring, with its bunch of pearls which would no married woman would ordinarily part with under the direct conditions.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
  17. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, op. cit., Vol. II. p. 294.
  18. *Imad-us-Saadat*, op. cit., p. 35.
  19. *Memirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, op. cit., Vol. II., p. 18.
  20. *Ibid.*
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. For Dept., Secret, Cons., May 1, 1775 No. 4; *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, Vol. II.. Pp. 12, 20, 21, W.Hoey (tr.) *A History of Asaf-ud-daulah*, Oudh Government Press, 1885, p. 9, Originally written in Persian by Abu Talib under the title *Tafzih-ul-Ghafilin*.

24. Intizamullah, (ed.), *Begamat-i-Awadh Ke Khutut Faruqi Press, Delhi, 1947, p. 29.*
25. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad, Vol. II. p. 10.*
26. *Ibid., p. 15.*
27. *Ibid., p. 24.*
28. *For Sec. Dept., Cons, Feb. 9, 1778, No. 6.*
29. *Ibid., No. 6 and 7.*
30. *Ibid., Sept., 28, 1783, No. 6.*
31. *For Dept., Sec. Cons., March 20, 1775 No. 5 Ibid., June 19, No. 6, Ibid., Agust 10, No. 8, Ibid., Sept., 25, No. 3.*
32. *Ibid., Sept., 25, No. 2*
33. *Ibid., March 20, No. 5.*
34. *History of Asaf-ud-daulah, op. cit., p. 9; Scir-ul-Mutakhirin, op. cit., Vol. IV. pp. 70-71.*
35. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad, Vol. II, pp. 25-28 Following articles were given by the Begum :*
  1. 70 elephants
  2. 860 Bullock carriages
  3. Inlaid hukkah with a coifed tube worth Rs. 70,000/-
  4. A Saddle with gold mounting worth Rs. 17,000/-
  5. 40 Chambals (i.e. lids of hukkah bowels) with chains which were inlaid with precious stones and were models of exquisite workmanship.
  6. Precious stones and necklaces of pearls and webs of cloth Kashani velvet and tents of velvet etc. costing about Rs. 8,00,000/-
36. *Sketches of Rulers of India, Delhi, 1977, Vol. II, p. 72.*
37. *For Dept. Sec. Cons. December 21, 1775 No. 2, Ibid., February 7, 1776, No. 1.*
38. *K.S. Santha, op. cit., p. 70*
39. *Edward Thoronton, The History of the British Empire in India, Vol. II, Reprint New Delhi, 1988, p. 318.*
40. *Sir Pendrel moon, The British Conquest and Dominion of India, Great Britain, 1989 pp. 214-215. Captain L.J. Trotter, Warren Hastings, Oxford, 1905, pp. 181-188.*
41. *Edward Thoronton, op. cit., p. 316.*
42. *Ibid., pp. 316-317*
43. *Ibid. pp. 325.*
44. *G.R. Gleig, Mamoirs on the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings, Vol. II., London, 1841. p. 435.*
45. *Ibid., p. 438.*
46. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad, Vol. II., p. 119.*
47. *K.S. Santha, op. cit., p. 14.*
48. *For Dept., Sce., Feb. 5, 1782, No. 2., Memoris of Delhi and Faizabad, op. cit. Vol. II., pp. 120-210; vincent a. Smith, The Oxford History of India, Part III Rewritten by Percival Spear, p. 516.*
49. *For Dept., Sce., February 17, 1784 No. 14, History of Asaf-ud-daulah, p. 47.*
50. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad, Vol. II., p. 166.*
51. *Ibid., p. 107.*
52. *Edward Thoronton, op. cit., p. 334.*
53. *Edmund Burke, Speeches On The Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Reprint Delhi, 1947. Vol. II p. 224.*
54. *Ibid. p. 222.*

- 
55. G. Valentia, *Voyages and Travels in the years 1802-1806*, London, 1814, Vol. I., p. 142., William Hodges, *Travels in India*, London 1793, p. 104.
  56. Edmund Burke, *op. cit.*, pp. 214., 222-227, 231-232, 234, 235, 236-238, 241, 242.
  57. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
  58. James Mill, *History of British India.*, 1817.
  59. For Dept. Sec., December 16, 1783, No. 40
  60. Imad-us-Saadat, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
  61. Edmund Burke, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.
  62. *ibid.*, p. 214.
  63. *Ibid.* p. 247.
  64. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
  65. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269, *memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, Vol. II. p. 215.
  66. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, Vol. II. pp. 222, 294.
  67. K.K. Aziz, *The British in India*, Islamabad, 1976, p. 211.
  68. G.D.H. Cole and Margaret Cole (ed.), *The Opinions of William Cobbett*, London, 1944, p. 258.



## BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE COW PROTECTION MOVEMENT IN AYODHYA, 1910-1916

By

J. P. MISRA

### (I)

Gandhiji once said that "the sanctity of cow was the central point of Hinduism and the one concrete belief of all Hindus<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore, not surprising that the cow protection movement began and gained strength in several parts of India in the closing decades of the 19th Century. Two distinct phase of the movement are particularly noticeable. The first phase began in late 1880s and ended in largescale disturbances in 1893. The second phase of the movement was effective during the years 1910-1916. While the historians have focussed attention on the 1893 disturbances they have generally overlooked the second phase of the movement<sup>2</sup>. Accordingly there is need to discuss the growth of the second phase of the cow protection movement. Since the latter phase movement was the strongest in Ayodhya and it was the centre of activity in the second phase it would be our effort to describe the events in the sacred complex in as detailed manner as possible. Together with this the present paper would also examine the attitude of the local officials and the provincial government with a view to explain their responsibility in the unfortunate happenings in Ayodhya.

### (II)

As regards the background of the movement it would be well to begin with Akbar's reign. He prohibited cow slaughter as part of his effort to consolidate Hindu support and he made violations of his order punishable with death<sup>3</sup>. The East India Company agreed to the continuation of bans on cow slaughter in some of its treaties with Indian rulers<sup>4</sup>. Henry Lawrence ordered a ban on the killing of kine at Amritsar in 1847. During the Revolt of 1857 at Delhi Emperor Bahadur Shah forbade cow slaughter, impounded cattle owned by Muslims and even threatened to blow from guns any Muslim caught sacrificing cattle during the Bakr Id<sup>5</sup>.

In the decades following the Revolt of 1857 the British rulers did not follow such a strict policy prohibiting cow slaughter. Instead they wanted to be neutral. In the changing political atmosphere following the establishment of the Indian National Congress the British rulers did not

wish to interfere. They followed a waiting game in the hope of making political capital out of the whole controversy. The result was that during the period the attitude of both the major communities hardened. Several cow protection societies were established in various parts of the country. The effective importance of cow was reinforced at various centres and influenced various sections of Hindus. In U. P. as well as in other provinces a ban on cow slaughter became an anathema to Muslims while permission to kill cows antagonised many Hindus. It was a sign of advancing political development that the cow killing question was debated in courts, newspapers and pamphlets in terms of legal rights and legislative enactments.

The controversies about religious obligations led to tensions between Hindus and Muslims. The year 1893 was one of the worst years of the Hindu-Muslim relations in the nineteenth century. More than one hundred people were killed in communal riots related to cow slaughter in such widespread places as Bombay, Junagadh, U.P., and Bihar<sup>6</sup>.

To understand the form and pattern of these riots and the dimensions of the British policy it would be appropriate to discuss the events in Azamgarh district of U. P. which witnessed large-scale violence during the year. Three points of law and order and administrative practice emerged here. The first related to the number of cows which were normally sacrificed. When it was made known that 426 notices for sacrifice were received by the local administration the Hindu passions were aroused as it was felt that the number was unusually large. The District magistrate looked helpless to do anything to bring down the number of sacrifices.<sup>7</sup> The second dispute was regarding the sacrifices in the town. Hindus pointed out that Azamgarh municipal bylaws forbade animal sacrifice in private houses. But the district magistrate's answer was that the bylaw did not apply to id sacrifices. The disagreement could not be resolved and proved to be an important cause of the riot in the city. The third issue was regarding an order issued by the governor General in Council, in 1808 sanctioning the prohibition, as a special measure of all sacrifices in Mau town. later the local officials agreed with Muslims that the old order pertained only to "sacrifices" and that cow slaughter could be resorted to on other occasions. The failure of the British officials to enforce longstanding legal and administrative decision in a consistent manner led to riots in Mau in 1893.<sup>8</sup> The pro-British newspaper "The pioneer" blamed Hindus for Azamgarh riots<sup>9</sup> and the provincial governor echoed the same

view in a speech. He said that the riots occurred with the knowledge and cooperation of Hindu landholders and called them "rebels."<sup>10</sup>

The communal antagonism accompanying the cow protection movement pleased some officials. The Secretary of State, Lord Kimberley, thought that the movement made a "Hindu-Muslim combination impossible." He added: 'It cuts at the root of the Congress agitation for the formation of a united Indian people who are to force us to surrender power into their hands.'<sup>11</sup> The representative of the Home Government was looking at the 1893 riots from imperial viewpoint and appeared happy with the Hindu-Muslim conflicts.

### (III)

The rapid collapse of the cow protection movement after 1893 suggested that the popular sentiment was not broad or adamant. For next sixteen years U. P. was largely free of communal tensions. But behind the lull the major problems related to the movement remained unsolved and no one was surprised when the issue came into prominence again after 1910.

It should, however, be noted that there was no tension or sign of disturbances in Ayodhya either before or after 1893. If this pilgrimage town remained peaceful during those years it naturally follows that certain new development in and around Ayodhya led to most serious riots here in the later years.

In the early decade of the twentieth century Ayodhya was a small town comprising in round numbers of 11,000 Hindus and 1,500 Muhammedans. However, during religious festivals and other occasions it often attracted over two lakhs Hindu pilgrims. Many of these remained at Ayodhya for several days before or after one or the other festival and in case there arose any tension during such an occasion the surging crowd could create problems for any local administration. As the later events in Ayodhya were to indicate the British officials and the police, in earlier stages, showed little awareness of the feelings of the Hindus, of the sacred complex of the area and of the longstanding customs prevailing here. It would also appear that the provincial and local administration had learnt no lessons from the 1893 riots. If the local and provincial officials desired to balance the Hindus and the Muslims and gave the impression of pleasing them in turn they ultimately failed in their efforts and were largely responsible for disturbances in Ayodhya.

## (IV)

Cow protection societies were revived again and by 1910 there were clear signs of increasing interest in the question in several parts of U.P. Increasing number of speakers moved about, *gaushalas* were established and "monster petitions" were submitted to the Government against cow-slaughter. Feelings over the cow-sacrifice at the Bakr Id ran much higher particularly because of the insistence of the Muhammedans over their legal right to do so. In its judgment of 1908 the Allahabad High Court upheld their right to sacrifice. Relying on this decision the Muhammedans of Dewal, in Gazipur district of U. P., went to civil court and established their right to slaughter cows. This encouraged the Muslims to assert their right to sacrifice cows in Ayodhya as well.<sup>12</sup>

Such legal decrees were often obtained to override local customs. The official report points out that upto 1910 no "police arrangements were made in Ayodhya at Bakr Id and cows were never killed with the knowledge of district authorities." The local Muhammedans had never applied for permission to kill cow in Ayodhya before 1910 and no such permission had ever been given.<sup>13</sup>

Bakr Id troubles came to fore in Ayodhya in 1910 when cows were killed and disturbances were apprehended but did not take place. In 1911 the Deputy Commissioner of Fyzabad issued a general order prohibiting *qurbani* in Ayodhya. One Mohammedan broke these orders and action was immediately initiated against him.<sup>14</sup> The Mohammedans soon complained to the higher authorities both against the prosecution of this person as well as the general order against sacrifice in the town. On this representation the provincial government instructed the District Magistrate to amend his previous orders. The officer was asked to satisfy himself as to the suitability of each of the sacrifice being guided by the ruling of the courts.<sup>15</sup> The disturbances in Ayodhya and Fyzabad in the following year were largely due to the amendments in the previous orders issued in 1910 and 1911. The clouds which had been gathering in 1910 and 1911 burst in 1912 and the attention was focussed on the disturbances at Ayodhya which found an echo in many other districts.

In November 1912 the Deputy Commissioner, who had taken over the charge of the district less than a month back, attempted to arrange a compromise but failed as the Hindus were not prepared to accept any modification in the official policy adopted and acted upon in the earlier years. Eventually on 18th November 1912 the district magistrate allowed

sacrifices at six places in Ayodhya. These six places were located in Ayodhya.<sup>16</sup>

In 1912 the Bakr Id fell on 20th November, two days after the *Parikrama* and four days before the *kartik Purnmasi Mela*. Ayodhya was therefore full of devout and excited Hindu pilgrims. The Musalmans announced their intention of killing cows in the various places. On the Bakr Id day large number of *Bairagis* collected in Ayodhya and attacked the Muhammedans, broke into their houses, liberated most of the cows and beat and robbed several Musalmans. According to official version one of them died, two sustained serious injuries and thirty seven Muhammedans received minor injuries. Although there were 100 policemen in Ayodhya on the 20th November peace could not be preserved or bloodshed prevented without military assistance. The army was given order to fire on the rioters. This resulted the death of atleast two and injuries to many Hindus<sup>17</sup>. Later several Hindus were rounded up on different charges. They were imprisoned and sent to jail term ranging from two to seven years<sup>18</sup>.

On the next day sacrifices were carried on in Ayodhya under military protection. The news of the *qurbani* at Ayodhya, the movement of cows to and from Faizabad and the rumours regarding the role of troops led to an outbreak of rioting in Faizabad. Tension was great in both Ayodhya and Faizabad for some days. It affected several other towns as well<sup>19</sup>.

From the agitation of 1912 three conclusions can be drawn. The first is that the district magistrate failed to foresee the consequences of his permission allowing cow-sacrifice at Ayodhya. The second point which emerges from the official accounts of the Bakr Id troubles is that the "Muhammadans were not prepared to show any regard for the places which were held in most veneration by the Hindus." The third point is that no compromise could be arrived at by the prominent men of the two communities. There was greater realization after 1912 that "the everlasting *qurbani* question has to be treated with most delicate touch." This reflected marked change in official policy after 1912.

#### (V)

In 1913 the official policy towards *qurbani* was reversed and orders under section 144 Cr. P.C. forbidding cow-sacrifice in Ayodhya were passed as the authorities were not prepared to protect the sacrifice by military force as was done in the earlier year<sup>20</sup>.

There was gradual change in the official opinion. The U.P. Governor held detailed discussions with political leaders, senior officers and eminent persons and noted in Feb. 1914 that "the Hindus have behaved extremely well during all the recent Mohammedan excitement. They were undoubtedly horrified at the innovation of cow-sacrifice in place of such sanctity as Ayodhya<sup>21</sup>." He decided to release 23 minor offenders and reduce the sentences of 7 major offenders who had been sentenced for taking part in Ayodhya riots.

In the discussions following the Ayodhya riots there was frank acceptance in official circles of the "sanctity of Ayodhya". The provincial government stressed this in the following words;

"The whole area of Ayodhya is wrapped up in Hindu scriptures and earliest traditions with the history of Rama, probably the most revered of all the incarnations of the godhead and the story of Rama and Sita is the most familiar and the most sacred episode in their literature. It is, therefore, very difficult for any one who is not Hindu to appreciate the reverence which they feel for the ground of Ayodhya and the idea of sacrifice of the cow on this soil is intensely repugnant and irritating even to the most moderate minded among them."<sup>22</sup>

On this ground the Lt. Governor gave orders in Sep. 1915 that *qurbani* should not take place, in future, within Ayodhya and the Ayodhya Muhammadans were asked to perform *qurbani* beyond the "most sacred part of Ayodhya" in a piece of land west of the Jalpa nala. It was further decided that the Government could not, whatever the High Court may rule, recognise *qurbani* as a standing institution in Ayodhya. The forthright and clear instructions of the provincial governor against cow-slaughter in Ayodhya was a vindication of the stand taken by the supporters of the cow protection movement<sup>23</sup>.

Probably the issue of cow slaughter was more symbolic than substantive although the symbolic value varied from group and place to place. It would appear that the cow protection movement began with laudable motives. But is soon led to tensions between the two major communities. This indicated lack of understanding among them, failure to resolve minor differences and strong insistence on following their own course in a particular manner. The local officials failed in the early stages to appreciate the feelings of the Hindus and the special character of the sacred complex of Ayodhya. When serious thought was given to the complex problem it was realized that the whole issue should be viewed

from a different angle.<sup>24</sup> No sooner the sanctity of Ayodhya was recognized and need was felt to understand the "deep and fervent feelings shared by a large number of Hindus" the cow protection question was resolved.

- 
1. L.S.S.O' Malley, *Indian Caste System* (Cambridge, 1932) p. 14.
  2. J.R. Mclane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), C.A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics* (Oxford, 1975) and A.S.Singh, *Growth of Political Awakening in U.P.* (Varanasi, 1991).
  3. V.A. Smith, *Akbar The Great Mogul* (Oxford, 1919) p. 220.
  4. J. malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India* (London, 1932) pp. 328-29.
  5. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, (Cambridge, 1951) p. 207.
  6. U.P. Native Newspaper Reports (hereafter UPNNR) 16 November 1893.
  7. UPNNR, *Hindustani*, 19 July 1893.
  8. Home Political File, No. 81, Governor General to Secretary of State for India, 27 December 1893.
  9. UPNNR, *The Hindustani*, 12 July 1893.
  10. UPNNR, *The Hindustani*, 23 August 1893.
  11. S.Gopal, *British policy in India* (Cambridge, 1965) p. 363.
  12. Home, Political, Deposit Proceedings, November 1916, No. 52.
  13. Home, Political, A, proceedings, December 1913, Nos. 1-4.
  14. *Ibid.*, Semi-Official Letter from Sir J.H.DuBoulay, 29 Oct. 1913.
  15. Home, Political, B. Proceedings, April 1913, Nos. 109-114.
  16. *Ibid.*
  17. Home, Political, B, Proceedings, October 1913, No. 35.
  18. Home, Political, A, Proceedings, December 1913 Nos. 1-4.
  19. *Ibid.*
  20. *Ibid.*, District Magistrate, T.A.H. Way's Order, dated 26.11.1913.
  21. James Meston to Craddock, 2 February 1914, Meston Papers.
  22. Letter No. 1926, 13 September 1915, from Chief Secretary to the Govt. of U.P. to the Secretary Government of India., Home Department, Home Pol. Proceedings No 258.
  23. *Ibid.*
  24. Home, Political, A, Proceedings, December 1913, Nos. 1-4.

## "RAMA AND AYODHYA IN BHOJPURI FOLKSONGS"

By

HARI S. UPADHYAYA

This paper is based on a collection and study of 500 Bhojpuri folksongs from Ballia, U.P. and 300 from Sasaram, Bihar.

The purpose of this paper is to show what these songs have to say about Rama and his beloved City, Ayodhya.

Predominantly, Bhojpuri folksongs depict traditional story of Rama as depicted by Valmiki and Tulsidas. In general song-story is much closer to Valmiki's account.

There are a small number of folksongs from Ballia and Sasaram which deal with different versions and variants of the Rama story. Author attempts to highlight non-traditional material in the present paper.

In songs word 'Rama', is described in two ways :

A Rama, as an epic hero

B Rama, as an ideal husband

About 80% of the time the word used for the epic hero is Rama. Words like Ramchandra and Ragubar appear seldom and in a formal manner<sup>1</sup>.

Concept of Rama, the God, is that of a loving deity without any ritualistic performance. In fact folksongs have felt so close to famous epic characters like Dasarath, mother-in-law like Kausilya, husband like Rama and brother-in-law like laxuman are considered desirable<sup>2</sup>.

Birth of Rama : The king, Dasarath is given, by an ascetic, a child bearing herb and is told to give it to "the queen, who is most suited to him"<sup>3</sup> The queen Kausilya is asked by the river Ganges, "Why have you come to me?" Kausilya's simple agonizing reply is "for a son and to remove my barrenness."<sup>4</sup> Eventually, Rama was born to King, Dasarath, and queen, Kausilya, in pomp and glory. The king is said to have given away his wealth so much that Kaikae had to intervene :

O King be careful, do not let the city of Ayodhya be robbed, Bharat also wants something.<sup>5</sup>

Like Krishna, not much is know about Rama's childhood. The only incident of childhood, we know of, is coming of the sage, Vishwamitra to take both boys to the forest to have demons killed. Dasarath parts with



Rama and Laxuman unwillingly. Though, he would have preferred to destroy the demons himself, who had racked havoc at the Rishi's yagya<sup>6</sup>.

In the songs of Ballia and Sasaram even before his birth, Ram is destined to live in the forest for twelve years<sup>7</sup>.

In a song from Sasaram, Kaikae forewarns Kausilya : "O Kausilya, Rama will not stay home. At twelve, he will depart to the forest. "Folksongs do tell the story, Dasarath giving her a boon as kalikae had taken out a prick from his finger, while he was cutting bamboos. Folksongs explicitly show that among dearest of Dasarath's queens. kaikae, collected the cruellest demand by persistently asking "exilement for Rama and Laxuman and the throne of Ayodhya for Bharat<sup>8</sup>.

Love-stricken king moans and groans<sup>9</sup> begging his youngest beautiful queen to withdraw her demands, however the daughter of the Kaikai king remains adamant. Songs, though, very clearly show Bharat not being a party to his "mother's conspiracy", however, he remains suspect in the eyes of Kausilya and others<sup>10</sup>.

Almost all the songs collected depict four main incidents in Rama's life:

- A. Rama's marriage to Sita,
- B. Exilement and Sita's persistence to go with Rama,
- C. Kidnapping of Sita ( ) and war with Ravana,
- D. Return to Ayodhya and Banishment of Sita

### Marriage:

Rama of Ayodhya, son of King Dasarath, depicted in Bhojpuri songs, was married to Sita, daughter of king-philosopher<sup>11</sup>, Janak, of Janakpuri.

Rama is, as a bridegroom, located in three ways.

- A. Sita asks Janak to select Rama out of the four brothers<sup>12</sup>,
- B. Sita knows Rama before marriage dating<sup>13</sup>
- C. Swayamber breaking of Shiva's bow.

It appears, by the time these songs came into circulation, swayamber (स्वयंवर) was not the only method of groom selection. Several songs suggest Sita knowing and actually dating Rama prior to her marriage. Dating was known in ancient India. Rama and Sita are depicted playing chess, swinging on a 'Jhula' and walking and talking into a garden.

Sita might also have wanted Laxuman her bridegroom<sup>14</sup>. In a song from Sasaram Sita says, "my heart throbs for Laxuman."<sup>15</sup>

Volume of songs from Ballia describe breaking the Shiva bow by Rama and parasuram with him. However, it is not over the bow:

Parasuram claims Sita as his wife. Rama avoids confrontation and wants to leave town very early in the morning, with Sita :

वडा रे पराते सरहज डडिया फेना इवी,

नही त भेंटइहे पासाराम ।

एक वने गइले.....

हमरी विआहल सीता कोई ले ले जाला रे ।<sup>16</sup>

### Exilement :

Folksongs describe exilement for Rama as 'fact accompli.' A large body of songs mention Kausilya and Rama repeatedly asking Sita to stay in the royal palace as she was delicate, and used to luxuries; however, the determined daughter of Janak vehemently protests staying behind. Infact, in a song from Sasaram, Sita threatens to take out a dagger from her box and end her life<sup>17</sup>.

Bhojpuri folksongs depict Rama leaving for the forest with great ease; and with great brotherly love assigning the throne of the famed kingdom to Bharat, to rule with shastric traditions<sup>18</sup>.

### Kidnapping of Sita (सीता-हरण) :

This must be the most devastating event during Rama's life of exilement. Appearance of the golden deer is not much mentioned; however Ravana's coming to the north in disguise of a hermit<sup>19</sup>, to kidnap Sita, by taking her away in an airplane or dragging her by hand, has received elaborate description in the folksongs of Sasaram and Ballia.

### War with Ravana :

Kidnapping of Sita, certainly, was the immediate cause of war with Lankeshwar. Actual war has not receive not much circulation; however valor of Hanuman, Laxuman getting fainted<sup>20</sup>, grief of Rama, and bringing of 'Sanjivini herb' by 'pavansut' has been described widely. Even a physician, in folksongs of Ballia, named Hussain has been mentioned to cure laxuman<sup>21</sup>. Either doctors, in general were known as Hussain, when these songs were composed, or it potrays the influence of Muslim presence on Hindus cultural elements.

Incidence of war describes a song in the following manner :

"an army comes from Lanka,

and fights with Ramachandra."<sup>22</sup>

Mandodari, the wisest of Ravana's queens taunts at Sita :

"O Sita, you do come from a large family,

And no one is here to free you."

Sita's replies in challenging words;

"O sister Mandodari, Sarswati and Laxmi clean my house,  
Hanuman is always at our service.

Rama will come and destroy Lanka<sup>23</sup>.

**Return from exilement :**

Rama's triumphant return to Ayodhya is subject matter of a few songs. However, Kausilya, Bharat and the citizens of Ayodhya pictured to give a royal welcome to Rama and his entourage.<sup>24</sup>

**Banishment of Sita :**

Banishment of Sita by the King of Ayodhya is covered by a huge body of Bhojpuri folksongs. Most songs describe Sita, highly virtuous and magnanimous woman.

Bhojpuri folksongs, studied here, give no reason for her banishment rather they condemn Rama for his heartless action<sup>25</sup>. Rama never had a sister, however a Rajasthani folksong<sup>26</sup> tells of Rama's sister complaining about Sita, who was seen making Ravana's picture. Which landed her in the forest alone.

Sita, indeed, was angry and hurt at the banishment. After the birth of Lav, Sita sends message to everyone, though a barber, but, especially, orders him not to inform Rama. At a sacrifice, Rama needs Sita by his side<sup>27</sup>. However, no one had courage to bring Sita to Ayodhya. Kausilya approaches, Vasisth, the 'Guru' of the 'Solar Clan' to fetch Sita.

Upon arrival when Vasisth asks :

"O Sita, you are virtuous, you are a storehouse of virtue."

O Sita, you deserted the kingdom of Ayodhya and now, you are living in a forest."

**Sita replies resentfully :**

"O preceptor, remember when I was married,

I was separated from my natal home;

Rama, on a horse, escorted me to Ayodhya,

Put me on a cushion bed and gazed at me constantly.

O preceptor, now asking me to meet Rama is like putting me into a sacrificial fire."<sup>28</sup>

However, after blasting the Guru of the 'Raghu Kul', in the tradition of Indian womanhood, Sita meekly rides a palanquin escorted by Rishi Vasisth and dewar Laxuman. There is mention that the family and neighbours were delighted at Rama and Sita reunion<sup>29</sup>.

Songs try to give a happy ending to the story. But Sita did return back to the forest of which there is no account. Except for a brief mention of Lav and Kush, not much there in Bhojpuri folksongs. Though songs do say, eventually, daughter of the earth, Sita, entered into the earth and this ended her life of glory, devotion trouble and sadness.

### Ayodhya: A word about Ayodhya :

The city which gave birth to Rama and was his domain, is repeatedly mentioned in folksongs as Awadh, Awadhपुरी and Ayodhya.

Though this was the home of the Ramayana, the greatest epic of the Hindus; songs do not give any details. Ayodhya depicted in Bhojpuri folksongs appears like any other kingdom of the olden times. It could be that this city was too well known and needed no detailing in the songs. Or there was little appetite for geographic details among the Bhojpurias.

- 
1. 2F: 226 Bhojpuri Folksongs from Ballia, Vol II Ms.
  2. 1C: 445, pg. 17 Folksongs from Ballia, Vol I, 1988.
  3. 2A: 10, pg. 32 Ibid.  
ए राजा जवनी रानी रउरा जोगी तवनी जरिया पिअसु
  4. 2A: 12, pg. 37 Ibid.  
सोनवा त ए गंगा जी ढेर वाड़े, रूपया के ओरी चुए  
ए गंगा जी मोर रे संततिया के साथ ।
  5. 2A: 10, pp. 32-35 Ibid.
  6. Sasaram Collection, MS SA: 221  
आताना वचन राजा सुनले, त मनही दुखीत भइले हो,  
राजा हाथ जोड़ कइले विनितिया.....  
हे मुनि हमारों के दिहिना हुकुमवा.....  
असुर चलि के मारबि ।
  7. Ibid. 2A: 67  
इमति जनिह कोसिला रानी, राम गृह रहिहें हो,  
वहिनी वारह वरिसवा के राम होइहें बनवा के जइहें हो ।
  8. 1A: 415, p. 5-7 Folksongs from Ballia, 1988.  
मंगली ही केकई, राम लखन दुनो बनवा के जइहे ए-  
भरथ के तिलका लिलार ए.....।
  9. 1A: 415, pp 6 ibid.  
मरलू हो केकई वाडा ही बनवा मरलू ए.....  
तूरी दिहली दहीन हमरो वाही ए.....।  
(लिहलू करेजवा निकाली ए.....)
  10. 1A: 415, pp 5-6 Ibid.  
बाहर वाडू की भीतर ए कोसिला हमरी भइया ए,  
का हमरो परेला हाँकारी ए ।  
हमसे का पूछेल भरथवा हमार वबुआ ए,  
पूछवे केकइया अपनी भाई ए ।
  11. 2E: 157, p. 135, Ibid.  
काहाँ वाड़े राजा रिखे ।

12. 2E: 90, . 104, Ibid.  
चारहु में जिन्ही संवर ए वावा  
उहे हउए कंत हमार जी ।
13. 2E: 85, p. 100 Ibid.  
आरे काहंवा गववलू सीता दुपहरिया,  
काहावा रंगवलू सीता दांत जी ।
14. Sasaram Collection 2E: 30  
हमरा के देहूँ मुनि राम दोनों भइया,  
साथावा कोसिला अइसन मात जी ।
15. 2A: 61 Ibid.  
हिरदया बीच लक्ष्मन बसे हो,  
अरि तोरहो सिंगार कई, सीतल रानी, रमइया मोरी विसखलन ।
16. 2E: 153, p. 131 Ibid.
17. Sasaram Collection 2A: 116  
सीता झांपी मे से काढ़ेली कटरिया  
आपन जियरा हरवि ।
18. 1A: 310, pp. 1-2 *Folksongs from Ballia, Vol. I.*  
भारथ भइया लवटी जा तू घरवा के,  
जाई अयोध्या तिलक राज करिह भइया,  
अयोध्या के राज चलइह जसर हो ।
19. Sasaram Collection 1A: 43 MS  
जोगिया के भेष धइले आवे एक ब्राह्मण ।
20. Abid 1A: 43  
लखन के लागे शक्ति वान जी ।
21. 1A: 447, pp. 8-9 *Folksongs from Ballia, I*  
पवत उपर हुसेन वयद,  
सजे पहाड़ उठवले बजरंग ।
22. लंका से फउज आइली, रामचन्द्र से जुझी भइली ।
23. 1A: 315 *Folksongs from Ballia, Vol. II. MS.*
24. 1A: 318 Ibid.  
आरे जब आवन सुने कोसिला मइया,  
दूध से अंगन लिपाई !.....  
अवध में सोर भई ।  
मुठियन-मुठियन हीरा लुटावे, राम लखन बलिहारी ।
25. 2A: 21 Ibid.  
जिनि सीता भुखला के अनदेली, लागटा के बहतर  
तिनि सीता गुरुहा असापति, राम वन देले ।
26. Sita, Damyanti, Sila and Prabhakar *Dhul Dhuserit Maniya*, National Publishing House, Delhi : 1964, p. 72.
27. 2A: 14, p. 40 *Folksongs from Ballia, Vol. I.*  
कातिक के प्रथि नउमी,  
राम जग ठाने हो ।
28. 2A: 14, p. 42 Ibid.  
2A: 14, p. 41  
रउरा कहबि हम करबि  
पाँच डेग चलबी ।
29. 2A: 14, p. 41 I bid.  
आजु मोरा दुनिया जुडाइले,  
त राम सीता एक भइले ।



## ACTIVITIES OF THE ALL-INDIA KASHIRAJ TRUST

(January-June 1994)

### GARUḌA PURĀṆA WORK

During the period of these six months the Critical Apparatuses of further 50 chapters (51-100) of the Ācārakhaṇḍa of th Garuḍa Purāṇa have been revised. Revision of further chapters is in progress. The printing of the Critical edition has been taken up.

### WORK ON TĪRTHAS

The collation work of the Ayodhyāmāhātmya of the Vaiṣṇava-khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa and of the Rudrayāmalatantra are in progress.

### PUBLICATION OF THE UNPUBLISHED MSS. OF THE PURĀṆAS

1. The editing of the Vāśiṣṭhīliṅga purāṇa is being done on the basis of the three Mss. of the Purāṇa, which are preserved in the Sarasvati Bhandar Library of His highness the Maharaja of Benaras. The work is in progress.

2. The work of critical edition of the Varuṇa Upa-Purāṇa is also in progress.

3. The work of the Mānasakhaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa is also in progress.

### VEDA-PĀRĀYAṆA

The traditional recitation of the Taittirīya Śākhā of the Kṛṣṇayajurveda was organized by the All-India Kashiraj Trust. The Veda-pārāyaṇa was organized during the Śukla-pakṣa (bright half) of Māgha. On this occasion, Pt. Ram Murti Ghanapathi was reciter and Pt. Viresvar Shastri Dravid was śrotā. At the end of the pārāyaṇa presents were offered to the reciter and śrotā and their travelling expenses were also given.

### VISITORS TO THE PURĀṆA DEPARTMENT

During this period many scholars and students of different colleges and universities visited the Purāṇa Department of the All-India Kashiraj Trust for consulting the texts of Purāṇas; they were also helped by the Department in their Puranic studies. Some visitors recorded their opinions also, which are given here :-

1. Jai Srila Prabhupada Maha-Vishnu Svami visited on 8th April, 1994. He writes :-"Iskcon *sanyāsis* and devotees are offering blessings for your holy work in the service of Lord Rama and Sri Krishna.

Hare Krishna! Hare Rama...11

2. Km. Shivapriya Singh, Research Scholar in the Department of Geography, B.H.U., visited on 8.4.1994 and noted puranic material for her research.

3. Prof. Varnekar, Nagpur, 17.6.94

4. Prof. Paramanand, Kurukshetra Univ. 17.6.94

## ACTIVITIES OF THE SISTER TRUSTS

### 1. Maharaja Banaras Vidya Mandir Trust

#### (a) DHRUPADMELĀ

This year the Dhrupad Melā organised by the Maharaja Benares Vidyamandir Trust, was celebrated at Tulasighat, hallowed by the memory of sanit poet Tulasidas author of Rāmācaritamānasa on March 7-9, 1994. This year His Highness Kashinaresh Maharaja Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singh for the first time graced the inaugural function by his presence. Yuvaraja Shri Anant Narain Singh was also present in the function. His Highness in his inaugural speech assured the artists that Maharaja Benares Vidyamandir Trust would take care of old artists who were unable to earn. On this occasion Maharaja Bahadur also honoured those artists who had regularly contributed for the success of this Melā for the last twenty years. This year the Swati Turnal award was given to Sri Saiduddeen Dagar (Pune) and to Shri Ramashish Pathak. Most of the famous Dhrupad artists of India and abroad participated in the Melā.

This year the 9th volume of Dhrupad Varshiki was published on this occasion. In this journal scholar-artists of the Dhrupad system of music from all over the world contributed scholarly articles. Renowned scholar Professor Prema Lata Sharma has been painstakingly editing this journal since last nine years.

#### (b) MAṄGALOTSAVA

The *Maṅgalotsava* was celebrated this year on 29th March 1994. Several talented singers from Varanasi gave their recitals. Instrumental music also played an important role during the *Maṅgalotsava*. The *Maṅgalotsava* was organised in the '*Diwānakhānā*' of the Ramanagar Fort. Officials and citizens from Varanasi and Ramnagar listened to the performance and were delighted in the melliferous cadence of Indian music.

The festival was also attended by some eminent foreign scholars.



## 2. Maharaja Udit Narain Singh Mānasa Pracāra Nidhi Navāha-Pārāyaṇa

The Maharaja Udit Narain Singh Mānasa Pracāra Nidhi has organised a nine-days *Pārāyaṇa* and *Pravacana* (discourse) of the Rāmacaritamānasa in the *Kālī* Temple of Chakia. As usual a large number of citizens attended the *pravacanas*, which were also daily attended by His Highness the Maharaja of Benaras. The *Navāha-Pārāyaṇa* was performed from *Vaiśākha Śukla Dvītyā* to *Vaiśākha Śukla Navamī*, 2051 Vikram Era (from 12th May to 20th May 1994). On the concluding day brahmins were fed and gifts were distributed.

### THE RĀMĀYAṆA SEMINAR IN BARODA

The Oriental Institute, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, organised an international Seminar on *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa* from January 25 to January 27 1994. Scholars of international repute from India and abroad participated in the seminar. His Highness Kashinaresh Maharaj Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singh inaugurated the seminar on 25th January, 1994. His Highness Maharaja in his inaugural speech praised the high qualities of the works performed by the Institute and the great contributions of Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad in the furtherance of the academic activities in Baroda. His Highness also emphasised the need of publishing the illustrated Persian translation of the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa* commissioned by King Akbar which remains unpublished and consequently which could not be used by the editors of the Critical edition. A team, headed by Dr. G.S. Rai, Purana Department of the All-India Kashiraj Trust, participated in the seminar and presented three papers :-

1. *Lañkā* in Antarctica : A Text Critical analysis.
2. Spiritual unity of the two parts of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.
3. A proto-*Kāṇḍa* division of *Rāmāyaṇa* as depicted in later *Rāmakāvya*s.

आसन् । नवाहपारायणमिदं २०५१ वैक्रमाब्दस्य वैशाखे शुक्लपक्षस्य द्वितीयातो वैशाखशुक्लदशमी (१२-२० अप्रैल १९९४) यावदायोजितम् । पारायणसमाप्तौ ब्राह्मणभोजनस्य प्रसादवितरणस्य चायोजनं विहितम् ।

### बटोदरायां रामायणगोष्ठी

बटोदरास्थ-महाराजसयाजिरावविश्वविद्यालयीयेन प्राच्यविद्यासंस्थानेन १९९४ वर्षे जनवरीमासे २५-२७ दिनाङ्केषु वाल्मीकिरामायणविषयिण्येकाऽन्ताराष्ट्रीयीया गोष्ठ्यायोजिता । गोष्ठ्यामस्यां भारतीया वैदेशिकाश्च प्रसिद्धाः विद्वांसः भागं गृहीतवन्तः । तत्रभवन्तः काशिनरेशः डॉ. विभूतिनारायणसिंहशर्मदेवा अस्या गोष्ठ्या उद्घाटनं २५-जनवरी १९९४ दिनाङ्के कृतवन्तः । तत्रभवद्भिः महाराजैः स्वकीये उद्घाटनभाषणे संस्थानेन सम्पादितानां महत्त्वपूर्णकार्याणां, महाराजसयाजिराव-गायकवाडमहोदयस्य बटोदरायां शैक्षणिकप्रगत्यर्थकयोगदानस्य च प्रशंसा कृता । तत्रभवद्भी राज्ञाऽकबरेण कारितस्य वाल्मीकिरामायणस्य सचित्र-पारसीभाषानु-वादस्य प्रकाशनस्याऽवश्यकताऽपि उद्घोषिता । यतोहि रामायणस्य पारसी-भाषानुवादोऽयं हस्तलेखागारेणैव संरक्ष्यते, अतोऽस्योपयोगोऽपि पाठसमीक्षित-संस्करणस्य सम्पादकैः न कृतः ।

सर्वभारतीयकाशिराजन्यासस्य पुराणविभागीय डॉ. गङ्गासागररायमहोदय-स्याध्यक्ष्ये विभागीयसदस्या अपि गोष्ठ्यां भागं गृहीतवन्तः, त्रयः निबन्धाश्च प्रस्तुतवन्तः । ते निबन्धा इमे—

१. अण्टार्कटिकाप्रदेशे लङ्का-पाठसमीक्षात्मिका व्याख्या;
२. रामायणस्य द्वयोः भागयोराध्यात्मिकैकता;
३. उत्तरवर्तिरामकाव्येषु व्यक्तो रामायणस्य प्राक्तनकाण्डविभागश्च ।

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF  
THE ALL-INDIA KASHIRAJ TRUST

1. His Highness Maharaja Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singh, M.A., D.Litt. Fort, Ramnagar, Varanasi (*Chairman*).

*Trustee nominated by the Govt. of India :—*

2. Vacant.

*Trustees nominated by the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh :—*

3. Sri Krishna Chandra Pant, Ex. Minister, Govt. of India, 7, Tyagraj Marg, New Delhi.
4. Sri Lok Pati T. pathi, Ex. Minister, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, Aurangabad, Varanasi.

*Trustees nominated by His Highness, the Maharaja of Banaras :—*

5. Dr. R.N. Dandekar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.
6. Pt. Giridhari Lal Mehta, Varanasi; Managing Director; Jardine Handerson Ltd.; Scindia Steam Navigation Ltd.; Trustee : Vallabhram-Saligram Trust, Calcutta.
7. Padmabhushan Pt. Baladeva Upadhyaya, M.A. Sahityacharya, Vachaspati; Formerly Director, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University; Ravindrapuri, Varanasi.

Donation made to All-India Kashiraj Trust, Fort, Ramnagar, Varanasi, Will qualify for exemption under Sec. 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 in the hands of donors.

Statement of ownership and other particulars about

पुराणम्—PURĀṆA

1. Place of Publication ...Fort Ramnagar, Varanasi
2. Periodicity of Publication ...Half-yearly
3. Printer's Name ...Vinaya Shankar  
Nationality ...Indian  
Address ...Ratna Printing Works,  
B 21/42 A, Kamachha, Varanasi
4. Publisher's Name ...Yogendra Narain Thakur  
General Secretary, All-India  
Kashiraj Trust  
Nationality ...Indian  
Address ...All-India Kashiraj Trust, Fort  
Ramnagar, Varanasi.
5. Editor's Name ...R.K. Sharma (New Delhi),  
Dr. R.N. Dandekar (Pune),  
R.S. Bhattacharya (*Editor*)  
(Purāṇa Deptt., Fort Ramnagar  
Varanasi)  
Nationality ...Indian
6. Name of the owner ...All-India Kashiraj Trust, Fort  
Ramnagar, Varanasi.

I, Yogendra Narain Thakur, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge.

**Yogendra Narain Thakur**  
Publisher.

Printed at the Ratna Printing Works, Kamachha, Varanasi.