

The Ayodhya Evidence Debate

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[The present article is adapted, with minor modifications, from the chapter of the same name in the book “ELST, Koenraad. 2002. *Ayodhya, The Case Against the Temple*, New Delhi: Voice of India, pp. 146-188.”

The article assumes importance in view of the ongoing archaeological excavations at the disputed site, at the orders of the Indian courts of law. The reader will note that the same set of Marxist political scholars (Irfan Habib, D. N. Jha, R. S. Sharma, D. Mandal, Suraj Bhan, Sushil Srivastava etc.) who had served as counsel to the BMAC are now again siding with the Islamist party in their current media blitzkrieg. The article serves to expose, in brief, the lack of ethical behavior as well as the academic dishonesty exhibited by these political scholars – **Bharatvani Team**, 9 July 2003].

PART I

This paper was written as an adaptation from an earlier paper, “The Ayodhya Debate”, published in the conference proceedings of the 1991 International Ramayana Conference which had taken place in my hometown, Leuven.^[1] The present version represents my own text prepared for the October 1995 Annual South Asia Conference in Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A. A few notes have been added.

The atmosphere at the conference was frankly hostile. After the academic authorities, who may have been ignorant of my controversial reputation, had allowed my paper to be read, the practical organization of the panel session was entrusted to graduate students belonging to the Indian Communist organization, *Forum of Indian Leftists* (FOIL). They scheduled me as the last speaker in a panel of four, chaired by an Indian female graduate student, a nice girl but obviously unable to perform the most difficult duty of a panel chairperson, viz. keeping the speakers to their allotted time. Moreover, they arranged for our session to be held in a room where another panel was scheduled at noon, making it impossible for the last speaker to read his paper in excess of the panel session’s allotted time. Two panel speakers played along comfortably expounding and repeating the points they could have easily have made in half a minute.

It was up to people from the audience to protest and oblige the chairperson to allow me to read out my paper. When it was my turn, I was heckled somewhat by the Leftist crowd, especially by a well-known Indo-American Communist academic, who was rolling his eyes like a madman and making obscene gestures until an elderly American lady sitting next to him told him to behave. At the end, Biju Mathew came to collect a copy of my text (the book version of which I had some author’s copies handy), called me a “liar”, and told his buddies that they needed to write a scholarly rebuttal. Which is still being awaited today.

1. Introduction

One of the contenders in the Ayodhya history debate, the “hypothesis” that the Babri Masjid had been built in forcible replacement of a Hindu temple, had been a matter of universal consensus until a few years ago. Even the Muslim participants in court cases in the British period had not challenged it; on the contrary, Muslim authors expressed pride in this monument of Islamic victory over infidelity. It is only years after the Hindu take-over of the structure in 1949 that denials started to be voiced.^[2] And it is only in 1989 that a large-scale press campaign was launched to deny what had earlier been a universally accepted fact.

In normal academic practice, the debate on an issue on which such a consensus exists, would only have been opened after the discovery of new facts which undermine the consensus view. The present debate is between a tradition which numerous observers and scholars had found coherent and well-founded, and an artificial hypothesis based on political compulsions, instead of on newly discovered facts.

In an effort to move the debate forward, the Government of India provided the contending parties with an official forum in which experts could go through the evidence produced for both sides. This scholarly exchange took place around the turn of 1991, and was briefly revived in the autumn of 1992. Both rounds of the debate were unilaterally broken off by the Babri Masjid party.

This paper is intended to fill the gap left by the general media in the information on the debate about the historical claims concerning the Rama-Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya. As the only non-Indian scholar to have followed the dispute closely, I will argue that the scholars’ debate has ended in an unambiguous victory for one of the two parties.^[3]

2. The Object of the Debate

As is well known by now, on Rama’s supposed birthplace in Ayodhya, there used to stand a disputed mosque structure. It was called the *Babri Masjid* because according to an inscription on its front wall it was built at the orders of the Moghul invader Babar in 1528, by his lieutenant Mir Baqi. But until the beginning of this century, official documents called it *Masjid-i-Janmasthan*, “Mosque of the birthplace”, and the hill on which it stands was designated as *Ramkot* (Rama’s fort) or *Janmasthan* (birthplace). Since 1949, the building is effectively in use as a Hindu temple, but many Hindus, and especially the *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (VHP)^[4], want to explicate the Hindu function of the place with proper Hindu temple architecture, which implied removing the existing structure. On the other hand, the *Babri Masjid Action Committee* (BMAC) and its splinter, the *Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee* (BMMCC), want the building, and after its demolition at least the site, to be given back to the Muslim community.

In December 1990 and January 1991, at the request of the Chandra Shekhar Government, the BMAC and the VHP exchanged historical evidence for their respective cases. It was broken off on 25 January 1991 when the BMAC representatives, without any explanation, failed to show up at the meeting scheduled

for that day. The debate was revived in October 1992 by the Narasimha Rao Government, with essentially the same teams, but the next month, the BMAC withdrew in protest against VHP's announcement of a Kar Seva (building activity) due to 6 December 1992.

It is strange (but perfectly explainable, as we shall see) that this debate has not received more attention in scholarly and journalistic writings. It was, after all, the only occasion where both parties could not manipulate "evidence" without being subject to pointed criticism from the opposing side. Many reporters on the Ayodhya conflict have made tall claims about "concoction" of bogus evidence" (not to mention "Goebbelsian propaganda"), and to substantiate these, there could hardly be a better mine of information than this Government-sponsored debate. Yet, most of them refuse to even mention it.

A report of this debate should distinguish between three possible debating issues:

1) Is the present-day Ayodhya with all its Rama-related sites, the Ayodhya described by Valmiki in his Sanskrit Ramayana? In the course of this debate, no new facts have been added to Prof. B. B. Lal's conclusion that Valmiki's Ayodhya and present-day Ayodhya are one and the same place.^[5] It is a different matter that his conclusions have been disputed, without any evidence, by the JNU historians among others. Of course, it is nobody's case that the Valmiki connection has been established in an unassailable manner, but at least, what much research is available, points in that direction. However, even if B. B. Lal's assertion is correct, this leaves open the possibility that the writer who styled himself Valmiki, may have written his version of the Rama story long after it actually took place, and that he relocated the scene of a tradition coming from elsewhere into his own area. Therefore, the next, more fundamental question might be:

2) Is the present-day Ayodhya, and more specifically the disputed site, indeed the birthplace of a historical character called Rama? The BMAC has argued that such a thing cannot be proven, assuming that Rama was a historical character at all. The VHP has refused to consider this question, arguing that religions do not have to justify the sacredness of their sacred sites: if the site was traditionally associated with sacred events and characters (as it was, at least from Valmiki onwards), or if it was treated by Rama devotees as somehow sacred (as it was since at least several centuries), then that should be enough to command respect, regardless of the historical basis of this claim to sacredness.

Compare with the Muslim sacred places: there is no historical substance at all in Mohammad's claim that the Kaaba in Mecca had been built by Abraham as a place of monotheistic worship. This story had to justify the take-over of the Kaaba from its real owners, the "idolaters" of Arabia. And yet, in spite of the starkly unhistorical nature of the Muslim claim to the Kaaba, this claim is not being questioned. Nobody is saying that the Muslims can only have their Kaaba if they give historical proof that it was built by Abraham.^[6]

Therefore the VHP insists that if the disputed site is a genuine traditional sacred site, this must be enough to make others respect it as such. Moreover, if it was really a Hindu sacred site, it is reasonable to expect that this status was explicitated with a temple, which must have adorned the site before the Babri Masjid was built. So, the third question is:

3) Was the Babri Masjid built in forcible replacement of a pre-existing Rama temple? The Muslim fundamentalist leader Syed Shahabuddin, convener of the BMMCC (and initiator of the campaign against Salman Rushdie)^[7] agrees with the VHP that this is the fundamental question. He has said repeatedly: "If it is proven that the Babri Masjid has been built in forcible replacement of a Hindu temple, I will demolish it with my own hands."^[8] So, the subject matter of the debate can be limited to the question whether a Hindu temple had been destroyed to make way for the Babri Masjid.

In November 1990, in a letter to the newly appointed Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, the late Sri Rajiv Gandhi (whose Congress Party was supporting the new Government) had also proposed to narrow down the debate to this one question. Sri Gandhi suggested that the decision of whether to leave the disputed building to the Hindus (who were using it as a temple) or to give it to the Muslims (who had used it as a mosque), should be taken on the basis of historical and archaeological evidence regarding the specific point whether the Babri Masjid had replaced a pre-existing Hindu temple. It is this letter from Rajiv Gandhi which prompted Chandra Shekhar to invite the contending parties to have a scholarly exchange of historical evidence.

3. Chronicle of the semi-official debate

Both parties met on 1 December and 4 December 1990, and they agreed to submit and confront historical material supporting their respective viewpoints. On 23 December, the VHP and the BMAC submitted their respective bundles of evidence, On 10 January 1991, both sides submitted rejoinders to their opponents' evidence bundles. At least, the VHP scholars gave a detailed reply to all the documents presented by the BMAC. But the latter merely handed in yet another pile of newspaper articles and more such non-evidential statements of opinion. This created the impression that the BMAC was effectively conceding defeat.

On January 24, the parties met in order to discuss the evidence. But the BMAC team leader, Prof. R. S. Sharma, a well-known Marxist historian, said that he and his colleagues had not yet studied the VHP material (to which the BMAC had agreed to reply by January 10). This is most remarkable, because the week before, he had led 42 academics in signing a much-publicized statement stating, that there was definitely absolutely no proof whatsoever at all for the pre-existing Rama temple. He had issued more statements on the matter and even published a small book on it.^[9] There he was, pleading a lack of familiarity with the very material on which he had been making such tall statements.

The other historians for the BMAC were Athar Ali, D. N. Jha and Suraj Bhan, apart from the office bearers of the BMAC itself. The four BMAC historians have published their argumentation some months later: Ramajanmabhumi Baburi Masjid, *A Historians' Report to the Nation*. Tellingly, they do not mention the outcome of the debate, but reiterate the ludicrous demand they made while attending the debate as BMAC advocates, viz. that they be considered "independent historians" qualified to pronounce scientific judgment in a debate between their employers and their enemies.^[10]

Of course the government representative dismissed this demand as ridiculous. Yet, the BMAC has continued to call them “independent historians”, and they themselves have continued to demand that the VHP submit its case to “independent arbitration”, i.e., by their own kind. These two telling details of the Ayodhya debate story have, of course, been withheld from the reader in the booklet published by the anti-temple party.

The next meeting was scheduled for the next day, January 25. But there, the BMAC scholars simply did not show up. The unambiguous result of the debate was this: The BMAC scholars have run away from the arena. They had not presented written evidence worth the name, they had not given a written refutation of the VHP scholars’ arguments, they had wriggled out of a face-to-face discussion on the accumulated evidence, and finally they had just stayed away. Thus ended the first attempt by the Government of India to find an amicable solution on the basis of genuine historical facts.

In October 1992, the Narasimha Rao Government tried to revive this discussion forum. Due to personal differences, Prof. R. S. Sharma stayed away from the BMAC team, which otherwise consisted of the same people. The debate focused almost entirely on the interpretation of the archaeological findings of June 1992: a large number of Hindu sculptures and other temple remains, found in the terrain in front of the disputed building. The BMAC team argued that these findings had all been planted. It also demanded that in view of the ongoing negotiations, the VHP cancel its programme scheduled for 6 December 1992 in Ayodhya. When the VHP refused, the BMAC stayed away from the talks once more.

4. The pro-Temple Evidence

On Ayodhya, there has always in living memory been a consensus: among local Muslims and Hindus, among European travelers and British administrators. As late as 1989, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (entry *Ayodhya*) reports without a trace of hesitation that the Babri Masjid was built in forcible replacement of a temple marking Rama’s birthplace. When there is such a consensus on a given issue, the academic custom is not to reopen the debate until someone comes with serious evidence that the consensus opinion is wrong and that a different scenario is indicated by newfound (or newly interpreted) facts. But the only evidence to surface during the debate was presented by the VHP-mandated team and merely reconfirmed the old consensus.

The VHP’s evidence bundle was not just a pile of separate documents.^[11] It was centered around a careful argumentation, which can be summed up in three points:

- 1) A single hypothesis. Only one hypothesis is put forward, viz. that the disputed place was traditionally (since before the Muslim period) venerated as Rama’s birthplace, that a Rama temple had stood on it, and that this temple was destroyed to make way for the Babri Masjid. All the material

- collected goes to confirm this one hypothesis. Not a single piece of documentary or archaeological evidence contradicts it. The contrast with the anti-Janmabhumi polemicists is striking: they have so far not produced any document that positively indicates a different scenario from the one upheld by the VHP scholars. The BMAC effort has been only negative, viz. trying to pick holes in the pro-temple evidence, but the VHP has posited its own hypothesis that takes care of all the relevant data.
- 2) Temple foundations. Archaeological findings in Prof. B. B. Lal's excavation campaign *Archaeology of the Ramayana Sites 1975-80* and more recent ones as well as a large number of documents written *in tempore non suspecto* confirm the hypothesis. Findings of burnt-brick pillar bases dated to the 11th century in trenches a few metres from the disputed structure prove that a pillared building stood in alignment with, and on the same foundations system as the Babri Masjid. The written documents do not include an eye-witness account of the temple destruction, the way we have eye-witness accounts of the destruction of many other temples. But then, a wealth of documents by European travelers and by local Muslims, confirm unambiguously that the Babri Masjid was considered to have been built in forcible replacement of a Rama temple. These witnesses also describe first-hand how the place was revered by the Hindus as Rama's birthsite, and that Hindus always came back to worship as closely as possible to the original temple site: they could not reasonably have done this except in continuation of a tradition dating back to before the Babri Masjid.
 - 3) The single hypothesis is consistent with known patterns. No *ad hoc* hypothesis are needed to support the main hypothesis, no unusual scenarios have to be invented, no unusual motives have to be attributed to the people involved, no conspiracy theory has to be conjured up. The general VHP hypothesis merely says that well-established general patterns of Hindu and Muslim behavior apply to the specific case under consideration. Among these are to be noted:

First, the fact that a temple stood on the now-disputed site, which is a hilltop overlooking Ayodhya, is in perfect conformity with a world-wide practice of putting important buildings, like castles and temples, on the topographical place of honor. By contrast, the hypothesis that the Babri Masjid has been built on an empty spot presupposes an abnormal course of events, viz. that the people of the temple city Ayodhya had left the place of honor empty.

Second, the demolition of Hindu temples and their forcible replacement by mosques has been a very persistent behavior pattern of the Muslim conquerors. These temple demolitions were consistent with the persecution of "unbelief" carried out by Islamic rulers from Mohammed bin Qasim (who conquered Sindh in 712) to Aurangzeb (the last great Moghul. D. 1707), and more recently in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Kashmir. Though there is no lack of *negationists* who try to deny or conceal it, the historical record bears out Will Durant's assessment that "the Mohammedan conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history".^[12] It is safe to affirm that the majority of pre-1707 mosques in India has been built in forcible replacement of Hindu temples. Outside India the Islamic takeover of the most sacred sites of other

religions was equally systematic, e.g., the *Ka'aba* in Mecca, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Aya Sophia in Istanbul, the Buddhist monastery in Bukhara etc.

Third, the fact that Hindu temple materials (14 black stone sculptured pillars) have been used in the Babri Masjid is not an unusual feature requiring a special explanation; on the contrary, it was fairly common practice meant as a visual display of the victory of Islam over infidelity. It was done in many mosques that have forcibly replaced temples, e.g., the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi (in which a part of the Kashi Vishvanath temple is still visible)^[13], and the Adahi-Din-ka-Jhonpra mosque in Ajmer, the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi, or, outside India, the Jama Masjid of Damascus (which was a Christian cathedral).

Fourth, the fact that Hindus used to keep on revering sacred sites even after mosques had been built on them, is attested by foreigners like Niccolo Manucci in the 17th and Alexander Cunningham in the 19th century.^[14] By contrast, the hypothesis that Hindus started laying an arbitrary claim on a place firmly occupied by the Muslims (so that they courted repression for no reason at all), is pretty fantastic and without parallel.

5. No Direct Evidence

The VHP bundle also contained a large number of quotes from ancient literature to prove that the Rama cult is not a recent development, and that the status of Ayodhya as a sacred city has been uninterrupted since at least 2000 years. The one thing that is missing is the ultimate clinching evidence: a contemporary description of the forcible replacement of the temple with the mosque. But even in the absence of this item of primary evidence, the amount of secondary evidence is so overwhelming, coherent and uncontradicted, that in another, less contentious historical search, it would be considered conclusive.

It may be recalled that, in the course of the public debate on the opinion pages of the newspapers, the pro-BMAC polemicists had at first demanded non-British evidence, because the whole Janmabhoomi tradition was merely a British concoction. In A. G. Noorani's categorical words "The myth is a 19th century creation by the British."^[15]

Next, the demanded pre-19th century evidence, because Hindus and Muslims had already "interiorized the British propaganda" early in that century, as is clear from a number of writings by local Muslims, brought to light by Prof. Harsh Narain. This, Mirza Jan, a Muslim militant who participated in an attempt to wrest from the Hindus another sacred site in Ayodhya, the Hanumangarhi, wrote in 1856 that "a lofty mosque has been built by *badshah* Babar" on "the original birthplace of Rama", in application of the rule that "where there was a big temple, a big mosque was constructed and where there was a small temple, a small mosque was constructed."^[16] Therefore, Muslim leader Mohammed Abdul Rahim Qureishi has asked the pro-Janmabhoomi side "to produce any historical evidence, not only independent of the British sources but also of the period prior to the advent of the 19th century".^[17]

But this type of evidence was also produced: most publicly the Austrian Jesuit Joseph Tieffenthaler's 1767 account, presented by Mr. Abhas Kumar Chatterjee in *Indian Express*. Tieffenthaler describes how Hindus celebrated *Ram Navami*

(commemorating Rama's birth) just outside the Babri Masjid, and recounts the local traditions that the mosque was built in forcible replacement of Rama's birthplace temple.^[18]

It was also pointed out that the Muslim writer Mirza Jan, already mentioned, had given an extensive quotation from an (otherwise unknown) letter by a daughter of Aurangzeb's son and successor, Bahadur Shah. He quotes her as writing about 1710 that the temples on the sacred sites of Shiva, Krishna and Rama (including "Sita's kitchen", i.e., part of the Ramkot complex) "were all demolished for the strength of Islam, and at all these places mosques have been constructed". She exhorted the Muslims to assert their presence at these mosques and not to give in to Hindu compromise proposals.^[19]

Furthermore, a letter dated 1735 by a Faizabad *qazi* (judge) was shown, describing Hindu-Muslim riots in Ayodhya was shown, describing Hindu-Muslim riots in Ayodhya over "the Masjid built by the emperor of Delhi", i.e., either a pre-Moghul Sultan or Moghul dynasty founder Babar. This is only a secondary indication for the actual temple destruction, but it is first-hand evidence for the existence of the Hindu claim on the Babri Masjid site well before the 19th century. Only when this type of evidence was shown, did the pro-BMAC polemicists move on to demand strictly contemporary evidence.

About this demand for eye-witness accounts, Arun Shourie has remarked: "Today a contemporary account is being demanded in the case of the Babri Masjid, Are those who make this demand prepared to accept this as the criterion – that if a contemporary account exists of the destruction of a temple for constructing a mosque, the case is made?" Shourie goes on to quote from Aurangzeb's court chronicles: "News came to Court that in accordance with the Emperor's command his officers had demolished the temple of Vishvanath at Benares (2/9/1669)...In the month of Ramzan, the religious-minded Emperor ordered the demolition of the temple at Mathura....In a short time by the great exertions of his officers the destruction of this strong center of infidelity was accomplished....A grand mosque was built on its site....January 1670)"^[20]. These accounts are as contemporary as you can get.

Shourie concludes: "If the fact that a contemporary account of the temple at Ayodhya is not available leaves the matter unsettled, does the fact that contemporary accounts are available for the temples at Kashi, Mathura, Pandharpur and a host of other places settle the matter? One has only to ask the question to know that the 'experts' and 'intellectuals' will immediately ask for something else."^[21]

6. The Anti-Temple Evidence

The BMAC presented a pile of some eighty documents which can be divided into three groups: legal documents, statements of opinion, and historical documents.

The largest group consists of court documents, from court disputes over the Rama-Janmabhoomi and other contentious places in Ayodhya, most of them from the British period, a few from after the independence. However, what these court documents prove is:

First, that the Hindus kept on claiming the site in principle, even if for the time being they were willing to settle for a license to worship on a platform just outside the contentious building.

Second, that the Muslim plea always focused, not on questioning the temple destruction tradition, but on the accomplished fact that they owned the place for centuries, long enough to *create* an ownership title no matter how and from whom they had acquired it;

And third, that the British rulers did not want any raking-up of old quarrels, and therefore upheld the status-quo, but without questioning the common belief that the Masjid had replaced a Hindu temple.

British judges have explicitly not subscribed to the thesis, now defended by the BMAC and BMMCC, that there had never been a Hindu temple on the contentious spot. On the contrary, in his verdict in 1886 a British judge observed: "It is unfortunate that a mosque should have been built on land held specially sacred by the Hindus, but as that happened 356 years ago, it is now too late to remedy the grievance."^[22] So, the court verdicts that upheld the Muslim claim to the site (and have been cited by the BMAC scholars to this effect), by no means imply that the judges doubted the contention that a temple had been demolished to make way for this mosque. All the British sources, such as Edward Balfour in 1858 and Archaeological Survey of India's field explorer A. Furher in 1891, confirm the tradition that the Babri Masjid had replaced a Rama temple.

One British source, Francis Buchanan's survey (written in 1810 and edited by Montgomery Martin in 1838), has been quoted by pro-BMAC historians (who have otherwise British testimonies as "prejudiced", "part of a British tactic to foment communalism" etc.) as calling the tradition of the Rama-Janmabhoomi temple destruction "very illfounded".^[23] However, Buchanan did not denounce as ill-founded "the temple-destruction theory", as the BMAC historians claim, but only referred to the fact that "the destruction is very generally attributed by the Hindus to the furious zeal of *Aurangzeb*", which allegation was misdirected: as proof for Aurangzeb's non-involvement Buchanan cites the inscription attributing the mosque to Babar.^[24] As the last large-scale temple destroyer, Aurangzeb had become the proverbial representative of the old Islamic tradition of iconoclasm, which has already destroyed thousands of temples before his own time.

Buchanan opines that Babar had built the mosque not on empty land, but on the site of the Ramkot "castle", which to him may well have been the very castle in which Rama himself had lived. This claim only differs from the local tradition and the VHP position by being even bolder. According to him, the black-stone pillars (with Hindu sculptures defaced by "the bigot" Babar) incorporated in the Masjid had been "taken from the ruins of the palace", and at any rate from "a Hindu building". Obviously, the site was considered by the devotees as Rama's court, originally a castle and only later a temple.^[25]

At any rate, the quarrel over whether the Babri Masjid replaced a "castle" or a "temple" is a false problem, considering Rama's double-role as a God-king. Buchanan gives no facts supporting an alternative origin for the Babri Masjid and

upholds the essence of the local tradition, viz. that the Masjid has replaced a Hindu building.^[26] The British judges have consistently accepted the view of the British surveyors and scholars.

The second largest group of BMAC documents consisted of book excerpts and newspaper articles, mere statements of opinion. They give the well-known or at least predictable opinions of politicians like Jawaharlal Nehru and Ramaswamy Naicker, of secularist journalists like Arvind N. Das and Praful Bidwai, of Marxist intellectuals like the JNU historians and Prof. R. S. Sharma (who was invited to lead the BMAC team only after this first round). In this collection of opinions essentially four points have been argued:

Firstly, Rama was not a historical character;

Secondly, Rama have been a historical character, but Ayodhya is not his real birthplace;

Thirdly, Rama worship in Ayodhya is fairly recent, and hardly existed prior to the period when the Babri Masjid was built;

Fourthly, the Babri Masjid was not built in forcible replacement of a Rama temple.

However, the cited opinions on each of these four points are not even convergent or in mutual agreement. For instance several authors say that the Babri Masjid was built on empty land; others say it replaced a Jaina temple, or a Shaiva temple, or a secular building. About Rama's birthplace, one source cited says that Rama was born in Nepal; another says it was in Afghanistan; yet another says it was in Ayodhya, but on a different spot; one writer says that Rama was in fact a pharaoh of Egypt. In all, the BMAC has given "proof" that Rama was born at 8 different places.

Methodologically speaking, these documents do not form a body of evidence supporting one hypothesis. The BMAC has merely collected all kinds of opinions which happen to be in conflict with the thesis that the Masjid replaced a Rama temple, without minding that these opinions are also in conflict with each other. Of course, this collection of contemporary, often politically motivated articles and statements does not have any proof value. At best, some of the names under the articles could constitute an "argument of authority", but even that is diluted by their juxtaposition with political agitators and plain cranks. More than an argumentation, this presentation of many conflicting opinions is a dispersionary tactic to keep the opposing party busy with refuting the weirdest viewpoints.

An important feature of the collected pro-BMAC opinions is that they have in fact limited themselves to an attempt to discredit the evidence cited in favor of the Rama-Janmabhoomi tradition. They have not given any evidence (valid or otherwise) at all for an alternative scenario that explains the presence of the Babri Masjid and the well-attested Hindu opposition against it. They have tried to explain away the Janmabhoomi tradition by means of a campaign by the British rulers, out to "divide and rule".^[27] In fact, such a rumor campaign is totally unheard of in the well-documented history of British India, and would have left testimonies which the pro-BMAC historians have not been able to produce.^[28] It is an ad hoc hypothesis based on nothing but the fond belief that India's "communal problem" is a British creation and not the necessary result of any religious doctrine of hostility towards alternative forms of worship.^[29]

The only seemingly valid point scored by some of the BMAC sympathizers cited in the BMAC evidence bundle is the *argumentum e silentio* that the temple destruction is not mentioned in near-contemporary sources, notably Abul Fazl's *Ain-I-Akbari* and the poems of Tulsidas. However, neither Abul Fazl nor Tulsidas have written catalogues of demolished temples or even just devoted some pointed attention to the buildings of the cities mentioned in their works: they are simply not the sources that are supposed to carry the required information. Also, they are not really contemporary with Babar, but with his grandson Akbar (around 1600 A.D.).^[30] For them too, the temple destruction was history, and the Babri Masjid just one of the thousands of mosques built on demolished Hindu temples.

The third part of the evidence bundle for the Babri Masjid side, is the historical evidence properly speaking. It consists of *three* pieces.

One is the text of the inscriptions on the Babri Masjid and its gate, declaring that the mosque was built in 1528 by Mir Baqi, who worked under Babar's command. Of course the Hindu side has no quarrel with that: the Babri Masjid was built, so it must have been built by someone. However, in spite of the inscription, the identity of the Masjid's builder happens to be disputable. It has been argued (by Sushil Srivastava and R. Nath independently)^[31] that, judging from the architecture, the mosque must have been built during the preceding Sultanate period. Sushil Srivastava even claims that the inscription attributing the Masjid to Babar (or at least to his lieutenant Mir Baqi), is a 19th century forgery.^[32] At any rate, the scenario that it was built under Babar is not in conflict with the thesis that it was built in forcible replacement of a Rama temple. This dispute is not about who built the mosque, but about what preceded it.

The second piece is Babar's memoirs. In it, no mention is made of a temple demolition in Ayodhya. Unfortunately, the pages for the months when he must have been in Ayodhya and perhaps also ordered the demolition of a Hindu temple, are missing from the manuscripts. So we simply do not have Babar's own report on this matter. And if Sushil Srivastava and R. Nath are right, Babar was not the builder and his testimony is irrelevant, except insofar as it might explain why the already existing mosque got attributed to him. For instance, the Afghan rulers (against whom the invader Babar fought) or the city's inhabitants may have defended Ayodhya from the Ramkot hill, so that the existing mosque got damaged in the fighting (Babar was the first one in India to use cannon), and was subsequently rebuilt by Babar's men. But all this will remain speculation, because the relevant part of Babar's report is missing.

The third piece of BMAC evidence is Babar's testament, in which he advises his son Humayun to practice tolerance, to respect Hindu temples, and not to kill cows. This statement of religious tolerance is very nice, but unfortunately it has amply been proven to be a forgery.^[33] It is quite bizarre that scholars trying to prove a point discredit their own case by using a proven forgery without any comment.

And even if Babar's testament had been genuine, it would only prove that at the end of his life, Babar had got tired of the jihad which he had been waging (on top of an inter-Muslim war), or that he had come to realize that a prosperous kingdom would be better served by religious amity than by the intolerance of which he himself had given sufficient proof during his life. Babar's emphatical concern for tolerance would certainly not prove that tolerance had been his way all through his life.

There are Hindu temple materials attributed to Babar in Sambhal (replacing a Vishnu temple, and dated by archaeologists to the Sultanate period, just like the Ayodhya “Babri” Masjid) and Pilakhana. Local tradition affirms that the Babri Masjids in Palam, Somipat, Rohtak, and Sirsa have replaced Brahmanical or Jain temples. The contemporary *Tarikh-i-Babari* describes how Babar’s troops “demolished many Hindu temples at Chanderi” when they occupied it. Some tough Jihad rhetoric has been preserved from Babar’s war against the Rajputs, such as the quatrain:

“For Islam’s sake, I wandered in the wild,
prepared for war with unbelievers and Hindus,
resolved myself to meet a martyr’s death.
Thanks be to Allah! A *ghazi* I became.”^[34]

It is quite plain that Babar, even when he had to fight fellow Muslims (the Afghan Lodi dynasty), never lost sight of his duty of waging war against the infidels.

So, these three documents do not prove that the Babri Masjid was built on something else than a Rama temple. The two other groups of documents are not even an attempt to give documentary or archaeological evidence, merely a collection of sympathizing statements of opinion. What is worse, the whole collection makes one wonder whether the BMAC experts had read it at all: not only are many of the documents unconvincing or beside the point, but some even support the VHP case.

Thus, a court ruling of 1951 cites testimony of local Muslims that the mosque had not been used since 1936, which means that in 1949 the Hindus took over an unused building – hardly worth the current Babri Masjid movement with its cries of “Islam in danger!” (or its newer version “Secularism in danger!”) and its hundreds of riot victims. On 3 March 1951, the Civil Judge of Faizabad observed: “It further appears from a number of affidavits of certain Muslim residents of Ayodhya that at least from 1936 onwards the Muslims have neither used the site as a mosque nor offered prayers there....Nothing has been pointed to discredit these affidavits.”^[35] Of course, even a nudge may be misinformed on occasion; but at least, this is the official view, enunciated by a Court of Law constituted under India’s democratic legal system. In particular, those who have been lecturing the Hindu movement on “abiding by the Constitution” and “respecting Court verdicts” ought to show some respect for this Court verdict.

Another court document shows that the ongoing court dispute (which is the only legal obstacle to the replacement of the present structure with a proper temple) was filed well past the legal time-limit. In any case, while the BMAC wants to rule out the British Gazetteers as evidence (because they confirm that the Babri Masjid had replaced a temple), it cites court documents which reproduce excerpts from the Gazetteers as evidence and declare in so many words that Gazetteers are admissible as evidence. A number of court rulings record that Hindus relentlessly kept on claiming the site, “most sacred” to them, and made do with as near a site as possible under prevalent equations: this refutes the BMAC claim that the Rama-Janmabhoomi tradition is a recent invention for political purposes, whether colonial “divide and rule” or Hindu “communalism”.

The leading political analyst Arun Shourie has commented: “On reading the papers the BMAC had filed as ‘evidence’, I could only conclude, therefore, that either its leaders had not read the papers themselves, or that they had no case and had just tried to over-awe or confuse the government etc. by dumping a huge miscellaneous heap.”^[36] When asked in public forums about the results of the scholars’ debate, both Prof. Irfan Habib (historian at Aligarh Muslim University) and Subodh Kant Sahay (who was the Home Minister at the time of the debate) have declared that “the VHP has run away from the debate”. Leading newspapers have refused to publish denials of this allegation. In fact, this unfounded allegation provides an interesting illustration of the psychology of lies. Liars are often not very creative, and they tend to say things that are partly inspired on truth. Thus, Prof. Habib and Mr. Sahay are perfectly right in alleging that the debate has ended because one of the parties has “run away from the debate”: to that extent, their version is transparent of the truth. Only it is not the VHP, but the BMAC which has turned its back on the debate.

7. The Anti-Temple Debating Tactics

Meanwhile, the actual course of the debate both in the official forum and in the media could have suggested some conclusions even to non-historians (like the Supreme Court judges who refused to pronounce an opinion on it in 1994). The debate has not genuinely altered the old consensus, but it has been an interesting case-study in manipulation by unscrupled academics. That, at least seems to be a fair description of learned publications advertising themselves as “objective” studies of the controversy, but systematically concealing the arguments put forth by one of the parties.

The VHP has published its argumentation including a detailed refutation of the Babri Masjid Action Committee’s arguments, and like-minded scholars have published detailed presentations of specific types of evidence (e.g., Prof. Harsh Narain and Prof. R. Nath; note how the VHP, lacking a think-tank of its own, was dependent on the help of people with no prior connection to it). By contrast, the BMAC, which had the support of the Indian Council of Historical Research led by Aligarh historian Prof. Irfan Habib and of a team of scholars led by Prof. R. S. Sharma, has not felt sufficiently satisfied with its own performance in the official debate to publish its argumentation. Its numerous supporters have chosen not to refer to the debate at all and to keep the argumentation of their serious opponents out of view.

Instead, these top academics have chosen the poorest Hindutva pamphletists as their opponents and made some fun of cranky but irrelevant claims which go around in the semi-literate fringe of the Hindu movement. One point they like to highlight is the spurious claim that on 22 December 1949, the idols “miraculously appeared” in the disputed building. I do not know of anyone who would affirm that except tongue in cheek, but given that placing the idols could be construed as a criminal offence, it has nonetheless been affirmed – as an obvious ad hoc fable for purposes of self-exculpation. But note that this miracle story has long gone out of fashion: in an interview in the *New York Times*, “Abbot Ram Chander Das Parahamhams of an Ayodhya *akhara* declared openly that he was one who had put the image inside the mosque.”^[37]

Another fairly common tactic was to lump the temple argumentation with the fringe school led by P. N. Oak, which holds that every Indo-Muslim building (e.g., the Taj

Mahal)^[38] was in fact a Hindu temple, not demolished but only transformed. However, this school happened to have aligned itself with the eminent historians against the VHP. Oak himself explained that the Babri Masjid itself was built by Hindus as a temple, that “Babar had nothing to do with the Babri Masjid”, and that neither the Moghul nor any Muslim ruler had demolished a Hindu temple at the site.^[39] Oak’s version of history is of a kind with the contrived scenarios thought up by the eminent historians.

Another spokesman of this school, Heevan Kulkarni from Bombay, claimed that the Babri Masjid was a Hindu temple built by Hindus before the Muslim conquest. He even approached the Supreme Court to obtain permission to prove his point by means of thermo-luminescence and other advanced archaeological techniques, as well as an injunction to solve the dispute by preserving the building (as Muslims demand, in the “mistaken” belief that the building was built as a mosque) but allotting it to the Hindus to serve as the “restored” Rama temple which it was meant to be when it was built. Again, this school was wrongly identified with the HP position.

A similar tactic was to associate the Ayodhya evidence with the eccentric theory of the non-historian Bal Gangadhar Tilak, later adapted by the non-historian Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar in his young days, that the Aryans came from the Arctic (Tilak’s attempt to harmonize the Aryan invasion theory with traditional Vedic chronology) or that Indian itself had been in the Arctic zone then (Golwalkar’s attempt to harmonize Tilak with Aryan indigenesness).^[40] These ideas are simply unrelated to the more recent history of Hindu-Muslim conflict, and are only brought into the discussion in order to strengthen the contrast between Hindu amateurishness and secularist professionalism: “After R. C. Majumdar, the communal interpretation has been relegated to the world of school-level textbooks, made-easies, popular magazines, newspapers and comic strips”, - meaning that the positions of prestige by India’s secularists who imposed denial of Hindu-Muslim conflict as the orthodox explanation.^[41] This is an argument not of authority but of status.^[42]

This way, India’s topmost academics and journalists have avoided confronting the real evidence and have concentrated on attacking straw men instead. It is clearly an application of Mao Zedong’s dictum: “Attach where the enemy is weak, retreat where the enemy is strong.” That may be a legitimate principle in warfare, but in scholarship the goal is not to score points but to establish the truth.

PART II

^[1] Koenraad Elst: “The Ayodhya Debate”, in Gilbert Pollet, ed.: *Indian Epic Values. Ramayana and its Impact*, Peeters, Leuven 1995. As is all too common with conference proceedings, this book was assembled only three years after the conference, so the published version of my paper was finalized only in 1994.

^[2] In the 1961 Faizabad Gazetteer, Mrs. E. B. Joshi, while not yet denying the traditional account relayed in the earlier Gazetteers, suppresses it without giving any reason for doing so, probably on orders of the Government of India under Jawaharlal

Nehru. But neutral scholarly publications like the 1989 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (entry *Ayodhya*) confirm the temple destruction scenario.

[3] One of the first scholarly publications on the dispute was my *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid, a Case Study in Hindu-Muslim Conflict* (Voice of India, Delhi, July 1990), partly a reply to the statement *The Political Abuse of History: Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy*, by Bipin Chandra and 24 other historians of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. A large part of my book has been included in Vinay Chandra Mishra and Parmamand Singh, eds.: *Ram Janmabhoomi Babri Masjid, Historical Documents, Legal Opinions & Judgments*, Bar Council of India Trust, Delhi 1991.

[4] The VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad, "World Hindu Council") was founded by Guru Golwalkar, chief of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS, "National Volunteer Corps") as an instrument for the spread of Hindu culture and religion. It takes its guidelines from an assembly of traditional religious leaders.

[5] Prof. B. B. Lal has formulated this conclusion on different occasions including articles in *Puratattva* no. 16, 1987, and in *Manthan*, October 1990. In a letter to the *Times of India*, published on 1-3-1991, he concludes that "what is known as Ayodhya today was indeed the Ayodhya of the Valmiki *Ramayana*".

[6] Prof. Kamal Salibi of Beirut has proposed the theory that all the Biblical sites including Abraham's Hebron and king David's Jerusalem, were situated in the Hijaz area of Western Arabia (in his 1985 book *The Bible Came from Arabia: A Radical Reinterpretation of Old Testament Geography*). The double political motivation is obvious: undermining Israel's historical legitimacy and giving a foundation to Islam's claim to an Abrahamic heritage including the *Ka'aba*. Established Bible scholars have dismissed this theory as wishful thinking.

[7] The Ayodhya dispute and the Rushdie affair are indeed connected. The ban on *The Satanic Verses* was a part of a package of concessions by the Rajiv Gandhi Government to calm down Syed Shahabuddin, who had threatened a Muslim "march to Ayodhya" on the same day when the VHP would hold a rally there.

[8] Quoted for rebuttal from Shahabuddin's own monthly *Muslim India* by Harsh Narain in his article *Ram Janmabhoomi: Muslim Testimony* published in the *Lucknow Pioneer* (5-2-90) and in *Indian Express* (26-2-90), and included in S. R. Goel: *Hindu Temples*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed., Voice of India, Delhi 1998. In the ensuing debate between Prof. Narain, Mr. A. K. Chatterjee and Syed Shahabuddin, the latter has never denied nor cancelled his offer.

[9] Prof. R. S. Sharma: *Communal History and Rama's Ayodhya*, People's Publishing House, Delhi 1990.

[10] R. S. Sharma et al.: *Ramajanmabhumi Baburi Masjid, A Historians' Report to the Nation*, People's Publishing House, Delhi 1991, p. 4

[11] The VHP evidence bundle, its rebuttal of the BMAC argumentation, a press brief, and some articles generally supporting the VHP viewpoint, have been published as *History versus Casuistry, Evidence of the Ramajanmabhoomi Mandir presented by the Vishva Hindu Parishad to the Government of India in December-January 1990-91*, Voice of India, Delhi 1991. Most of it was also included in Sita Ram Goel: *Hindu Temples. Vol. 1*. at least in its second edition, Voice of India, Delhi 1998. The BMAC evidence bundle has not been published.

[12] Will Durant: *Story of Civilization*, Vol. 1, New York 1972, p. 459

[13] This incorporation of Hindu temple materials in mosques is cynically held up as a showpiece of "composite culture" and a "living evidence of secularism" by the friends of Islam such as Congress MP Manu Shankar Aiyar, cited to this effect by Swapan Dasgupta, *Sunday*, 10-5-1992.

[14] A testimony to the same effect is also given by the Portuguese historian Gaspar Correa, who describes the site of the Kapalishwara temple on Mylapore beach (Madras), even after the temple had been forcibly replaced with a Catholic church, vide Ishwar Sharan: *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, Voice of India, p. 18-19 (1st ed., 1991) or p. 93-94 (2nd ed., 1995).

[15] A. G. Noorani: "The Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi Question" (originally published in *Economic and Political Weekly*), in A. A. Engineer ed.: *Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy*, Ajanta, Delhi 1990, p. 66.

[16] Mirza Jan: *Hadiqa-I Shahada* ("The Garden of Martyrdom"), Lucknow 1856, included in the VHP evidence bundle: *History versus Casuistry*, Voice of India, Delhi 1991, p. 14

[17] *Indian Express*, 13-3-1990.

[18] A. K. Chatterjee: "Ram Janmabhoomi: some more evidence", *Indian Express*, 27-3-1990. It is included, with the whole ensuing polemical exchange with Syed Shahabuddin, as appendix 4 in *History versus Casuistry*.

[19] The title of the princess's text is given as *Sahifa-I Chahal Nasaih Bahadur Shahi* (Persian: "Letter of the Forty Advices of Bahadur Shah". It is included in the VHP evidence bundle: *History versus Casuistry*, p. 13-14

[20] Percival Spear has the effrontery to declare: "Aurangzeb's supposed intolerance is little more than a hostile legend" (*Penguin History of India*, vol. 2, p. 56). The contemporary records show Aurangzeb as a pious man who faithfully practiced his religion and *therefore* persecuted the unbelievers and destroyed their temples by the thousands. About the denial of Islamic crimes against humanity, vide Sita Ram Goel: *Story of Islamic Imperialism in India*, Voice of India, Delhi, 1984.

[21] A. Shourie: "Take over from the experts", syndicated column, included in *History versus Casuistry* as appendix 1, and in A. Shourie: *Indian Controversies*, ASA, Delhi 1992, p. 411-418

[22] Quoted by the VHP-mandated experts in their rejoinder to the BMAC: *History versus Casuistry*, p. 61

[23] This text does not figure in the original BMAC evidence bundle, but its words "very ill-founded" are quoted by Prof. Irfan Habib in a speech to the Aligarh Historians Group (12/2/1992, published in *Muslim India*, 5/1991). The paragraph containing these words (but not the entire relevant passage) is quoted by R. S. Sharma, M. Athar Ali, D. N. Jha and Suraj Bhan, the historians for the BMAC, in their joint publication: *Ramjanmabhumi Baburi Masjid, A Historians' Report to the Nation*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, May 1991, p. 20-21).

[24] Cited in Harsh Narain: *The Ayodhya Temple/Mosque Dispute*, Penman, Delhi 1993, p. 8, emphasis added. Father Joseph Tieffenthaler records that the temple destruction was being attributed to Aurangzeb by some, to Babar by others, but this minor confusion never affected the consensus that the mosque had forcibly replaced a Hindu temple.

[25] In 1608, William Finch (quoted in the VHP evidence bundle: *History versus Casuistry*, p. 19) had witnessed the "ruins of Ramkot", i.e., of the Hindu temple which kept alive the tradition that that very site had once been Rama's castle. The entire hill was called Ramkot, "Rama's castle", and the temple complex was certainly larger than the Babri Masjid, so that Finch may well have seen some leftovers standing there beside the mosque.

[26] Francis Buchanan's report has been put into perspective by Mr. A. K. Chatterjee, in an article intended as an episode of his Ayodhya debate with Syed Shahabuddin on the opinion page of the *Indian Express*, sent on 14-8-1990 but not published; but included in *History versus Casuistry*, appendix 4.

[27] For instance, Syed Shahabuddin blames “propaganda by the British” (*Indian Express*, 12-5-1990), and according to Md. Abdul Rahim Qureishi, secretary of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, “The Britishers....planted false stories and succeeded in misleading the masses to believe that Babri Masjid stood in the premises of a Rama temple which was demolished by Babar” (*Indian Express*, 13-3-1990).

[28] For a rebuttal of the British conspiracy hypothesis, vide K. Elst: “Party-line history-writing”, *The Pioneer* (Lucknow edition), 19/20-12-1990, reproduced in *History versus Casuistry*, app. 6.

[29] It should be borne in mind that the Qur’an contains dozens of injunctions to wage war against the unbelievers, e.g.” ‘Make war on them until idolatry is no more and Allah’s religion reigns supreme” (2:193 and 8:39); “Those who follow Mohammed are merciless to the unbelievers but kind to one another” (48:29); “Enmity and hate shall reign between us until ye believe in Allah alone” (60:4), etc. The same attitude is found in the jihad chapters of the Hadis collections and the Islamic law codices. In Indian history, these verses and the precedent set by the Prophet have been systematically invoked to justify persecutions and temple demolitions.

[30] A. G. Noorani (A. A. Engineer ed.: *Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy*, p. 65) claims that Tulsidas “was over thirty in 1528 when the mosque was built. He lived and wrote his great work [the *Ramacharitmanas*] in Ayodhya.” In fact, he wrote it in Varanasi, on what is now called Tulsi Ghat, and he died in 1623, which means that he was born *after* 1528.

[31] Sushil Srivastava: *The Disputed Mosque*, Vistaar Publ., Delhi 1991, ch. 5; R. Nath: *The Baburi Masjid of Ayodhya*, Historical Research Documentation Programme, Jaipur 1991. The latter has clearly stated that this revision of who built the Masjid, in no way invalidates the claim that it had replaced a Hindu temple: “I have been to the site and had had the occasion to study the mosque, privately, and I have absolutely no doubt the mosque stands on the site of a Hindu temple on the north-western corner of the temple-fortress Ramkot.” (letter in *Indian Express*, 2-1-91).

[32] Srivastava (in A. A. Engineer ed: *Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi Controversy*, p. 36) quotes Shamsur Rehman Farooqui, a scholar of Persian, who considers the inscription written in a younger style of calligraphy common in the 19th century, and by someone not well-versed in Persian. The latter observation may as well be explained by the fact that Babar’s Turkish scribes had only recently learned Persian; whereas most literature Muslims in 19th century India were very well-versed in Persian.

[33] Sri Ram Sharma: *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (1940), p. 24-25. The same position has been taken by Mrs. Beveridge, the translator of Babar’s memoirs, and other historians. Several hypotheses of who forged this “testament” and why are explored in J. N. Tiwari and V. S. Pathak (BHU): “Rama Janmabhumi Bhavana. The Testimony of the Ayodhya Mahatmya”, in Lallanji Gopal, ed.: *Ayodhya, History, Archaeology and Tradition*, papers presented in the Seminar held on 13-15 February 1992, All-India Kashiraj Trust, Varanasi 1994, p. 282-296

[34] Quoted in Mrs. A. S. Beveridge: *Babur Nama*, Delhi 1970 reprint, p. 574-575. *Ghazi* has the same meaning as *mujahid*, though it is often used in the more precise sense of “one who has effectively killed infidels with his own hands”.

[35] Prof. B. P. Sinha claims to know how this disuse of the Masjid came about: “As early as 1936-37, a bill was introduced in the legislative council of U. P. to transfer the site to the Hindus (...) the bill was withdrawn on an unwritten understanding that

no *namaz* [be] performed.” (in annexure 29 to the VHP evidence bundle, unpublished)

^[36] A. Shourie: “Take over from the experts”, syndicated column, 27-1-91, included in *History versus Casuistry* as appendix 1. Shourie was sacked as Indian Express editor, apparently under government pressure, after revealing that, in October 1990, Prime Minister V. P. Singh had aborted his own compromise arrangement on Ayodhya under pressure from Imam Bukhari, a prominent member of the BMAC.

^[37] Cited in Peter Van der Veer: *Religious Nationalism*, p. 157, with reference to *New York Times*, 22-12-1991

^[38] Though the Taj Mahal was obviously never a Hindu temple, the story of its construction may be a bit more complicated than simply one of an original Indo-Saracen construction on virgin land, vide Marvin H. Mills (Professor of Architecture, Pratt Institute, New York): “An architect looks at the Taj legend”, a review of Wayne Edison Begley & Ziyauddin Ahmad Desai: *Taj Mahal, the Illumined Tomb*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1989.

^[39] Padmini Kumar: “Another twist to the issue!”, *Maharashtra Herald*, 9-12-1990, based on an interview with P. N. Oak

^[40] B. G. Tilak: *Arctic Home in the Vedas*, 1903, and M. S. Golwalkar: *We, Our Nationhood Defined*, 1939

^[41] Aditya and Mrdula Mukherjee: “No challenge from communalists”, *Sunday Observer*, 15-3-1992

^[42] It may be noted that the no-temple school is not necessarily less communalist, for it imposes explanations by religious conflict where no such conflicts existed, e.g., in his president’s address before the Panjab History Conference held at Patiala in March 1999, “*Against communalizing history*”, D. N. Jha communalizes history by repeating the myth of Saint Thomas’ “martyrdom” at the hands of Hindus as a “well known” fact.

Part II