

IS Ramayana a history or a story?

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Abstract:

Rama was born to Kaushalya and Dasharatha in Ayodhya, the ruler of the Kingdom of Kosala. His siblings included Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna. He married Sita. Though born in a royal family, their life is described in the Hindu texts as one challenged by unexpected changes such as an exile into impoverished and difficult circumstances, ethical questions and moral dilemmas. Of all their travails, the most notable is the kidnapping of Sita by demon-king Ravana, followed by the determined and epic efforts of Rama and Lakshmana to gain her freedom and destroy the evil Ravana against great odds. The entire life story of Rama, Sita and their companions allegorically discusses duties, rights and social responsibilities of an individual. It illustrates dharma and dharmic living through model characters.

Mahmud Ghaznavi was the king of Ghazni who ruled from 971 to 1030 AD. He was the son of Subuktgeen. Attracted by India's wealth, Ghaznavi attacked India several times. In fact, Ghaznavi attacked India 17 times. The main objective of his attacks was to plunder the wealth of Ghaznavi

Muhammad Ghori led a series of the campaigns in India which recalled the days of Mahamud Ghaznavi , 200 years back. The first thing Muhammad Ghori did was to bring the Muslim provinces of India under his control. He began with Multan in 1175 against a Muslim ruler and got victorious.

In modern times, a mosque was located at the supposed birth spot of Rama, which sat on a large mound in the centre of Ayodhya, called the Ramadurg or Ramkot (the fort of Rama). The mosque bore an inscription stating that it was built in 1528 by Mir Baqi on the orders of Babur.

Beginning of dispute

The first recorded instances of religious violence in Ayodhya occurred in the 1850s over a nearby mosque at Hanuman Garhi. The Babri mosque was attacked by Hindus in the process. Since then, local Hindu groups made occasional demands that they should have the possession of the site and that they should be allowed to build a temple on the site, all of which were denied by the colonial government. In 1946, an offshoot of the Hindu Mahasabha called Akhil Bharatiya Ramayana Mahasabha (ABRM) started an agitation for the possession of the site. In 1949, Sant Digvijay Nath of Gorakhnath Math joined the ABRM and organised a 9-day continuous recitation of Ramcharit Manas, at the end of which the Hindu activists broke into the mosque and placed idols of Rama and Sita inside. People were led to believe that the idols had 'miraculously' appeared inside the mosque. The date of the event was 22 December 1949.

Religious background

The land on which the medieval mosque, Babri Masjid, stood is traditionally considered by Hindus to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity, Rama, and is at the core of the Ayodhya dispute

The Ayodhya dispute is a political, historical, and socio-religious debate in India, centered on a plot of land in the city of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. The issues revolve around the control of a site traditionally regarded among Hindus to be the birthplace of their deity Rama.

The mosque there, the Babri Masjid, was destroyed during a political rally which turned into a riot on 6 December 1992. A subsequent land title case was lodged in the Allahabad High Court, the verdict of which was pronounced on 30 September 2010. In the judgment, the three judges of the Allahabad High Court ruled that the 2.77 acres (1.12 ha) of Ayodhya land be divided into three parts, with one third going to the Ram Lalla or Infant Rama represented by the Hindu Maha Sabha, one third going to the Sunni Waqf Board, and the remaining one third going to Nirmohi Akhara, a Hindu religious denomination. While the three-judge bench was not unanimous that the disputed structure was constructed after demolition of a temple, it did agree that a temple structure predated the mosque at the same site.

The five-judge Supreme Court bench heard the title dispute cases from August to October 2019. On 9 November 2019, the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, announced their verdict; it vacated the previous decision and ruled that the land belonged to the government based on tax records. It further ordered the land to be handed over to a trust to build the Hindu temple. It also ordered the government to give an alternate five-acre tract of land to the Sunni Waqf Board to build the mosque.

Ram Janmabhoomi (Rama's birthplace)

Rama is one of the most widely worshipped Hindu deities and is considered the seventh incarnation of god Vishnu. According to the Ramayana, Rama was born in Ayodhya to Queen Kaushalya and King Dasharatha.

According to the Garuda Purana, a Hindu religious text, Ayodhya is one of seven sacred sites where Moksha, or a final release from the cycle of death and rebirth, may be obtained. The Ayodhya Mahatmya, described as a "pilgrimage manual" of Ayodhya, composed and collected from the 11th century onwards, traced the growth of the Rama cult in the second millennium AD. The original recension of the text, dated to the period between 11th and 14th centuries mentions the janmasthan (birthplace) as a pilgrimage site. A later recension adds many more places in Ayodhya and the entire fortified town, labelled Ramadurga ("Rama's fort"), as pilgrimage sites.

Gupta period

In Buddha's time (600 BC) the present day Ayodhya was called Saketa and it was one of the 6 largest cities of North India. During the Gupta times, either Kumaragupta or Skandagupta made it their capital, after which it came to be called Ayodhya. Kalidasa wrote Raghuvamsa here, and referred to Gopratara tirtha (Guptar Ghat), where Rama was believed to have entered the waters of Saryuin his ascent to heaven. According to a local tradition recorded by Francis Buchanan and Alexander Cunningham, Ayodhya became desolate after Rama's ascent to heaven and "Vikramaditya" revived it. (In Raghuvamsa, Rama's son Kusa revived it.) Prabhavati Gupta, the daughter of Chandragupta II, was a Rama devotee. Her son, Pravarasena II wrote Sethubandha, in which Rama is regarded as identical to Vishnu. He also built a temple to Rama at Pravarapura (Paunar near Ramtek) in about 450 AD.

Gahadavala period

After the Guptas, the capital of North India moved to Kannauj and Ayodhya fell into relative neglect. It was revived by the Gahadavalas, coming to power in the 11th century AD. The Gahadavalas were Vaishnavas. They built several Vishnu temples in Ayodhya, five of which survived till Aurangzeb's

reign. Indologist Hans T. Bakker concludes that there might have been a temple at the supposed birth spot of Rama built by the Gahadavalas. In subsequent years, the cult of Rama developed within Vaishnavism, with Rama being regarded as the foremost avatar of Vishnu. Consequently, Ayodhya's importance as a pilgrimage centre grew. In particular, multiple versions of Ayodhya Mahatmya (magical powers of Ayodhya) prescribed the celebration of Ram Navami (the birthday of Rama).

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Mahmud of Ghazni for first time attacked modern Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1000 AD. He defeated Hindu ruler Jaya Pala, who committed suicide himself later and was succeeded by his son Anandpala.

- Ghazni invaded Bhatia in 1005 AD.
- Ghazni invaded Multan in 1006 AD. During this time, Ananda Pala attacked him.
- Mahmud of Ghazni attacked and crushed Sukha Pala, ruler of Bhatinda in 1007 AD.
- Ghazni attacked Nagarkot in the Punjab hills in 1011 AD.
- Mahmud attacked the shahi kingdom under Anand Pala and defeated him in the Battle of Waihind, the Hind shahi capital near Peshawar in 1013 AD.
- Mahmud of Ghazni captured Thanesar in 1014 AD.
- Mahmud of Ghazni attacked Kashmir in 1015 AD.
- He attacked Mathura in 1018 AD and defeated a coalition of rulers, including a ruler called Chandra Pala.
- Mahmud conquered Kanauj in 1021 AD by defeating Kanauj King Chandella Gauda.
- Gwalior was invaded and conquered by Mahmud Ghazni attacked Gwalior and conquered in 1023 AD.
- Mahmud Ghazni attacked the Somnath temple in 1025 AD to loot the wealth amassed inside the temple.
- Mahmud Ghaznavi died in 1030 AD due to Malaria during his last invasion.

He was attracted to the enormous wealth of India. This made him repeatedly raid India. He also added religious dimension to his invasion of India. He destroyed the temples of Somnath, Kangra, Mathura and Jwalamukhi to earn the nickname of Idol Breaker.

Although there is no deep political impact of the Ghaznavi's invasions on India, it exposed the shortcomings of the war strategies of the Rajput kings. It also revealed that there was no political unity in India and it invited more attacks.

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The first battle of Muhammad Ghori against a Hindu ruler was with Raja Bhimdev II of Gujarat who was a member of Solanki Dynasty. This is called "Battle of Gujarat" and took place at Kayadra near Mount Abu. Raja Bhimdev II was a young man and real regent was his mother Naikidevi. Naikidevi inflicted such a

major defeat to Muhammad Ghori that this invasion became Muhammad's first and last attack on India from the Gujarat side. He never turned to Gujarat later on.

In 1179, he took Peshawar from Khusrau Malik, the last successor of Mahmud, who was a weak, gentle king, who submitted to Ghori easily and gave his son as a slave to him. In 1181, he ravaged Lahore and fortified Sialkot. He did not leave the successors of Mahmud. Khusrau and his son were taken to Ghor and confined in the fort, where after five years they were put to death. Within a decade, Muhammad Ghori had got rid of all the Muslim forces in India. Now he could turn to Hindus.

Alauddin conquered the kingdoms of Gujarat (raided in 1299 and annexed in 1304), Ranthambore (1301), Chittor (1303), Malwa (1305), Siwana (1308), and Jalore (1311). These victories ended several Hindu dynasties, including the Paramaras, the Vaghelas, the Chahamanas of Ranastambhapura and Jalore, the Rawal branch of the Guhilas, and possibly the Yajvapalas. His slave-general Malik Kafur led multiple campaigns to the south of the Vindhyas, obtaining a considerable amount of wealth from Devagiri (1308), Warangal (1310) and Dwarasamudra (1311). These victories forced the Yadava king Ramachandra, the Kakatiya king Prataparudra, and the Hoysalaking Ballala III to become Alauddin's tributaries. Kafur also raided the Pandya kingdom (1311), obtaining much treasure and many elephants and horses.

At times, Alauddin exploited Muslim fanaticism against Hindu chieftains and the treatment of the zimmi. He rarely heeded to the orthodox ulema but believed "that the Hindu will never be submissive and obedient to the Musalman." He undertook measures to impoverish them and felt it was justified because he knew the Hindu chiefs and muqaddams led a luxurious life but didn't pay a jital in taxes. Under the Mamluks, Indian Muslims and Hindus were deprived of positions in higher bureaucracy. However, Amir Khusrau mentions a Hindu officer of his army despatched to repel the Mongols. In addition, many non-Muslims served in his army.

During the last years of his life, Alauddin suffered from an illness, and relied on Malik Kafur to handle the administration. After his death in 1316, Malik Kafur appointed Shihabuddin, son of Alauddin and his Hindu wife Jhatyapali, as a puppet monarch. However, his elder son Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah seized the power shortly after his death.

Mughal period

In modern times, a mosque was located at the supposed birth spot of Rama, which sat on a large mound in the centre of Ayodhya, called the Ramadurg or Ramkot (the fort of Rama). The mosque bore an inscription stating that it was built in 1528 by Mir Baqi on the orders of Babur.

According to an early 20th century text by Maulvi Abdul Ghaffar and the surrounding historical sources examined by historian Harsh Narain, the young Babur came from Kabul to Awadh (Ayodhya) in disguise, dressed as a Qalandar (Sufi ascetic), probably as part of a fact-finding mission. Here he met the Sufi saints Shah Jalal and Sayyid Musa Ashiqan and took a pledge in return for their blessings for conquering Hindustan. The pledge is not spelled out in the 1981 edition of Abdul Ghaffar's book, but it is made clear that it is in pursuance of this pledge that he got the Babri mosque constructed after conquering Hindustan. The original book was written in Persian by Maulvi Abdul Karim, a spiritual descendant of Musa Ashiqan, and it was translated into Urdu by Abdul Ghaffar, his grandson, with additional commentary. The older editions of Abdul Ghaffar's book contain more detail, which seems to have been excised in the 1981 edition. Lala Sita Ram of Ayodhya, who had access to the older edition in 1932,

wrote, "The faqirs answered that they would bless him if he promised to build a mosque after demolishing the Janmasthan temple. Babur accepted the faqirs' offer and returned to his homeland.

The fact that Babur came in the guise of a Qalandar is corroborated in Abdullah's *Tarikh-i Dawudi*, where it is detailed that he met the Sultan Sikandar Lodhi in Delhi in the same disguise. The inscription on the Babri mosque also names him as Babur Qalandar. Musa Ashiqan's grave is situated close to the Babri mosque site, whose shrine uses two of the same type of black basalt columns used in the Babri mosque, indicative of his role in the destruction of the prior temple.

Tulsidas, who began writing the *Ramcharit Manas* in Ayodhya on Rama's birthday in 1574 (coming there from his normal residence in Varanasi) mentioned the "great birthday festival" in Ayodhya but made no mention of a mosque at Rama's birth place Abu'l-Fazl ibn Mubarak (1551–1602), who wrote *Akbarnama*, completing the third volume *Ain-i Akbari* in 1598, described the birthday festival in Ayodhya, the "residence of Rama" and the "holiest place of antiquity", but made no mention of a mosque. William Finch, the English traveller that visited Ayodhya around 1611, and wrote about the "ruins of the Ranichand [Ramachand] castle and houses" where Hindus believed the great God "took flesh upon him to see the tamasha of the world." He found *pandas* (Brahmin priests) in the ruins of the fort, who were recording the names of the pilgrims, a practice that was said to go back to antiquity. Again there was no mention of a mosque in his account.

Late Mughal period

The first known report of a mosque appears in a book *Sahifa-I-Chihil Nasaih Bahadur Shahi*, said to have been written by a daughter of the emperor Bahadur Shah I (1643–1712) and granddaughter of Emperor Aurangzeb, in the early 18th century. It mentioned mosques having been constructed after demolishing the "temples of the idolatrous Hindus situated at Mathura, Banaras and Awadh etc." Hindus are said to have called these demolished temples in Awadh "Sita Rasoi" (Sita's kitchen) and "Hanuman's abode". While there was no mention of Babur in this account, the Ayodhya mosque had been juxtaposed with those built by Aurangzeb at Mathura and Banaras.

Jai Singh II (popularly called "Sawai Jai Singh", 1688–1743) purchased land and established *Jaisinghpuras* in all Hindu religious centres in North India, including Mathura, Vrindavan, Banaras, Allahabad, Ujjain and Ayodhya. The documents of these activities have been preserved in the *Kapad-Dwar* collection in the City Palace Museum in Jaipur. R. Nath, who has examined these records, concludes that Jai Singh had acquired the land of Rama Janmasthan in 1717. The ownership of the land was vested in the deity.

The Jesuit priest Joseph Tieffenthaler, who visited Awadh in 1766–1771, wrote, "Emperor Aurangzebe got the fortress called Ramcot demolished and got a Muslim temple, with triple domes, constructed at the same place. Others say that it was constructed by 'Babor'. Fourteen black stone pillars of 5 spans high, which had existed at the site of the fortress, are seen there. Twelve of these pillars now support the interior arcades of the mosque." This ambiguity between Aurangzeb and Babur could be significant. Tieffenthaler also wrote that Hindus worshipped a square box raised 5 inches above the ground, which was said to be called the "Bedi, i.e., the cradle", and "The reason for this is that once upon a time, here was a house where Beschun [Vishnu] was born in the form of Ram." He recorded that Rama's birthday was celebrated every year, with a big gathering of people, which was "so famous in the entire India".

Beginnings of dispute

The first recorded instances of religious violence in Ayodhya occurred in the 1850s over a nearby mosque at Hanuman Garhi. The Babri mosque was attacked by Hindus in the process. Since then, local Hindu groups made occasional demands that they should have the possession of the site and that they should be allowed to build a temple on the site, all of which were denied by the colonial government. In 1946, an offshoot of the Hindu Mahasabha called Akhil Bharatiya Ramayana Mahasabha (ABRM) started an agitation for the possession of the site. In 1949, Sant Digvijay Nath of Gorakhnath Math joined the ABRM and organised a 9-day continuous recitation of Ramcharit Manas, at the end of which the Hindu activists broke into the mosque and placed idols of Rama and Sita inside. People were led to believe that the idols had 'miraculously' appeared inside the mosque. The date of the event was 22 December 1949.

Demolition of the Babri Mosque

In the 1980s, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad(VHP), belonging to the mainstream Hindu nationalist family Sangh Parivar, launched a new movement to "reclaim" the site for Hindus and to erect a temple dedicated to the infant Rama (Ramlala) at this spot. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), formed in 1980 from the remnants of the Jana Sangh, became the political face of the campaign. In 1986, a district judge ruled that the gates would be reopened and Hindus permitted to worship inside, providing a major boost to the movement.[8] In September 1990, BJP leader L. K. Advani began a "rath yatra" (pilgrimage procession) to Ayodhya in order to generate support for the movement. Advani later stated in his memoirs, "If Muslims are entitled to an Islamic atmosphere in Mecca, and if Christians are entitled to a Christian atmosphere in the Vatican, why is it wrong for the Hindus to expect a Hindu atmosphere in Ayodhya?" The yatra resulted in communal riots in many cities in its wake, prompting the government of Bihar to arrest Advani. In spite of this, a large number of 'kar sevaks' or Sangh Parivar activists reached Ayodhya and tried to attack the mosque. They were stopped by the Uttar Pradesh police and the paramilitary forces, resulting in a pitched battle in which several kar sevaks were killed. Accusing the central government led by V.P. Singh of being weak, the BJP withdrew its support, necessitating fresh elections.

A report from the Archaeological Survey of India found no evidence for the structure being man-made. The Archaeological Survey of India and the government of India informed the Supreme Court of India in a 2007 affidavit that there was no historical proof of the bridge being built by Rama.

However, the Hindu religious theories believe that it is the bridge constructed by Lord Rama and his Vanara (monkey) army as mentioned in the epic Ramayana. Surprisingly, this causeway is visible from an aerial view even to this day. The whole issue of Ram Setu is mysterious and that makes us to talk about it even more!

Is it Man-Made According to Hindu mythology, it was built by Lord Rama with the help Vanara (monkey) army. He had to construct this bridge to reach Sri Lanka as his wife Sita was kidnapped and was imprisoned there. Surprisingly, the time of Ramayana (5000 BCE) and the carbon analysis of the bridge sync properly.

Is it Man-Made We can confirm a mythology only through the historical evidence. Some believe Ram Setu is the only archaeological and historical evidence of Ramayana. The detailing of the construction in the epic can be related to some scientific theories. However, it is hard to believe everything through a mythological perspective.

Walk- able: It is said that Rama's bridge was above the sea level. Even some historical records suggest that it was walk able till the 15th century. Even the estimated depth is around 3 - 30 ft in the area of this causeway.

What's With So Many Names! Ram Setu is also called as Adam's Bridge, Nala Setu and Setu Banda. Ram Setu as it was built by Rama and his army. It is said Nala Setu because it was Nala who was the architect (designed) the bridge in Ramayana. The name Adam's Bridge comes from some ancient Islamic texts referring to the Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka (Adam is suppose to fallen in this part of earth).

The Reefs of Palk Strait Scientific studies reveal that it is a linear sequence of coral reefs or the limestone reefs. According to science, it is a naturally formed causeway which connects the Pambam Island to Mannar Island.

Round About For Ships! Even though, the Adam's Bridge is inside the water the ships cannot sail on it. The water here is shallow with the level of depth varying at certain points. Hence, ships from India have to take another roundabout route to reach Sri Lanka.

Mysterious & Surprising: The studies of Oceanography suggest that the bridge is 7000 years old. Interestingly, the carbon dating of beaches near Dhanushkodi and Mannar Island sync with the date of Ramayana.

Ambitious Setu Samudram Project Setu Samudram Project is a proposed bridge to build over the Palk Strait. The idea is to have a short-cut route from Pamban Island to Mannar Island in Sri Lanka.

Religious Uproar against Setu Samudram Project Hindus believes that Ram Setu is a holy site and hence no other man-made bridge should be constructed over it. As seen from science perspective, this might destroy the natural reefs which have existed in the sea from a long time.

Interesting Floating Stones Ramayana mentions that the Setu Banda was constructed with floating stones. Surprisingly, such floating stones are scattered across Rameswaram even to this day. Scientific theories suggest that some volcanic rocks do float in water. This might explain the linear formation of rocks which form this bridge.

Man Versus Natural to think about it as man-made is rather interesting. Looking at its depth, it is possible that Ram Setu was once above the sea level. It is also possible that the rise of sea level over the years has submerged this causeway. In nature's perspective, it is rather exciting to see such a long formation of reefs which have existed for so many years.

Summary of the verdict

The five-judge bench of the Supreme Court unanimously pronounced its verdict on 9 November 2019.

The judgement can be summarised as follows:

- The Court ordered the Government of India to create a trust to build the Ram Mandir temple and form a Board of Trustees within three months. The disputed land will be owned by the Government of India and subsequently transferred to the Trust after its formation.
- The Court ordered the entire disputed land of area of 2.77 acres to be allocated for the construction of a temple while an alternative piece of land of area of 5 acres is allocated to the Sunni Waqf Board for the construction of a mosque at a suitable place within Ayodhya.
- The Court ruled that the 2010 Allahabad High Court's decision, division of the disputed land was incorrect.
- The Court ruled that the Demolition of the Babri Masjid and the 1949 desecration of the Babri Masjid were in violation of law.

- The Court observed that archaeological evidence from the Archaeological Survey of India shows that the Babri Masjid was constructed on a "structure", whose architecture was distinctly indigenous and non-Islamic.
- The ruins of an ancient religious structure under an existing building does not always indicate that it was demolished by unfriendly powers, the Supreme Court held in its 1,045-page judgment in the Ayodhya case.
- The court observed that all four of the Janamsakhis (biographies of the first Sikhguru, Guru Nanak) state unambiguously and in detail that Guru Nanak made pilgrimage to Ayodhya and offered prayers in the Ram temple in 1510–11 AD. The court also mentioned that a group of Nihang Sikhs performed puja in the "mosque" in 1857.
- The Court said that Muslim parties, including the Sunni Waqf Board, failed to establish exclusive possession of disputed land. It said that the Hindu parties furnished better evidence to prove that Hindus had worshipped continuously inside the mosque, believing it to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity Rama. The Court cited that iron railings set up in 1856–57 separated the inner courtyard of the mosque from the outer courtyard, and that Hindus were in exclusive possession of the outer courtyard. It said that even before this, Hindus had access to the inner courtyard of the mosque.
- The Court ruled that the suit filed by Nirmohi Akhara could not be upheld and it had no shebait rights. However, the court ruled that Nirmohi Akhara should be given appropriate representation in the Board of Trustees.
- The Court rejected the claim made by Shia Waqf Board against the Sunni Waqf Board for the ownership of the Babri Masjid.

Ayodhya Verdict: Entire Disputed Site Goes to Hindus for Ram Mandir, Muslims to Get 5 Acres of Alternate Land.

In the judgment running into 1,045 pages, the apex court said a report by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) provided evidence of the remains of a building "that was not Islamic" beneath the demolished mosque.

The Supreme Court pronounced in a historic judgement on Saturday that a temple be constructed for Hindus on a 2.77-acre site in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya town, which has been the epic centre of independent India's biggest religio-political wrangle, while Muslims should get an alternative land to build a potential mosque.

The five-judge Constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, ruled unanimously that the spot, where frenzied right-wing mobs destroyed the four-centuries-old Babri Masjid in 1992, should be handed over to a trust that the Centre must constitute in three months to oversee the construction of a temple, subject to conditions.

In 2016, the court started a fresh hearing of the case. In 2017, the SC said that the matter was sensitive and suggested for the case to be settled out of court. It asked stakeholders to hold talks and find an amicable solution. However, no solution was achieved. In 2018, the Supreme Court set up a five-judge Constitution Bench to hear the land dispute case.

The five-judge Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, started day-to-day hearing on the matter from August 6, 2019, and midway through the proceedings, directed the advocates to finish the argument by October 16.

The Supreme Court, on October 16, 2019, concluded hearings in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute in Ayodhya and reserved its judgment, which was passed on November 9. The apex court, in a unanimous verdict, gave the ownership of the disputed 2.77-acre land in Ayodhya to the Ram Janmabhoomi trust. It ordered that an alternative piece of land in a "suitable" and "prominent" place in Ayodhya should be given to the Muslims to build a mosque. The Court also asked the government to frame a plan within three months and set up a trust, which would construct a temple in Ayodhya.

Continued

Conclusion:

Supreme Court on 9th November, 2019, delivered a landmark judgment in the Ayodhya land dispute case that will have far-reaching effects. The five-judge Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi read out a unanimous judgment and ruled in favour of the Ram Janmabhoomi and said there will be Ram Mandir at the disputed site and Muslims will be given an alternate 5 acre land for their mosque.

The Supreme Court heard the long-pending Ayodhya land dispute for a period of 40 days at a stretch and pronounced the historic verdict on Saturday as the nation waited with bated breath.

Top 10 key takeaways from the landmark judgment in the Ayodhya case:

1. Supreme Court has granted the entire 2.77 acre of disputed land in Ayodhya to deity Ram Lalla.
2. Supreme Court has directed the Centre and Uttar Pradesh government to allot an alternative 5 acre land to the Muslims at a prominent place to build a mosque.
3. The court has asked Centre to consider granting some kind of representation to Nirmohi Akhara in setting up of trust. Nirmohi Akhara was the third party in the Ayodhya dispute.
4. The Supreme Court dismissed the plea of Nirmohi Akhara, which was seeking control of the entire disputed land, saying they are the custodian of the land.
5. Supreme Court has directed the Union government to set up a trust in 3 months for the construction of the Ram mandir at the disputed site where Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992.
6. The Supreme Court said the underlying structure below the disputed site at Ayodhya was not an Islamic structure, but the ASI has not established whether a temple was demolished to build a mosque.
7. The court also said that the Hindus consider the disputed site as the birthplace of Lord Ram while the Muslims also say the same about the Babri Masjid site.
8. The court also said that the faith of the Hindus that Lord Ram was born at the disputed site where the Babri Masjid once stood cannot be disputed.
9. The Supreme Court also said that the 1992 demolition of the 16th century Babri Masjid mosque was a violation of law.
10. While reading out its judgment, the Supreme Court said that the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board has failed to establish its case in Ayodhya dispute case and Hindus have established their case that they were in possession of outer courtyard of the disputed site.

Adam's Bridge, also known as Rama's Bridge or Rama Setu, is a chain of limestone shoals, between Pam ban Island, also known as Rameswaram Island, off the south-eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, India, and Manner Island, off the north-western coast of Sri Lanka. Geological evidence suggests that this bridge is a former land connection between India and Sri Lanka.

NASA reports that the bridge is 48 km (30 mi) long and separates the Gulf of Manner (south-west) from the Palk Strait (northeast). Some of the regions are dry and the sea in the area rarely exceeds 1 meter (3 ft) in depth, thus hindering navigation. It was reportedly passable on foot until the 15th century, when storms deepened the channel: temple records seem to say that Adam's Bridge was completely above sea level until it broke in a cyclone in 1480. The bridge was first mentioned in the ancient Indian Sanskrit epic Ramayana written by Valmiki, wherein Rama constructed it for his Vanara (ape men) army to reach Lanka and rescue his wife Sita from the Rakshasa king, Ravana.

The western world first encountered it in "historical works in the 9th century" by Ibn Khordadbeh in his Book of Roads and Kingdoms (c. 850), referring to it as Set Bandhai or "Bridge of the Sea". Some early Islamic sources refer to a mountain in Sri Lanka as Adam's Peak, (where Adam supposedly fell to earth) and described Adam as crossing from Sri Lanka to India via the bridge after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, leading to the name of Adam's Bridge. Alberuni (c. 1030) was probably the first to describe it in such a manner. The earliest map that calls this area by the name Adam's bridge was prepared by a British cartographer in 1804.

The bridge starts as a chain of shoals from the Dhanushkodi tip of India's Pamban Island and ends at Sri Lanka's Mannar Island. Pamban Island is semi-connected to the Indian mainland by the 2-km-long Pamban Bridge. Mannar Island is connected to mainland Sri Lanka by a causeway. The border between India and Sri Lanka is said to pass across one of the shoals, constituting one of the shortest land borders in the world. Ramasetu and neighbouring areas like Rameswaram, Dhanushkodi, Devipattinam and Thirupullani are mentioned in the context of various legends in Ramayana.

Considerable diversity of opinion and confusion exists about the nature and origin of this structure. In the 19th century, two major theories were prominent in explaining the structure. One considered it to be formed by the process of accretion and rising of the land, while the other surmised that it was established by the breaking away of Sri Lanka from the Indian mainland. The friable calcareous ridges later broke into large rectangular blocks, which perhaps gave rise to the belief that the causeway is an artificial construction.

According to V. Ram Mohan of the Centre of Natural Hazards and Disaster Studies of the University of Madras, "reconstruction of the geological evolution of the island chain is a challenging task and has to be carried out based on circumstantial evidence". The lack of comprehensive field studies explains many of the uncertainties regarding the nature and origin of Adam's Bridge, which mostly consists of a series of parallel ledges of sandstone and conglomerates that are hard at the surface and grow coarse and soft as they descend to sandy banks.

Studies have variously described the structure as a chain of shoals, coral reefs, a ridge formed in the region owing to thinning of the earth's crust, a double tombolo a sand spit, or barrier islands. One account mentions that this landform was formerly the world's largest tombolo that split into a chain of shoals by a slight rise in mean sea level a few thousand years ago.

Based on satellite remote sensing data, but without actual field verification, the Marine and Water Resources Group of the Space Application Centre (SAC) of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) concludes that Adam's Bridge comprises 103 small patch reefs lying in a linear pattern. The feature consists of the reef crest (flattened, emergent, especially during low tides, or nearly emergent segment of a reef), sand cays (accumulations of loose coral sands and beach rock) and intermittent deep channels. The coral reefs are variously designated by other studies as ribbon and atoll reefs.

The geological process that gave rise to this structure has been attributed in one study to crustal down warping, block faulting, and mantle plume activity while another theory attributes it to continuous sand

deposition and the natural process of sedimentation leading to the formation of a chain of barrier islands related to rising sea levels. Another theory affirms that the origin and linearity of Adam's Bridge might be due to the old shoreline (implying that the two landmasses of India and Sri Lanka were once connected) from which shoreline coral reefs developed.

Another study attributes the origin of the structure to long shore drifting currents which moved in an anticlockwise direction in the north and clockwise direction in the south of Rameswaram and Talaimannar. The sand could have been dumped in a linear pattern along the current shadow zone between Dhanushkodi and Talaimannar with the later accumulation of corals over these linear sand bodies. In a diametrically opposing view, another group of geologists propose a crustal thinning theory, block faulting and a ridge formed in the region owing to thinning and asserts that development of this ridge augmented the coral growth in the area and in turn coral cover acted as a 'sand trapper'.

The tombolo model affirms a constant sediment source and a high unidirectional or bi-directional (monsoonal) longshore current. One study tentatively concludes that there is insufficient evidence to indicate eustatic emergence and that the raised reef in southern India probably results from a local uplift. Other studies also conclude that during periods of lowered sea level over the last 100,000 years, Adam's Bridge has provided an intermittent land connection between India and Sri Lanka, which according to famous ornithologists Sidney Dillon Ripley and Bruce Beehler supports the vicariance model for speciation in some birds of the Indian Subcontinent.

The studies under "Project Rameswaram" of the Geological Survey of India (GSI), which included dating of corals, indicate Rameswaram Island evolved beginning 125,000 years ago. Radio carbon dating of samples in this study suggests the domain between Rameswaram and Talaimannar may have been exposed sometime between 7,000 and 18,000 years ago. Thermoluminescence dating by GSI concludes that the sand dunes between Dhanushkodi and Adam's Bridge started forming about 500–600 years ago.

Another study suggests that the appearance of the reefs and other evidence indicate their recency, and a coral sample gives a radiocarbon age of $4,020 \pm 160$ years BP.

Due to shallow waters, Adam's bridge presents a formidable hindrance to navigation through the Palk Strait. Though trade across the India-Sri Lanka divide has been active since at least the first millennium BC, it was limited to small boats and dinghies. Larger ocean-going vessels from the West have had to navigate around Sri Lanka to reach India's eastern coast. Eminent British geographer Major James Rennell, who surveyed the region as a young officer in the late 18th century, suggested that a "navigable passage could be maintained by dredging the strait of Ramisseram [sic]". However, little notice was given to his proposal, perhaps because it came from "so young and unknown an officer", and the idea got revived only 60 years later.

In 1823, Sir Arthur Cotton (then an Ensign), was assigned to survey the Pamban channel, which separates the Indian mainland from the island of Rameswaram and forms the first link of Adam's Bridge. Geological evidence indicates that a land connection bridged this in the past, and some temple records suggest that violent storms broke the link in 1480. Cotton suggested that the channel could be dredged to enable passage of ships, but nothing was done until 1828 when Major Sim directed the blasting and removal of some rocks.

A more detailed marine survey of Adam's Bridge was undertaken in 1837 by Lieutenants F. T. Powell, Ethersey, Grieve, and Christopher along with draughtsman Felix Jones, and operations to dredge the channel were recommenced the next year. However, these and subsequent efforts in the 19th century did not succeed in keeping the passage navigable for any vessels except those with a light draft.

Indian culture and religion includes legends that the structure is of supernatural origin.

According to the Hindu epic, Ramayana, Ravana, the ten-headed demon king of Lanka (Sri Lanka), enticed Rama's wife Sita with a magical golden deer, then kidnapped her and took her to Lanka, doing this for revenge against Rama and his brother Lakshmana for having cut off the nose of Ravana's sister, Shurpanakha.

To rescue Sita, Rama needed to cross to Lanka. Brahma created an army of vanara (intelligent warrior monkeys) to aid Rama. Led by Nila and under the engineering direction of Nala, the vanara constructed a bridge to Lanka in five days.

Rama crossed the sea on this bridge, and pursued Ravana for many days. He fired hundreds of golden arrows which became serpents that cut off Ravana's heads, but ultimately had to use the divine arrow of Brahma (which had the power of the gods in it and cannot miss its target) to slay Ravana.

An ancient town, Ayodhya is regarded as one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus, revered because of its association in the great Indian epic poem Ramayana with the birth of Rama and with the rule of his father, Dasharatha. According to this source, the town was prosperous and well fortified and had a large population.

In traditional history, Ayodhya was the early capital of the kingdom of Kosala, though in Buddhist times (6th–5th century BCE) Shravasti became the kingdom's chief city. Scholars generally agree that Ayodhya is identical with the town 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 statement of the Chinese Buddhist monk Faxian in the 5th century CE that there were 100 monasteries there (although he cited 100, Faxian probably did not mean that exact number, just that there were many monasteries). There were also a number of other monuments, including a stupa (shrine) reputed to have been founded by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (3rd century BCE).

The Kanauj kingdom arose in Ayodhya, then called Oudh, during the 11th and 12th centuries CE. The region was later included in the Delhi sultanate, the Jaunpur kingdom, and, in the 16th century, the Mughal Empire. Oudh gained a measure of independence early in the 18th century but became subordinate to the British East India Company in 1764. In 1856 it was annexed by the British; the annexation and subsequent loss of rights by the hereditary land revenue receivers provided one of the causes of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Oudh was joined with the Agra Presidency in 1877 to form the North-Western Provinces and later the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, now Uttar Pradesh state.

Despite the town's great age, there are few surviving monuments of any antiquity. The Babri Masjid ("Mosque of Bābur") was built in the early 16th century by the Mughal emperor Bābur on a site traditionally identified as Rama's birthplace and as the location of an ancient Hindu temple, the Ram Janmabhoomi. Because of its significance to both Hindus and Muslims, the site was often a matter of contention. In 1990, riots in northern India followed the storming of the mosque by Hindu nationalist's intent on erecting a temple on the site; the ensuing crisis brought down the Indian government. Two years later, on December 6, 1992, the three-story mosque was demolished in a few hours by a crowd of Hindu nationalists. It was estimated that more than 2,000 people died in the rioting that swept through India following the mosque's destruction. An investigative commission led by Manmohan Singh Liberhan, a retired judge, was formed in 1992 but did not issue a report until 2009. The report, when it finally appeared, caused uproar because it blamed several leading figures from the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party for the mosque's destruction. A court ruling in 2010 divided the land between Hindus and Muslims, but that decision was overturned in 2019 by the Supreme Court, which entrusted the property exclusively to Hindus.

The numerous Vaishnava shrines and bathing Ghats are of no great age. Close to the modern town are several mounds marking the site of ancient Ayodhya that have not yet been adequately explored by archaeologists. Pop. (2001) 49,417; (2011) 55,890

The Ayodhya land dispute is a political, historical and socio-religious debate in India that has been on for decades. The dispute is focused on a plot of land in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, which is regarded among the Hindus to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram.

According to some beliefs, it was originally the site of a Hindu temple that was demolished to construct a mosque known as Babri Masjid. For their part, Muslims claim that the land was titled to them and Mir Baqi built the mosque on it in 1528 on orders of the first Mughal emperor, Babur.

The modification/demolition of the temple has stood as a topic of controversy. By some accounts, some Muslims in 1949 saw an idol of Ram being placed inside what was then a mosque. Both Hindu and Muslim sides claimed ownership of the site and that led to an eventual lockdown of the area by the government.

On December 17, 1959, Nirmohi Akhara filed a suit seeking possession of the site and claimed to be the custodians of the disputed land. Following this, the Sunni Central Board of Waqf also filed a suit claiming ownership of the site on December 18, 1961.

Later, some Hindu kar sevaks on December 6, 1992, demolished Babri masjid, an action that triggered communal riots all over India, killing at least 2,000 people.

Over the years, the matter has been brought up by both groups in various courts of the country.

On September 30, 2010, the Allahabad High Court ruled that the disputed 2.77-acre land in Ayodhya should be divided into three parts among the Hindus, Muslims and the Nirmohi Akhara. The petitioners moved the Supreme Court and the apex court stayed the HC verdict. Gist of Judgment of Supreme Court of India dated 9 November 2019.

The oral evidence as noticed above of the witnesses examined on behalf of plaintiffs of Suit No.5, plaintiffs of Suit No.3 and even witness examined on behalf of plaintiffs of Suit No.4 clearly proves faith and belief of Hindus that Janmasthan of Lord Ram is the place where Babri Mosque has been constructed. Three-dome structure was treated as Birthplace of Lord Ram. People worship of the three-dome structure, parikrama of the entire premises by the devotees have been amply proved by oral evidences led in the Suit. Page 114, 167. The statements noted in all Gazetteers as noticed above published under authority of government categorically and unanimously state that at Janmasthan of Lord Ram, Babri Mosque was constructed in 1528 by Babar. It is true that statements recorded in Gazette is not conclusive evidence but presumption of correctness of statements recorded have to be raised subject to being disproved by leading appropriate evidences. All Gazettes published by the Government authority repeats the same statement that Babri Mosque was constructed at the Janmasthan of Lord Ram. There is no evidence worth name led of the plaintiffs of Suit No.4 to disprove the above statement and further, oral evidence as noticed above clearly supports the faith and belief of Hindus that Lord Ram was born at the place where Babri Mosque has been constructed. The conclusion that place of birth of Lord Ram is the three dome structure can, therefore, be reached. 168. Dr. Rajeev Dhawan, learned senior counsel submits that although in oral statements it was stated by the Page 115 witnesses that birthplace of Lord Ram is below the middle dome but infact Ram Chabutra which was outside the three-dome structure on the left side in outer courtyard was the birthplace of Lord Ram. He submits that in the judgment of the suit filed in 1885 by Mahant Raghubar Das also the Janmasthan was treated to be Ram Chabutra. 169. The sequence of the events as noticed above clearly indicates that faith and belief of Hindus was that birth place of Lord Ram was in the three-dome structure Mosque which was constructed at the janamasthan. It was only during the British period that grilled wall was constructed dividing the walled premises of the

Mosque into inner courtyard and outer courtyard. Grilled iron wall was constructed to keep Hindus outside the grilled iron wall in the outer courtyard. In view of the construction of the iron wall, the worship and puja started in Ram Chabutra in the outer courtyard. Suit of 1885 was filed seeking permission to construct temple on the said Chabutra where worship was permitted by the British Authority. Page 116 Faith and belief of the Hindus as depicted by the evidence on record clearly establish that the Hindus believe that at the birth place of Lord Ram, the Mosque was constructed and three-dome structure is the birth place of Lord Ram. The fact that Hindus were by constructing iron wall, dividing Mosque premises, kept outside the three-dome structure cannot be said to alter their faith and belief regarding the birth place of Lord Ram. The worship on the Ram Chabutra in the outer courtyard was symbolic worship of Lord Ram who was believed to be born in the premises. 170. It is thus concluded on the conclusion that faith and belief of Hindus since prior to construction of Mosque and subsequent thereto has always been that Janmasthan of Lord Ram is the place where Babri Mosque has been constructed which faith and belief is proved by documentary and oral evidence discussed above.

Many of the eminent personalities of the West are of the opinion that the Hinduism, seems to be superfluous. But not so, as it is evident from the later excavations by Indian Excavators, in respect of Rama Sethu and Dwaraka found in the respective Seas.

However, Research made by "Mind and General Knowledge Research Foundation", Hyderabad revealed that Ramayana is a history is 'fait-acompli' (no longer arguing against).