

International Centre For
Sustainability



Ram Mandir FACT SHEET

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The construction of the Ram Mandir fulfilled a hope for millions of devotees to have a temple near the birthplace of Bhagavan Ram. Simply put, Ram Mandir is to Hindus (and others who worship Bhagavan Ram, which includes others within the Dharmic traditions and some Muslims) what Bethlehem is to Christians and Mecca to Muslims. Contest over ownership of the land has led to thousands of deaths, over several decades. The matter was resolved legally by a 2019 ruling of the Indian Supreme Court and land afforded to build a new mosque close by. Whilst this will be a celebration for many it will also be a poignant time of remembrance for lives lost, and an opportunity for the whole country to move on and close a difficult chapter.

In the UK many will be marking the occasion by lighting diyas with chants of 'Jai Shri Ram'. In India, one of the former lead Muslim litigants against the building of the Ram Mandir will be lighting a diya and joining the consecration as a show of good-will and commitment to new peaceful beginnings. There is considerable effort and hope that this will be an opportunity for peace, reconciliation and a more cohesive community moving forwards.

However, some may attempt to create communal tension by either insensitively celebrating this as a Hindu victory over Islam, or by Muslims advocating that the consecration is an oppressive act of Hindu supremacy. Both extremes would be inappropriate. Planned Hindu celebrations may be at risk. British Islamists may see this as an opportunity to intimidate Hindus and accuse those celebrating of being "Hindu extremists." We may also see a rise in anti-Muslim and anti-Hindu hate online.

A timeline

Pre 1529

Archaeological evidence and historiographical references suggest that the Hindu community carried out worship at the site of the soon to be inaugurated Ram Mandir, and that there was the presence of a Hindu temple. ⁱ

1529

Babri Masjid, also referred to as Masjid-e-Janma-bhoomi, was constructed by Mir Baqi, a commander under the Mughal emperor Babur, at the site.

1858

25 Nihang Sikhs, under the leadership of Nihang Baba Fakir Singh Khalsa, entered the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and performed a *havan* (Hindu fire ritual) inside. ⁱⁱ

1984

Ram Janmabhoomi Movement commences – Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) constitutes a group to start the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement. ⁱⁱⁱ

25 January 1986

Judge orders the locks on the inner courtyard to be removed to allow Hindu prayers. Muslims constitute a Babri Mosque Action Committee (BMAC) in protest. The order was stayed one week later. ^{iv}

25 September 1990

LK Advani launches a Rath Yatra (procession) from Somnath (Gujarat) to Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh) to gain support for the Movement. He is arrested in Samastipur in Bihar by the state government of Lalu Prasad Yadav in November 1990. ^v Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok Singhal is also arrested.

6 December 1992

Thousands of violent extremists stormed the mosque and demolished it in a few hours, leaving a make-shift shrine in its place. ^{vi} Riots broke out in different parts of the country, including Mumbai, estimates range from 1,000 ^{vii} to 2,000 Hindus and Muslims killed. ^{viii}

March 2002

Between 1,000 and 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in riots in Gujarat ^{ix} following an arson attack by Muslim radicals on a train where 52 ^x - 59 ^{xi} Hindu pilgrims who had been returning from Ayodhya, mostly families, were burnt alive.

2005

Six suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists attack the make-shift Ram-temple. ^{xii}

30 September 2010

The Allahabad High Court delivered its judgment, dividing the land equally between three parties: the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and the Hindu representatives of the deity. This was rejected by all three claimants. ^{xiii}

9 November 2019

In a unanimous and anonymous judgement, the Court ruled that the land belonged to the Hindu parties in law. Additionally, 5 acres of land were given to the Sunni Waqf Board to build a mosque. ^{xiv}

Key points of the Supreme Court judgement:

1. The Court found Hindus had exclusive and uninterrupted possession of the outer courtyard, but neither party demonstrated exclusive possession of the inner courtyard as both parties had mixed and interrupted possession.
2. The Court held that "the evidence in respect of the possessory claim of the Hindus to the composite whole of the disputed property stands on a better footing than the evidence adduced by the Muslims".
3. 5 acres were given for a mosque to be built.

5 August 2020

Prime Minister Narendra Modi headed the Bhoomi puja (land consecration ceremony) at the site on which the new Ram Mandir was to be rebuilt.

A symbol of unity and communal harmony:

- ✿ 40 Muslim women from Bareilly, led by Farhat Naqvi, President of Mera Haq Foundation, are preparing to present Shri Ram with a handcrafted outfit.
- ✿ Gulam Jilani is a Muslim tailor who specialises in making religious 'Mahaviri' flags in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district, he has stitched a flag measuring 40 feet in length and 42 feet in width that will fly from the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22.
- ✿ Ayodhya Ram murtis are made by both Muslim and Hindu artists. Two Muslim artisans from Duttapukur have made murtis of Ram for the Ram mandir.
- ✿ Muslim singers from Rajasthan will be singing at the inauguration of the Ram Mandir.

A community hub and vehicle for economic development:

- ✿ Over 10 years \$8.5 billion to spent on development and infrastructure to rebuild Ayodhya
- ✿ Expect tens of millions of tourists every year – it will become one of the largest tourist attractions in the world, bringing billions of dollars through tourism. Hotels, cafes, retail and real estate will get huge economic uplift. For every resident, planners expect 10 tourists in the city.
- ✿ For context, London had 21 million visitors at its peak (2019). Ayodhya in year 1 is expected to attract 25 million visitors.
- ✿ The citizens of Ayodhya have the potential to benefit from more jobs, better paid jobs and better infrastructure in healthcare, education, and transportation.
- ✿ New international airport is being built, as well as a new train station to bring the millions of tourists and pilgrims to the city.

Mixed views

There are some concerns over the site for the mosque, concerns that it is poorly located with building work slow to start. Grandson of one of the Muslim litigants in the case for possession of the site holds: "The government are not showing any willingness or support for the mosque construction." Whilst one of the five Muslim litigants contests: "We had said that we will accept whatever the court decides even before the judgment came. We now welcome the verdict, It's all in the past now. Let's hope the verdict and construction of the mosque paves way for permanent peace in Ayodhya." Anwar Hussain, Muslim from Rajasthan who will be singing at the inauguration summarizes: "There may be Hindus and Muslims not happy at this time, but I can say that our community is happy and all the Muslims I know are happy to deliver the message that we can co-exist. We hope for the whole world to be a family and we hope for peace amongst all."



Glossary of terms

'Bhagavan':

One who has the six qualities of 'bhaga', namely dominion, might, glory, splendour, wisdom and dispassion. ^{xv}

'Masjid':

A mosque. ^{xvi}

'Janmabhoomi':

'Janma' means 'birth' and 'bhoomi' means 'earth, soil or ground', hence 'place', so collectively 'birthplace'. ^{xvii}

'Murti':

Literally "any solid body or material form", but more specifically an "embodiment" or "manifestation" ^{xviii} of a Hindu deity in physical form, commonly either as an image or a small statue. ^{xix}

'Rath Yatra':

'Rath' (or 'ratha') is a "goer", a chariot, car" or "any vehicle", and a 'rathyatra' is a "car-procession". ^{xx} It traditionally involves the procession of a representation of the deity Vishnu on a chariot, as in the annual festival of Jagannatha. ^{xxi}

'Sunni Waqf Board':

The board constituted for the governance, administration and supervision of 'waqf', endowments which are to be used "solely for the purposes recognized under Islamic law as pious, religious or charitable". ^{xxii}

'Nirmohi Akhara':

A religious sect of ascetics devoted to Shri Ram that claims to have managed a temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya for centuries. ^{xxiii} They contested the claim of the Hindu representatives of the deity.

'Bhoomi puja':

'Puja' or 'puja' is worship or ritualised veneration. ^{xxiv} Here 'bhoomi' refers to the earth or the land (see 'Janmabhoomi' above). This is a ceremony for consecrating land on which a building is to be built.

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