

The relentless struggle for Ramajanmabhoomi

BUT
1/5/93

THE Hindus have been waging unremitting struggle for centuries to repossess the birthplace of Sri Rama. It is indisputably clear that in the year 1528 Babur ordered his commander Mir Baqi to erect a mosque at Ayodhya to make the spot a "place of descent of angels". It is the widely shared belief of Hindus that Mir Baqi established the mosque after demolishing the Temple of Sri Rama situated at the place of his birth known as Ramajanmabhoomi. Whether Mir Baqi did actually demolish the pre-existing temple and thereafter constructed the mosque is a matter of evidence which is discussed separately. However, the chronology of Ramajanmabhoomi brings out the unremitting struggle of the Hindus to recapture their holy place. This struggle itself indicated their pre-Masjid reverence for the site.

The recorded history shows that at least from 1735 the Hindus had consistently attempted to recapture the Janmasthan and re-establish the Rama temple as the following chronology establishes.

1. A document enclosed with a letter dated 12th August, 1855 from Wazid Ali Shah, the King of Oudh, to the British Resident Major James Outram, carrying the seal of the Qazi of Faizabad, in the year 1735 A.D., mentioned that a serious clash had taken place over the Masjid "built by the emperor of Delhi" (apparently a conflict of the kind that took place later in 1855) between Hindus and Muslims, during the time of Burhan-ul-Mulk Saadat Ali Khan, the first Nawab of Oudh (1707-1736) over the possession of this mosque.

MARATHA AIM: FREE AYODHYA

2. The Maratha documents show that one of the main objectives of Maratha operations and policy in North India was the liberation of the sacred cities of Ayodhya, Kashi and Prayag. In the year 1751, Maratha armies led by Malhar Rao Holkar, at the invitation of Safdarjang, the second Nawab of Oudh, defeated the Pathan forces in Doab. Immediately after his victory Malhar Rao Holkar requested Safdarjang to hand over Ayodhya, Kashi and Prayag to the Peshwa (A. L. Srivastava: *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*).

3. Again, when, in 1756, the third Nawab Shujaudaula invited Maratha help against impending Afghan invasion, the Maratha agent at the Court of Oudh demanded the transfer of these three holy places including Ayodhya and the negotiations lingered on for more than a year on this one point. Ultimately, in July 1757, Shujaudaula agreed to transfer the holy cities of Ayodhya and Kashi to the Maratha leader Raghoba. But the transfer could not be implemented as Maratha armies got entangled in the conquest of the Punjab which ultimately led to the tragedy of Panipat (1761 A.D.).

4. But Peshwa Balaji Bajirao's eagerness to acquire Ayodhya is reflected in one of his letters dated 23rd February, 1759 to Dattaji Scindia, his General in the North, wherein the Peshwa reminds Scindia that "Mansur Ali's son (i. e. Shujaudaula) had promised to Dada (i. e. Raghoba) to cede Benares and Ayodhya" and instructs him to take hold of those places along with Prayag (Cf. J. N. Sarkar: *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, Vol. II, Calcutta 1934, pp. 231-233).

5. Historians, Dr. A. L. Srivastava, Sir J. N. Sarkar, G. S. Sardesai and Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, who have studied this period of history very deeply, have concluded that "Had the Bhau (Sadashiv) emerged successful from Panipat, within a few years Kashi, Prayag and Ayodhya would have been emancipated."

STRUGGLE FOR JANMASTHAN

6. In 1767, an Austrian Jesuit traveller, Joseph Tieffenthaler, found that in spite of the Mughal kings' efforts to prevent them, the Hindus had re-occupied the courtyard, raised the Rama Chabootra thereon, and were worshipping and celebrating Ramanavami there as well as under the domed structure.

7. In 1855, there was a big armed encounter in which nearly 300 Muslims under Shah Ghulam Hussain took possession of the Babri mosque and tried to fix doors on it. On protest from Hindus, armed clashes started. Muslims attacked Hanuman-garhi, but were driven back with considerable loss. Then the Hindus counter-attacked, stormed the Janmabhoomi and killed 70 Muslims. Shah Ghulam Hussain jumped over the wall and fled (*Hadiqai-Shahada* by Mirza Jan, 1856, pp. 4-7). The Gazetteer of Faizabad District shows that the Hindus were in possession of the Ramajanmabhoomi at the time of the fight in 1855. It says: "When the Muslims mounted an attack in 1855, they took possession of the Ramjanmabhoomi and attacked the Hanuman Garhi, but were repulsed. The King's army (Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's army) stood by. The Hindus retook the Ramjanmabhoomi and the structure there."

8. In 1856, the Muazzin of the Babri mosque admitted, in a petition before the British authorities, that the courtyard had been in possession of the Hindus for hundreds of years and that now they were interfering with the domed structure as well (Petition by Muhammed Asghar dated 30.11.1858).

9. In 1934, serious Hindu-Muslim armed encounter occurred in and around the Babri mosque, occasioned by a cow-slaughter incident. Many people were killed and the structure seriously damaged.

10. The above chronology establishes a vital truth, namely, that the Hindus have been relentlessly fighting to re-establish and keep their rights over the Janmasthan and that till 1855 they seem to have been in possession of it.

(From the BJP's **WHITE PAPER** on **Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement**)