



The Rebuilding of Ram Temple: New Wave of Hindu Ethnonationalism

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Date of Submission: 02-04-2024

Date of Acceptance: 12-04-2024

Abstract: -

This proposed research would be on the new wave of Hindu ethnonationalism after the rebuilding of the Sri Ram Temple at Ayodhya. It sees the win of Hinduism after 300 years of legal battle. The survey reports of the 'Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)' and the memoirs and legal documents of the Mughal Empires proved it was a temple and demolished in the sixteenth century by order of Babar. A mosque was built over it using the building materials of the previous temple. Hindus worshipped Ram outside the mosque from the sixteenth century.

The previous Union governments of India wanted to delay the legal battle for the sake of Muslim appeasement. The Congress PM Ravi Gandhi opened the mosque door for Hindus to worship Ram. December 6, 1992, an angry mob of Hindus led by 'Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)', 'Rastriya Sayam Sevak (RSS)' and 'Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)' to rectify the injustice on Hindus from five centuries.

After a long legal battle, the 'Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas' (created by Hindus for the legal fight for the rebuilding of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya), the 'Supreme Court of India' gave a verdict of the rebuilding of the temple on the site where Hindus believed Ram was born.

Muslims allocated a piece of land outside that side to build a mosque. The rebuilding of the Ram temple seems to be a wave of Hindu ethnonationalism and demand to give back all temples which were demolished by Muslim invaders and built mosques. The recent legal battles for 'Kashi Vishwanath's Gyan Vapi Mosque' and 'Shahi Idgah inside Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple' are two examples. The theories of the ethno-symbolic approach, ethnonational and Brahmanical patriarchy will be used as the methodology of this research.

Keywords: -

Hindu ethnonationalism, Memory of temple Destruction, Hindu cultural memory, Muslim appeasement

I. Introduction: -

The rebuilding of the Ram temple in Ayodhya starts a new wave of Hindu ethnonationalism of reclaiming the holy sites of worships of Hindus (which were demolished by Muslim invaders) in India. The construction of the temple, which is believed to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity Lord Ram, has been a highly contentious issue in Indian politics for decades. The recent Supreme Court ruling in favour of the construction of the temple after showing the legal documents and proof of Hindu temple of Lord Rama before twelve century and the excavated material and epigraphic proof providing by the Archaeological Survey of India. It has ignited a renewed sense of pride and identity, mobilised by Hindu nationalist groups such as Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangha (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and so on, amongst many Hindus in India.

The movement to rebuild the Ram temple is deeply rooted in Hindu ethnonationalism, which seeks to assert the recognition of Hindu culture and values amongst Indians (whether they are Hindus or second Marjory Muslims or minorities such as Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and others) within the geographic entity of India (consider it as holy place for Hindus and called it Mother Bharat). This ideology has gained momentum in recent years, particularly under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which has close ties to Hindu nationalist organisations such as the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

The construction of the Ram temple is seen as a symbol of Hindu resurgence and a rejection of India's Nehruvian Socialist and Indira's secular traditions. It represents a triumph of Hindu identity of dharmic tradition over the historical marginalisation of Hinduism in India, particularly during periods of Muslim rule in medieval period and Christian dominance of British in late eighteenth to twentieth century. For many Hindu nationalists, the temple is not just a religious site,



but a manifestation of their political and cultural aspirations.

The resurgence of Hindu ethnonationalism has also fuelled tensions with India's second largest Majority Muslims (but claimed as minority for subscribing all government funded facilities for Minorities), a major vote bank for political parties – claimed secular, who have long opposed the construction of the temple on the grounds that it would legitimise the destruction of a historic mosque, the Babri Masjid, by Hindu mobs in 1992. Meenakshi Jain gives a concise history of destruction of Hindu temples and building mosques over those sites by Muslim conquerors. The historical documents in Mughal Period actually call this structure Masjid e Janmasthan or Janmasthan Mosque. The issue has further polarised communities along religious lines and raised concerns about the erosion of India's secular fabric.

As the construction of the Ram temple progresses, it is likely to continue fuelling the flames of Hindu ethnonationalism in India. The movement represents a significant shift in the country's political and social landscape, with far-reaching implications for religious minorities and the future of secularism in India.

II. Review of Literature: -

The proposed research will explore the multifaceted implications of the rebuilding of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, India, and its association with a new wave of Hindu Ethnonationalism. The synthesis of scholarly works on this subject provides insights into the historical, political, religious, caste, class, gender and socio-cultural dimensions surrounding the construction of the temple at Ayodhya.

Beginning with the historical context, the review delves into the Ayodhya dispute, examining the roots of the conflict and tracing its evolution over time. Scholars have scrutinised historical records, legal perspectives, and archaeological findings to unravel the complexities of the dispute and shed light on its impact on religious politics in contemporary Indian society.

Moving on to the political dimension, the literature review scrutinises the role of political actors and institutions in shaping the discourse surrounding the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple. It analyses how political ideologies intersect with religious sentiments, contributing to the rise of Hindu Ethnonationalism, based on territory (geography of India), culture (Hindutva), religion (Hinduism) and language (Hindi and Sanskrit). Scholars, such as, Christophe Jefferson, Partha

Chatterjee and Ashes Nandy, have dissected the strategies employed by political entities to mobilise support around the temple construction, exploring the ramifications for India's secular fabric.

Socio-cultural implications form another critical aspect of the literature review. It assesses the impact of the temple construction on the social fabric of India, examining issues such as communal harmony, religious pluralism, and identity politics. Scholars have investigated how the rhetoric of Hindu Ethnonationalism intersects with broader socio-cultural dynamics, influencing inter-community relations and fostering a sense of belonging among certain segments of the population.

The review also encompasses a global perspective, analysing the reactions of the international community to the Ram temple construction. It explores how the temple's reconstruction resonates with global discussions on nationalism, religious identity, and cultural heritage. Scholars have examined the implications for India's diplomatic relations and the nation's positioning in the global arena.

The proposed research will synthesise diverse scholarly perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the rebuilding of the Ram temple and its association with the new wave of Hindu Ethnonationalism. By examining historical, political, and socio-cultural dimensions, the review illuminates the complexities surrounding this contentious issue, offering valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and observers of Indian society and politics.

Definition, Rationale and Scope of the Study

The definition, rationale, and scope of the study on the rebuilding of the Ram temple and Hindu ethnonationalism in India would involve clearly defining the key concepts and terms related to the topic. This would include providing a clear definition of Hindu ethnonationalism, the historical and cultural significance of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, and the political and social implications of the temple's rebuilding.

The rationale for the study would involve explaining why this topic is important and relevant. This could include discussing the impact of Hindu ethnonationalism on second religious majority – Muslims (yet major minority religious group for electoral politics – creating fear against Hindus) in India, the role of the Ram temple movement in shaping Indian politics and society, and the potential implications for Muslim appeasement, communal harmony and secularism in the country.



The scope of the study would outline the specific aspects and dimensions of the topic that will be addressed in the research. This could include examining the historical background of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple movement, traumatic memory of destruction of temple, converting the holy site into mosque, analysing the political and social dynamics of Hindu ethnonationalism, and exploring the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in the issue.

Overall, defining the scope of the study would help to clarify the specific focus and objectives of the research, as well as provide a framework for conducting a comprehensive literature review and analysis of the topic.

Research Problem and Hypothesis-

The Paper asks the following research questions, Historical Inquiry:

What are the historical roots and evolution of the Ayodhya dispute, and how have they contributed to the current discourse on the rebuilding of the Ram temple?

Political Dynamics:

How have political actors and institutions influenced the narrative surrounding the Ram temple construction, particularly in the context of Hindu Ethnonationalism?

Legal Perspectives:

What legal dimensions and precedents are associated with the Ayodhya dispute, and how have they shaped the process and outcome of the temple reconstruction?

III. Methodology: -

This proposed research will be based on the secondary sources or books written on Hindu ethnonationalism and Ram Janmabhoomi movement – such as Christophe Jefferson, Partha Chatterjee, Ashes Nandy and Meenakshi Jain. It will also be based on ethnographic research using semi-structured and open-ended interviews.

Tentative Chapters-

Following would be the tentative chapters of this paper

Introduction
Chapter 1- Centuries of traumatic Memories of Lost of Holy Sites

Chapter 2 – Rise of Hindu Ethnonationalism and Fear Politics between two Religious Majority Groups (Hindus and Muslims) in India

Chapter 3 – Reconstruction of Temple at Ayodhya

– five centuries legal battle Conclusion

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