

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Movement – Frequently asked questions

1. What is the significance of Ayodhya the city?

Ayodhya is situated on the banks of the Saryu river in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. The Brahamanda Purana identifies Ayodhya as the premier amongst the six holy cities for the Hindus. The other five are Mathura, Haridwar, Kashi, Kanchi, and Ujjain. These holy cities are places of pilgrimage from where the Hindus seek inspiration of their great civilisation and culture. Visits to these places also assure them of Moksha or Nirvana.

2. Was Shri Ram a person or a mythical figure?

According to the Hindu tradition, Shri Ram is the seventh avtaar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu. He was born to King Dashratha of Ayodhya to deal with the setting of adharma (unrighteousness) in the trettha Yug, the second of the four Yugas. Hence he is not a mythical figure. In every nook and corner of India, there is a unique citation of Shri Ram having visited their place.

The belief in Shri Ram as a person has an antiquity of more than 3000 years, and this tradition is a continuous one. Shri Ram is accepted as a Maryada Purushottam all over the country, and also wherever Hindu civilisation had spread, as in Indonesia. Many of the incidents that have been mentioned in the Ramayana are being established on the basis of archaeology, attesting to the historicity of the various events that live today in the traditions relating to Shri Rama.

3. Why is Shri Ram called a Maryada Purushottam?

As a person, Shri Ram personifies the characteristics of an ideal person who is to be emulated. He had within him all the desirable virtues that any individual would seek to aspire. For example, he gave up his rightful claim to the throne and agreed to go into exile (vanvas) for fourteen years, to fulfil the vow that his father had given to Kaikeyi, one of King Dashratha's wives. This is in spite of the fact that Kaikeyi's son, Bharat, begged him to return

back to Ayodhya and said that he did not want to rule in place of Shri Rama. But Shri Ram considered his dharma as a son above that of his own birthright and his life's ambition. For such supreme sacrifices and many other qualities, Shri Ram is considered a Maryada Purushottam.

4. How long is the antiquity of the belief in Shri Ram prevalent?

Archaeology has established that the antiquity of the belief in Shri Ram to be more than 3000 years, and that too on a continuous basis. However, the Hindu literature places the date back even further. Even the later figure would make the belief to be based on history, and not myth. The submerged city of Dwarka, which was recently discovered by a marine archaeological survey, has always existed in the collective consciousness of the Hindus. Many other events in different parts of the world have been accepted as facts on the basis of traditions (parampara) which are even younger than the belief in Shri Rama.

5. Is there any archaeological evidence to establish the antiquity of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site?

Yes. In 1975-80, the Archaeological Survey of India, under the leadership of Prof B B Lal, took up extensive excavations, in different parts of India, to establish the various sites mentioned in Ramayan. Similar excavations were undertaken in Ayodhya, including in two places around the Babri structure. The team was able to establish that the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site was occupied prior to the 7th century BC.

6. Is there any proof of destruction of a mandir in honour of Shri Ram at Ayodhya in 1528 AD?

Yes. Muslim records attest to the fact of the destruction. European visitors, prior to the British rule, mention the fact of the destruction. Archaeological studies have found the existence of buildings prior to the construction of the Babri structure. Land revenue records, maintained by the British, have identified the site as Janmasthan. There is even legal judgement of 1886 that avers the fact that the structure was constructed on a site that was holy to Hindus.

In December 1990, the above facts, along with many others, were compiled by the VHP and presented to the Government of India. A copy was given to the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee and was also published by the VHP. Neither the committee nor the so-called secular historians have refuted the evidence.

7. How can one say that Babur destroyed a mandir in Ayodhya?

Destruction of the indigenous places of worship has been a norm for the Islamic invaders all over the world. India and the Hindus have not been an exception in experiencing these barbaric practices. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that Babur would have behaved any differently, as can be seen from his diary, Babur Nama.

Babur did not come to India merely to loot the wealth of our nation. He had a religious motivation too, as is the case with many other Islamic invaders. His motivation can be well judged by his actions and what he wrote in his diary called Babur Nama. He says:

“For Islam’s sake, I wandered in the wilds,
Prepared for war with Pagans and Hindus,
Resolved myself to meet the martyr’s death,
Thanks are to God! a Ghazi I became.”

Whether Babur himself supervised the destruction of the temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi is difficult to say, since the pages in question from his diary relating to his presence at Ayodhya have been lost. However, the pages that are available show that he was near Ayodhya just prior to the destruction of the temple and that Ayodhya was planned for attack. The fact that the structure was named after Babur also points out to the role of this Islamic invader from outside, in the destruction of the temple in honour of Shri Ram in 1528 AD.

8. Was the Babri structure deliberately built over ruins of a temple in Ayodhya?

Yes. Construction of structures, either religious or secular, over sites vandalised by the invaders has been a standard practice of both Islam and Christianity all over the world. The

Hindus have been no exception to this barbaric practice. The objective of the new structure is to show the conquered people that the invaders were the new masters, and hence the structure had nothing but a political message. To draw any other meaning clearly signifies that the programme of the trampling of the sentiments of the indigenous people is sought to be continued. This is no way to have cordial relations between groups. In the English translation of the Persian diary of Babur Nama, Annete Beveridge mentions specifically the destruction of the temple. She says that Babur was impressed with the dignity and sanctity of the ancient Hindu shrine at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. She also says that as an obedient follower of Mohammed, Babur regarded the substitution of the temple by a mosque as a dutiful and worthy action.

9. It is said that the act of destruction by Babur was not a religious one, but had a political motive. Please comment.

The act has to be interpreted in terms of the one who committed it. From what Babur has written about himself in his Babur Nama, it is clear that his intention was also to spread Islam. His actions after his victories also attest to this fact. It is true that he had a political mantle in terms of being a ruler. But in Islam, most of the rulers also did take all actions to propagate their religion. This is something that has happened all over the world, and the treatment meted out in India to the Hindus is no exception.

If Babur was purely a political person, there would have been no need, one, to destroy a place of worship of the indigenous people and, two, to construct an alien place of worship and/or victory monument where such destruction took place. The fact that the Babri structure was built after destroying a temple in honour of Shri Ram establishes the religious nature of the act.

Whether it is destroyed for a religious reason or for a political one, the Babri structure, supposed to be a Muslim place of worship, would still be termed as a monument of the slavery and subjugation of the Hindus. Also, since it was built after destroying Shri Rama's temple, the recovery of the site is still justified. The Hindus are not asking for the return of the thousands of the vandalised sites, but only three that are the most important to them in their tradition.

10. What was the significance of Ram Chabootar and Sita-ki-Rasoi?

These were built during the time of Akbar, that is within fifty years of the destruction of the temple in honour of Shri Ram in 1528 AD. The Sita-ki-Rasoi was built at the original site. The Ram Chabootar was built slightly away from where the garbha griha (sanctum sanctorum) existed. Hindus accepted this as a second best option, because they did not want to give up their claim of the site, and wanted to establish their right by their presence there. This is a clear indication of the attachment of the Hindus demonstrated to the place where Shri Ram was born. Akbar's acceptance of the demand also indicates that he respected the Hindu sentiments for the site

Throughout the existence of the Ram Chabootar, continuous worship of Shri Ram took place. There are numerous accounts of Ram Navami (Shri Rama's birthday) being celebrated from 1700 onwards.

11. If the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site is so important, why was it not recovered earlier?

Tens of thousands of people sacrificed their lives in defending the temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. Further, right from the time of the destruction of the temple at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi in 1528 AD, the efforts to recover the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site has been a continuous one. In spite of a relatively strong Islamic rule in the area, Hindu kings used every opportunity to liberate the site. Prior to 1947, there have been a total of 77 recorded attempts to wrest the control of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi from the clutches of Islam.

The insistence of construction of the Ram Chabootar and Sita ki Rasoi, within the precincts of the Babri structure, was with the intention of establishing the Hindu claim to the site. At the Ram Chabootar, prayers of Shri Ram were conducted on a continuous basis. Ram Navami was always celebrated at the site, even during the time of Islamic rule.

12. Is there an archaeological evidence to establish the

destruction of a temple in 1528 AD?

Yes. In the period 1975-80, an archaeological study was done of the various places mentioned in the Ramayan, and two pits were dug near the Babri structure. This led to the discovery of the bases of pillars of the destroyed temple. These were aligned in the same direction as the fourteen Kasauti-stone pillars that were used in the structure. These pillars in the Babri structure had distinctive Hindu carvings of the 12th century period. They were used, as in many other similar situations, to establish that the Babri structure was built after destroying a temple, as was done in many other cases of similar vandalism. This was a standard Islamic practice carried out all over the world.

In addition, artefacts of the time of the destruction of the mandir in 1528 were also recovered. Since the bases of the pillars were aligned in the same direction as the pillars in the Babri structure, it clearly shows that the two are linked with each other.

At the time of the destruction of the Babri structure, various other archaeological artefacts of the temple were discovered. One of the most important ones was a 1.10×0.56 meter slab consisting of 20 engraved lines in Nagari script. These lines mention of an existence of a beautiful temple of Vishnu-Hari at the site.

13. During the time of Islamic rule, were there any attempts to peacefully recover the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site?

During the time of Islamic rule, a peaceful return of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site to the Hindus would have defeated the very purpose of constructing the Babri structure. This purpose was to provide a visual reminder to the Hindus that Islam ruled even over their holy sites, and that Hindus were now slaves.

However, Hindus insisted on having at least a symbolic presence at the site. The permission to construct the Ram Chabootar and Sita-ki-Rasoil next to the Babri structure was a recognition of the Hindu sentiment of attachment to the site. Such permission could only be done by a person who wanted to be benign, namely Akbar. For the Hindus, it was only a second best option. It was accepted only to establish their rightful claim for a future return of

the site.

One should not forget the fact that temples were destroyed not only during the time of Babur. The record of Aurnagzeb in this respect was particularly atrocious. Hence, to try for a full return of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site would have been futile.

14. During the time of British rule, were there attempts at the peaceful recovery of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site?

Yes. Even though the Hindus were still not their own masters, at least an option of seeking the return through the judiciary process was available to them. This was taken up and a case was filed in 1885.

The essential section of the judgement that was delivered in 1886 reads as follows: “It is most unfortunate that a masjid should have been built on land specially held sacred by the Hindus, but as the event occurred 356 years ago it is too late now to remedy the grievance. All that can be done is to maintain the status quo. In such a case like the present one any innovation could cause more harm and derangement of order than benefit.”

A proper reading of the above judgement would clearly indicate that the Hindus have proved their right over the site. The second part of the judgement indicates that the British did not feel it necessary to be overly concerned about the Hindu sentiments since they were not their own masters. The harm that would be caused was to the colonial masters, and not to the Hindus.

15. Were there attempts at a peaceful recovery of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site in the post-independence period?

Yes. Since the judiciary option was now available once again, cases were filed in the courts for recovery of the site. After December 1949, when the idols of Shri Ram appeared in the Babri structure, the courts permitted continuous puja of the Hindus within the structure. The Courts also declined the removal of the idols and prohibited Muslims within 200 feet of the

idols. In February 1986, it was on court orders that the locks at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi were removed, giving full access to the Hindus to worship Shri Ram Lalla.

In addition, the VHP participated in various discussions, organised by the Government of India, during the reign of three Prime Ministers - Shri V P Singh, Shri Chandrashekar, and Shri Narsimha Rao. The most organised and well-documented effort of the three was one at the time Shri Chandrashekar was the Prime Minister. In each case, the discussions were frustrated because the prime ministers refused to proceed further, knowing that it will go against their programme of vote-bank politics. They would have had to stand up not only to an obscurantist Muslim leadership but also to those politicians and intellectuals who like to wear the badge of secularism on their sleeves.

One would have thought that monuments of slavery would have no place in public life. However, the practice of secularism in this country, which meant that Hindu sentiments are not to be considered, prevented the logical thing from happening.

16. Has the evidence to establish the destruction of the Shri Ram Mandir in 1528 AD been presented to the Government of India?

In December 1990, when the Chandrashekar government organised the meetings to discuss the history of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site, VHP gave written submissions, with sufficient supporting material to establish the authenticity. The VHP has, on its own, published the evidence, and many people have written about it. Thus, the documents are available for study by the general public.

These submissions covered all the aspects relating to literary, historical, revenue, judicial and archaeological records. All these had clearly proved the stand of the Hindus that a temple in honour of Shri Ram and was deliberately destroyed in 1528 AD with an objective of constructing the Babri structure in its place.

The government did acknowledge the receipt of this information. The relevant minutes of the time read as follows: "The VHP submitted the rejoinder in which it tried to refute claims of the AIBMAC pointwise. The AIBMAC did not react to the evidences put forward by the VHP.

Instead, it submitted photo-copies of more evidences in support of its claims. Since the AIBMAC did not give comments on the evidences put forward by the VHP, it is not possible for the government to decide the areas of agreement and disagreement.”

The Narsimha Rao government had formed a cell under Shri Naresh Chandra called the Ayodhya Cell. This was to evaluate the evidence already submitted. The deliberations of the cell are not publicly known. Given the practice of secularism in our country, it would be safe to say that this cell probably came to the conclusion that the historical case of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site is fully in favour of the Hindus.

17. Is the demand for the return of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site to the Hindus a forerunner to demand the return of the thousands of vandalised temple sites?

No. The demand is for the return of only three of the holiest of the holy sites and not the rest of the thousands of the vandalised sites. This has been clearly stated by the VHP as far back as January 1991. In its written submission to the government, VHP said: “We do not even demand the return of the thousands of places of worship that have been forcibly replaced with mosques...We merely want three places back, three age-old sacred places. And we would prefer getting them back from the Muslim community, to getting them back by an official decree.....Muslims should understand what kind of message they are sending by insisting on continuing the occupation of our sacred places, an occupation started by fanatics and mass-murders like Babar and Aurangzeb. We do not like to think of our Muslim compatriots as heirs and followers of such invaders and tyrants. It is up to them to make a gesture that will signify a formal break with this painful past.”

Ten years ago VHP had made this unequivocal statement about its position on the return of only the three sites. In asking for the return of only three sites, which have a special significance to the Hindus, it is clear that they are not seeking revenge.

18. Could the Babri structure have been moved from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site and built somewhere else?

A long time ago this was an option that was offered to the Muslim community. It was done

with an intention of showing the essence of Hindu tolerance and generosity in arriving at a negotiated solution. This is a clear indication that the Hindus had no intention of seeking revenge on the Muslims. It is unfortunate that the Muslim leadership rejected this offer.

19. Is there a need of a temple to pray for Shri Ram at the Janmabhoomi?

What is sought to be constructed is not merely just another temple for Shri Rama, but a temple where he was born, that is the Janmabhoomi. At such sites, there cannot be any other structure other than the one that honours the person born there. This is particularly important when we consider that Shri Ram is a Maryada Purushottam and a very important symbol of our cultural heritage. The temple will be a reminder of the glory of our civilisation and a beacon to the future.

20. What is the basic ethos of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement?

The basic ethos of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is to rejuvenate the Hindu samaj and culture, and not just an issue of bricks and mortar. This has been very well expressed by Vidiadhar S Naipaul when he said: "What is happening in India is a new historical awakening....Indian intellectuals, who want to be secure in their liberal beliefs, may not understand what is going on. But every other Indian knows precisely what is happening: deep down he knows that a larger response is emerging even if at times this response appears in his eyes to be threatening."

Given the response received from the masses in India and other places in the world for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement, Shri Ram is clearly at the heart of our civilisation and a major unifying force. There is no section, nor any region, of the Hindu samaj that does not exhibit a deep attachment to Shri Rama. This empathy is also strongly exhibited not only in other lands where Hindus have settled, but also where the indigenous people accepted the Hindu culture, as in Indonesia.

21. What is the rationale of the people who make a case that there was no destruction of a temple at Ayodhya?

The rationale keeps varying as per the needs of the situation. It seems that the ultimate objective is to create and maintain a level of confusion.

First, the historicity of Shri Ram is denied. When that is accepted, the concept of Maryada Purushottam as applicable to Shri Ram is denied. In effect, it is said that he was an ordinary person, without attributing any special importance to him. When that is accepted, it is denied that he was born in Ayodhya. When that is accepted, it is denied that the Ayodhya where he was born is not where the present day Ayodhya is. When that is accepted, it is denied he was born at the spot where the Hindus have a continuous tradition of more than 3000 years. And so on.

In essence, the strategy is one of negation of the site of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. A further element of this strategy is to negate that a discussion took place at the time of the Prime Ministership of Chandrashekar, where the VHP gave the totality of evidence to establish that a temple was destroyed in 1528 and the Babri structure was erected in its place. The media has kept under wraps the various attempts made for a negotiated solution because they would then have to also mention that these efforts were frustrated by those opposed to the construction of the temple.

22. Is the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi a political movement?

No. For the Hindus, a temple at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi is not an issue of mere bricks and mortar. It is an issue of our cultural resurgence and identity, where Shri Rama, as Maryada Purushottam, has a prime place of importance. The movement is an expression of the collective consciousness of the Hindu ethos which was also articulated by Shri K M Munshi in the case of the Mandir at Somnath: "The Hindu sentiment in regard to this temple is both strong and widespread. In the present conditions, it is unlikely that, that sentiment will be satisfied by mere restoration of the temple or by prolonging its life. The restoration of the idol would be a point of honour and sentiment with the Hindu public." Hence, for the Hindus Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not political.

The ones who are politicising the issue are the ones who are negating this importance of Shri Rama. By giving the Babri structure a significance other than that of the monument of slavery, the issue becomes politicised. Not accepting a legitimate claim of the Hindus on their holy sites is what causes politicisation.

23. The then Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has recently said that the construction of a temple at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi is an expression of the national sentiment. Please comment.

What Atalji has said reflects what the Hindu samaj, all over the world, has been saying for many years. The Hindus have deep attachment to the site where Shri Ram was born, and the Babri structure was a monument of thier slavery. No self-respecting independent nation, which seeks to regain its past glory, can tolerate such a structure on its land. Moreover, when he spoke in the Parliament in his strong defence of the events leading up to December 6, 1992, he exhibited the same sentiments. What Atalji has said recently is what he has said in the past.

24. Is it necessary to correct a wrong done in medieval times, when vandalising the holy sites of the conquered people was a norm?

Correcting a medieval wrong cannot necessarily be considered wrong. The people of India fought for their independence, often being forced to resort to violence, to get rid of the foreign rulers who were entrenched for two centuries. If this wrong was not to be corrected, then we should not have initiated and fought for our country's independence.

The manner in which the medieval wrong is sought to be corrected is also important. Hindus have not followed the example of Christians in Spain when in the 16th century they drove out the Moors who had conquered the country some 400 years earlier. The Moors had forcibly Islamised Spain in the process of their conquest. The Christians, also by force, re-Christianised Spain when the Moors were defeated.

The Hindus, whenever they defeated the Islamic rulers in India, took a benign stand towards those who had converted to Islam, either by force or inducements. Shivaji and the Marathas stand out as a shining example of this tolerance of the Hindus.

In the case of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi, Hindus have made serious attempts to get the site back peacefully – through negotiations and the judiciary. These attempts were frustrated for no fault of the Hindus.

Finally, if the barbaric behaviour during the medieval period was the norm of the time, correcting the medieval wrongs becomes even more important. This is the best way to tell future generations that such behaviour is not accepted and should not be repeated.

25. Does the destruction of the Babri structure not mean that the concept that ‘two wrongs make a right’ is accepted?

The concept of ‘two wrongs’ is applicable only when the wrongs are not related. For example, in reaction to the destruction of a Hindu religious place, if a Muslim religious place at another site was destroyed, the concept of ‘two wrongs’ is applicable. Similarly, if a wrong was corrected in an uncivilised manner, then the concept is applicable. The peaceful attempts of Hindus to recover the three holy sites of Ram Janmabhoomi, Krishna Janmabhoomi and Kashi Vishwanath clearly establishes that either of these criteria does not apply in the case in question.

In 1528 AD an existing temple in honour of Shri Ram was destroyed. What is, therefore, sought to be done is to undo a historical wrong, one which has caused deep hurt to the Hindu sentiments. In the true spirit of Hindu dharma, efforts were first made to find a negotiated solution. It was also clearly stated that the Hindus are asking for the return of only three holy sites, and not the thousands that have been vandalised or destroyed. It is only because the efforts were frustrated, for no fault of the Hindus, that the events of December 6, 1992, took place.

If this is considered to be wrong, then we have to consider that it was wrong on part of Shri Krishna to advise Arjun to fight a just fight, even if it means that he has to kill not only his cousins, the Kauravas, but also his elders, teachers, and others who took care of him during his childhood.

26. In destroying the Babri structure, does it not mean that the present day Muslims are being asked to pay a price for the mistakes of those who indulged in vandalism and destruction?

The real issue is how the present day Muslims view the Babri structure. Do they consider it as their holy place? If the answer is yes, then they end up owning the barbarism of Babur and others like him. The right way for Muslims to act is to distance themselves away from such vandalism of the past. When the Germans are asked to apologise for the crimes of Hitler, they do not hesitate to do so, clearly indicating that they do not own Nazism.

Hindus have asked for a peaceful return, through judiciary and negotiations, of only three of their holy sites that were vandalised. Hindus are not asking for the thousand other sites that have received similar treatment. Hindus are not asking for any sort of compensation or restitution. Having established that the Hindus are not seeking revenge, there is no question of the present day Muslims being asked to pay a price for the mistakes of those who indulged in vandalism.

27. Has the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement disturbed the communal atmosphere in the country?

The disturbance of the communal atmosphere in our country has a long and unhappy history, which has nothing to do with the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement. In the case of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement, the problem is blown up because the Muslims are told that the Babri structure is their religious place. They are not told the truth of the history of the site. They do not recognise that the monument was a political one and that it was a symbol of the slavery of the Hindus. This programme of misleading Muslims is not only confined to their obscurantist leadership but also to those who authenticate this leadership. The latter try to project themselves as protectors and benefactors of the Muslims, while in truth all that they are interested in is to keep them in a continual state of disenchantment. The cause for the communal atmosphere in the country being disturbed has to be correctly identified, if the problem is to be solved.

28. Why are those who oppose the construction of the mandir at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site called “Babur ke aulad” (descendants of Babur)?

One has to first determine how one views the Babri structure. Some of those opposed to the construction of the mandir at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi say that the Babri structure was a place of worship for the Muslims. Some others argue that it was a monument of our secular tradition. Any interpretation of the Babri structure, other than that it was a monument of our slavery, would clearly indicate that the Hindus are being asked to persist with the feeling of humiliation that Babur wanted to inflict on them, as conquered people.

The Babri structure was built after destroying a temple in honour of Shri Rama. Thus those who oppose the restoration of the temple wish to hold the memory of Babur, an invader from a foreign land, and one who caused much devastation, over that of Shri Rama, the maryada purushottam. It is in this sense that the opponents of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi are called “Babur ke aulad”.

29. Would the construction of a temple in honour of Shri Ram create a confrontation with the government in power?

The merit of the demand for the construction of a temple in honour of Shri Ram is the one that has to be decided first. The justification for the construction has been made on the basis of historical, literary, legal, revenue and archaeological records. This has been presented to all the sections of the society, including the Government of India and those opposed to the construction of the temple. Time and again, the Hindus have made sincere efforts to find a negotiated solution. These were frustrated for no fault of the Hindus. All the relevant information is in the public domain.

Therefore, under the circumstances, and given the just merit of the demand for the construction, we do not see any reason why there should be any kind of confrontation with any party. The people who are seeking a confrontation are those who do not wish to recognise the strong sentiments of the Hindus for their holy sites. Hence, the fault will not lie with the Hindus in this case too.

30. If the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple were rebuilt, would this not create a chain reaction in destroying the Hindu temples in other parts of the world?

Hindu temples in Pakistan, Bangladesh and even India have been destroyed prior to the coming of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement at the centre stage. The novel, Lajja, describes the atrocities against the Hindus in Bangladesh right from the time of independence. In 1986 in Kashmir, many Hindu temples were attacked, and some destroyed, during the initial stages of terrorism in the state.

Where the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is concerned, what should be considered is whether the Hindus have a legitimate claim on the site. Since the legitimacy has been established, it becomes incumbent not only for the Hindus to explain their position, but also for the others to view it in the same perspective. It should also be stated that Hindus have made sincere efforts to resolve the issue through negotiations, and these efforts were frustrated at the altar of vote-bank politics.

31. What will be the reaction of the Islamic oil producing countries if the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple is rebuilt?

The issue is whether the Hindus have a legitimate claim on the site or not. It is necessary for the society as a whole, and not only the Hindus, to undertake this exercise of explaining to the whole world about the case. Given the righteousness of the position of the Hindus, there is really no reason to expect an adverse reaction from any part of the world.

32. Will the reconstruction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple in any way affect the position of India vis-À-vis Kashmir?

These two issues have no link with each other. The problem of Kashmir is the result of the two-nation theory on the basis of which our country was divided. It, therefore, predates the coming of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement to the centre stage.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not one against the Muslims of the country but one which seeks for a rejuvenated Hinduism, which tradition belongs to all the citizens of India. The ancestors of the Muslims who were converted by force or inducement worshiped Shri Ram with as much fervour as those who did not convert.

33. Are Hindu organisations called fundamentalists in the crude sense? Will not the reconstruction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple make this charge valid?

The charge of fundamentalist in the crude sense has a political agenda behind it, and is not based on truth. Given its ethos of tolerance and other norms, Hindus can never be charged with being fundamentalist. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is one to rejuvenate Hindu culture, and is not directed against anyone. So, just as the present charge against any Hindu organisations of being fundamentalist is wrong, so any effort to colour them with the same charge on the basis of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi will be equally wrong.

34. Are we not destroying the secular fabric of our country by undertaking the programme to reconstruct the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple?

No. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not targeted against any segment of the society. Its objective is to revitalise the Hindu samaj and look at the glorious past to give a beacon for what can be achieved in the future. Being pro-Hindu does not mean that one is anti anyone else.

However, it is a practice of secularism in India that the history of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site is hidden from the people at large and Muslims in particular. In this practice, the ones who are getting appeased are the obscurantist leadership of the Muslim community, in the game of vote-bank politics. This practice has a history prior to the coming of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement at the centre stage. To repair the secular fabric of the nation, one has to understand the problem in its right perspective.

35. In destroying the Babri structure does it not go against the essence of tolerance in Hinduism?

No. First, the site belongs to the Hindus. Second, the Babri structure that stood there cannot be considered to be a place of worship. It was a political monument to remind the Hindus that they were slaves. Third, Hindus have made many sincere efforts to find a peaceful solution to the problem, through negotiations. Finally, since independence it is functioning as a temple. What happened on December 6, 1992, was an expression of the Hindu frustration at being denied what legitimately belongs to them.

Furthermore, in answering this question, one has also to look at what tolerance really means. It means that one accepts that another has a way of moksha or salvation which is unique to him. It does not mean that if someone tries to harm a person, the latter should meekly submit. That would be cowardice.

36. If the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple were rebuilt, what would be the position of Hindus in countries where Muslims are in large majority?

Hindus have always lived in peace with their neighbours, irrespective of whether they were in majority or minority. Throughout the history, Hindus have not created problems in any country in the world where they reside. In Indonesia, the Hindus of Bali have never asked for independence or any special privileges, as the Christians of East Timor have done.

Given the righteousness of the Hindu case for the return of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi, there is no reason why Hindus should be persecuted in other countries where they are in minority. Where they are persecuted, like in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the reasons have nothing to do with the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement. The persecution has existed prior to the coming of the movement to the centre stage.

37. Would the reconstruction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi

temple make the Christians in India insecure?

No. It should be noted that as far back as January 1991 the VHP had given a written submission asking for the return of only three of their holy sites which have been vandalised. They are not asking for the return of the thousands of similarly vandalised sites, either in the name of Islam or Christianity. For example, in Goa, many temples were destroyed and churches have been built on them. The Hindus have never asked for the return of these sites. Hence, there is no reason why Christians should feel insecure because of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

38. It is said that Islam does not sanction breaking of temples. Please comment.

The answer to this issue has to be determined on the basis of what the Muslim clergy has to say. Even a cursory reading of the history of 1400 years of Islam clearly indicate a pattern of destruction of holy sites and denigration of the culture of the conquered people. This has happened wherever Islam has gone by force. In Mecca, Mohammad himself ordered the wholesale destruction of idols except one – the well known Black Stone of Kaabah. He rejected the goddesses the Arabs worshipped. The Prophet declared that true belief demands iklas, the giving of one's whole and unmixed allegiance to God, and its opposite is shirk, the ascribing of partners to God and the worship of any creature.

One has also to see the way the destroyers of the temple viewed their action. Sir Vidiadhar Naipaul has put it most appropriately when he says: "The Muslim view of their conquest of India is a truer one. They speak of the triumph of the faith, the destruction of idols and temples, the loot, the carting away of the local people as slaves."

It is to be accepted that Islam truly does not sanction destruction of temples, then that is more the reason for NOT considering the Babri structure as a place of worship. This reinforces the argument that it was a political monument.

39. Can one make a comparison between Shri Ram

Janmabhoomi and Somnath?

Yes. In both the cases, the temples were deliberately destroyed in the name of Islam. In both the cases, the destruction was carried out by the invading forces who came from outside the country, Hindus made enormous personal sacrifices in protecting their sacred monuments, Hindus demonstrated great attachment not only to the temples but also to the site, and Hindus made continuous efforts for recovery of the site even when Islam ruled the areas. Such similarities abound.

Perhaps the only difference can find is that in case of Somnath, no religious place was built over the ruins of the vandalised temple. However, next to the ruins of the ancient Hindu place of worship, a small mosque was built within the temple precincts. Even this small structure was built not with any religious objective, but to give the same political message as in the case of the Babri structure at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi - namely that Hindus were now slaves of Islam. After all, if there was a need for the Muslims for a place of worship, it could have been built some distance away.

40. Have vandalised sites in other parts of the world sought to be recovered?

Yes. Around the 12th century, Spain was conquered by the Moors and the people were forcibly converted from Christianity to Islam. In the 16th century, the Christians recovered the whole of Spain from the Moors. The Muslims in the country were given three choices - reconvert to Christianity, leave the country along with the Moors, or be killed. All the Muslim places of worship were converted back to Christian churches. This re-Christianisation was also done with force.

In Warsaw, at the end of the first Russian occupation of Poland (1614-1915), one of the first things that the Polish people did was to bring down the Russian Orthodox Christian Cathedral that was built by the occupiers in the centre of the town. This was done despite the fact that Christ, whom the Poles worshipped, was being honoured in the destroyed Cathedral. The Poles took this action because they considered the cathedral not to be a religious monument, but a political one.

Recovery of vandalised sites, particular where political monuments were erected, is a common feature for a newly independent state.

41. How will the reconstruction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple affect the election fortunes of the BJP?

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not an issue related to electoral politics. It should be viewed on its own merit, and not on the basis of political fallout, favouring the BJP, or any other party. Unfortunately, the movement has come into the realm of electoral politics due to those who oppose the construction of the temple. This has happened at the altar of vote-bank politics.

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has rightly said that the construction of a temple at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi is part of our national sentiments. Hence, the programme of construction should be part of the agenda of all political parties, and not only the BJP. In this way, the movement will be kept out of the political arena.

42. Why could you not build a temple adjacent to the Babri structure, similar to the case of Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura and Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi?

The Hindus accepted to offer worship at the Ram Chabootar as a second best option. The temples at Mathura and Varanasi have a similar significance. They were built at the time when Hindus were not their own masters. In all the three cases, the intention of the Hindus was to re-establish their claim to the sites, because of their cultural attachment to these locations.

Where the sites in question have a special holy significance for Hindus, they should not be asked to keep on being contented with the second-best option. The manner of offering of prayers at these sites being unsatisfactory, the ill will against Islam is perpetuated. The structures by the invaders at the above three sites keep on reinforcing this feeling, since their only objective have always been one of making political statements rather than being places of worship. The return of these three sites to the Hindus will go a long way towards improving religious harmony.

43. Instead of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement are there no other important issues to be tackled by the society?

Society always deals with many issues of varying importance at any one time. An effort to tackle the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi issue does not mean that the effort to educate the masses, for example, is kept in the background.

Also, this question has validity only if it is contended that it is because of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement that the country's economic and social progress has been held back. The movement came to the centre stage only in the mid-80s. All the data show that that up to this time the country was in a poor state as measured by any parameter. The data also show that since then the country has progressed forward, at accelerated pace. Thus it is clear indication that even while the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement has come to the centre stage, the people of this country did not ignore the other issues.

44. Why not build something other than a temple at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi, say a library? Will this not lead towards a better communal harmony?

The site at Ayodhya is important for the Hindus all over the world, since that is where they believe that Shri Ram was born - a belief that has a continuous tradition of more than 3000 years. For the Hindus, the issue is not one of mere bricks and mortar, but to rejuvenate a pride in our culture and civilisation. In addition, the Hindus have made numerous efforts of getting back the site in a peaceful manner.

A Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple can only be built at the Janmabhoomi, and nowhere else. A library, or any other similar structure, can be built anywhere else, even next to the temple. In the Hindu tradition, places of worship have co-existed with places of learning.

The reasons for having communal disharmony has an unfortunate history going back to prior to the coming of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement to the centre stage. The cause for the disharmony has nothing to do with the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Communal harmony can be improved by addressing the real causes of the problem, and not by constructing a library, or any other similar structure, at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi.

45. Was the Babri structure used as a Muslim place of worship in recent years?

Records show that since the mid-1930s, Muslims stopped offering namaz at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site. At the same time, Hindu worship at Ram Chabootar and Sita-ki-Rasoi, which existed within the Babri structure compound, has been continuously going on from the late 16th century. Since December 1949, Hindus started to offer pujas to Ram Lalla (infant Shri Rama) within the structure. This worship at the spot continues even to this day, with the full sanction of the judiciary. In effect it became a functioning temple. What is now sought to be done is to undertake a renovation programme (Jeernoddhar) to fully reflect the glory of the Maryada Purushottam.

When the then Prime Minister, Shri V P Singh, in July 1990, was attempting to have a negotiated solution, he said to the leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: “Arey Bhai, Masjid hai hi kahan? Where is the mosque, my friends, when namaz is not being performed? When for forty years idol worship is going on there, what kind of a mosque is it? That is just the temple of our dear Ram.”

As the home minister during the prime ministership of Shri P V Narsimha Rao, Shri Shankarao Chavan visited the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site. He offered prayers to Ram Lalla and received his blessings. After these ceremonies, he expressed his intention to see the mosque built in honour of Babur. When he was told that he is already standing in the structure he expressed complete surprise.

46. Why do we need to have a grand temple at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi, in place of the existing functional temple?

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not one of bricks and mortar, but as one that will restore the honour of the nation and its culture. People take great pride in, and receive inspiration from, temples which signify their glorious past. This can be done only when we have a proper and full-fledged temple at the site.

Swami Vivekanand said: “Your forefathers underwent everything boldly, even death itself, but preserved their religion. Temple after temple was broken down by the foreign conqueror,

but no sooner had the wave passed than the spire of the temple rose up again. Some of these old temples of Southern India, and those like Somnath of Gujarat, will teach you volumes of wisdom, will give you keener insight into the history of the race than any amounts of books. Mark how these temples bear the marks of a hundred attacks and a hundred regenerations, continually destroyed and continually springing up out of the ruins, rejuvenated and strong as ever! That is the national mind, that is the national life-current. Follow it and it leads to glory. Give it up and you die; death will be the only result, annihilation the only effect, the moment you step beyond the life-current.”

47. Since some of the Dharmagurus are not willing to be associated with the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, how can it be said that the movement is of the Hindu samaj?

The Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, a trust set up by the Dharmagurus, will undertake the construction of the temple. Many Dharmagurus took the lead taken in setting up of the Nyas, and the president is Mahant Parmahans Ramchandradas of Ayodhya. Those Dharmagurus, who are not with the Nyas, also wish to see a temple being built at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. This is because they accept that the site is holy to the Hindus and that the Babri structure that stood there was a monument of our slavery. On this core issue, there is unanimity amongst the Dharmagurus.

One has, therefore, to understand what exactly is the objection of some of the Dharmagurus. Some say that the VHP should not undertake the construction. Some say that the architecture of the temple as proposed is not the correct one.

The construction project is the responsibility of the Hindu samaj, and not just the Nyas. What the VHP has undertaken to do is to take the programme that is chalked out by the Nyas to the Hindu samaj, not only in India but also in all parts of the world. Each and every programme that has been taken up by the Hindu samaj within the context of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi, like the Sant Yatra, Shri Ram Jyoti yatra, Shri Ram shila puja, Shri Ram paduka puja, Kar Seva, etc., have been the ones that were decided upon by the Dharmagurus at various Dharma Sansads.

At the time of the Mahakumbh Mela at Prayag in January 2001, the ninth Dharam Sansad was

held, where one of the points for discussions was set the date to being the construction of a temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. Initially the main Akhadas decided not to take part in the Sansad. However, when the resolution to set the date for the construction of the temple was moved, representatives of most of these Akhadas were present. This clearly shows that there is very large consensus in the Hindu samaj to the plans of the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas.

The construction of the mandir at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi is the task of the whole Hindu samaj, and not merely of the Nyas. The Dharmagurus are the ones who have blessed the project. The Nyas welcomes the participation of all in the programme. The views which are expressed by any Dharmaguru who has expressed certain doubts about the programme of construction will be given due consideration, since they are all the protectors of the Hindu samaj. The Hindu samaj holds all the Dharmagurus in high esteem.

48. Are the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas and the VHP trying to exclude some Dharmagurus from participating in the movement? In effect, are they trying to hijack the movement ?

For the Nyas and the VHP, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement is the property of the complete Hindu samaj. Therefore, they whole-heartedly support the participation of all the Dharmagurus, as well as anyone who has respect for the Hindu civilisation and culture. A fuller participation of the samaj in the movement will make the achievement of the larger goal - namely a resurgent Hinduism - that much easier. Any attempt to hijack the movement, therefore, will defeat the primary objective of the construction of the temple at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi.

At the same time, it should be recognised that the fulfilment of the programmes decided upon by the Nyas - namely, the Sant Yatra, Shri Ram Jyoti yatra, Shri Ram shila puja, Shri Ram paduka puja, Kar Seva, etc. - have been implemented through the organisation structure of the VHP, and the supporting organisations, all over India and the world. At each of these programmes we have sought the participation of other Hindu organisations, and many of them have done so with enthusiasm. All that the VHP has done is to give a practical expression of the deep sentiments of the Hindus for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site. They have not created these sentiments.

49. What has happened to the funds collected through the Shila puja programme?

A sum of Rs 8.25 crores was collected during the Ram Shila puja programme in 1989, and was deposited with several nationalised banks and in fixed deposits in public sector companies. A total of more than Rs 12 crores has been spent on the construction and the related activities. The current balance is around Rs 10 crores in the account of the Nyas.

The accounts of the Nyas are regularly submitted to the concerned government authority as per the provisions of the law. Hence, they are public documents, available for inspection by anyone.

50. Is it true that the foundation stone for the temple was laid by a harijan?

Yes. The Dharmagurus selected Shri Kameshwar Chaupal of Bihar to do the honour of laying the foundation stone on November 10, 1989. This was a deliberate act to show that the essential unity of Hinduism is blessed not only by the words of the Dharmagurus but also by their action. It is also a clear sign of the immense unifying power of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

51. What is the current status of construction?

The foundation stone of the temple was laid on November 10, 1989. Since then acquisition of a large area of land (67 acres) for the temple has been completed. Carving of the stones for the pillars and beams is going on at Ayodhya and three other places in Rajasthan. All the 106 pillars for the first floor have been completed. The carving for the beams and ceiling is in progress.

52. Has the date been announced for the construction of the temple? If so, what the plan for mass mobilisation?

At the Mahakumbh at Prayag, on January 20, 2001, the ninth Dharam Sansad have given a notice to all concerned to remove all obstacles to construct the temple at the Shri Ram

Janmabhoomi by March 12, 2002, the auspicious day of Mahashivrathri, after which the actual construction will commence. During this time, the carving of further pillars will proceed at the sites in Ayodhya and Rajasthan. By March 2002, sufficient preparatory work would be completed, and, once the erection activity at the site commences, it will proceed without interpretation.

The time will also be used to create a momentum within the Hindu samaj so that the sentiments for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi site will be clearly expressed. Various committees at the grass root level will be established. In the period September 18 to October 16, 2001, Jalabhishak programme will be conducted in more than 4,00,000 places all over the country. During the current year, the Suvarna Jayanti of the Pranpartishthapan (cosecration) of the jyotirling at the Somnath temple, which was reconstructed in a free India, will be celebrated. (The ancient temple here too was vandalised in the same manner as that at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi.) The Jalabhishak programme will be used to reaffirm the resolve to build a grand temple at the site of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi.

From November 26, 2001, on the auspicious day of Karthikshudda Ekadashi, the day after the end of the Chaturmas, till December 26, 2001, the day of Geeta Jayanti, a Ram namjap programme will be held all over the country. Each of these micro level programmes will be followed by a Ram yagna at the taluka level, with more than one in certain talukas.

The youths of this country will resolve themselves to the construction of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple. About 30 lakh youths will be enrolled as members of the Bajrang Dal and they will be trained to serve and protect the nation.

All the programmes will culminate with a Chetavani Sant Yatra which will commence on February 18, 2002, from Ayodhya and reach Delhi on February 25. More than 5000 sants will participate in this yatra.

Besides these main programmes, various Hindu organisations will undertake local level programmes to spread the message of the Dharam Sansad.

APPENDIX