

# Was There a Temple under the Babri Masjid? Reading the Archaeological 'Evidence'

SUPRIYA VARMA, JAYA MENON

As witnesses to a major part of the excavations carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India at the Ram janmabhoomi-Babri masjid site in Ayodhya in 2003, the authors detail the many irregularities and outdated methods they observed. They also refer to the objections they filed regarding some of the procedures followed by the ASI, as well as the objections to its Final Report on the excavations. In several ways, it was obvious that the ASI was operating with a preconceived notion of discovering the remains of a temple beneath the demolished mosque, even selectively altering the evidence to suit its hypothesis. The authors stress that there is little doubt that the kind of archaeology practised by the statist ASI, where archaeologists see themselves primarily as bureaucrats, suffers from a serious absence of academic engagement and training.

What began primarily as a title suit in the Ram janmabhoomi-Babri masjid case in 1961, with Muslim organisations arguing that their entitlement was the only valid one as the Babri masjid had stood there since 1528, became amplified in 1989. In that year, one of the issues that were framed was whether the Babri masjid had been constructed after demolishing a Hindu temple. It was because of this issue that the disciplines of history and archaeology were brought within the ambit of the legal case.

Our paper will focus on the way that archaeology has been perceived and used to resolve this dispute. There is a common perception that archaeology is an “exact science” and that all that we need to know about the past can be ascertained by simply digging. However, what may be recovered in an excavation are partial remains of walls or floors, artefacts, ceramics, bones, seeds and so forth. It is on the basis of what (artefacts, ceramics or organic materials) are found within walls and on or under floors that archaeologists make inferences about past buildings, activities or events. The fragmented nature of the archaeological material recovered often means that the data by itself is not self-explanatory. Therefore, during excavation itself, care has to be taken to recover and record every bit of data, including the nature of deposits being excavated. It is, thus, of utmost importance that a rigorous analysis of the complete set of data be undertaken. Yet, we often find that archaeologists work with preconceived notions and make their interpretations on the basis of select categories of artefacts.

Given the unfamiliarity of the Muslim parties to the case with the discipline of archaeology, their requirement was that professional archaeologists observe the excavations. Moreover, there was apprehension among them that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which was deputed the task of excavation, was a government body reporting directly to the Ministry of Culture, which was then under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the centre. There were very few archaeologists who were willing to be associated in a seemingly adversarial position with the ASI. When the excavations began, as archaeologists, we were curious to find out for ourselves, from first-hand observation, what lay beneath the Babri masjid. It so happened that we were at that time approached by the counsels of the Sunni Central Board of Waqfs. We were thus directly involved in the case when the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court ordered excavations at the site in Ayodhya in 2003 and we were present for extended periods<sup>1</sup> during the excavations between March and August 2003.

Supriya Varma (*varma.supriya@gmail.com*) is at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Jaya Menon (*jayamenon2000@gmail.com*) is at the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University.

In this essay, what we propose to discuss is the way archaeological “evidence” has been used in the 30 September 2010 judgment of the Allahabad High Court’s special full bench.<sup>2</sup> For this, it is necessary to go into the history of the archaeology of the site in Ayodhya. We also detail the observations made while we were present during the excavations and the objections we filed regarding various procedures followed by the ASI, as well as the objections to the Final Report on the excavations (subsequently AYD report) submitted to the court by the ASI, and how the judgment dealt with our objections. We also need to understand the interpretations made by the ASI in its report, keeping in mind its earlier involvement in this issue under director general B B Lal in the 1970s. Finally, what needs to be emphasised is that the kind of archaeology practised by the ASI is beset with several constraints, primarily because it is a bureaucratic organisation.

### A History of the Dispute in Ayodhya

The dispute over the land where the Babri masjid stood dates back to 1857 when the mahant (or chief priest) of Hanumangarhi, a centre of Vaishnav Bairagis, took over the eastern part of the masjid courtyard, building the Ram Chabutra (a platform on the spot said to be Ram’s birthplace) on the south-eastern side. In the same year, a petition was submitted to the magistrate by Maulvi Muhammad Asghar, the muezzin of the Babri masjid, complaining of a forcible takeover of the courtyard. The British government built a wall in 1859, separating the place of worship for Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus then entered from the east gate and the Muslims from the north. Similar petitions were filed by the Muslims in 1860, 1877, 1883 and 1884 but each of them was rejected. Finally, in 1885, Mahant Raghubar Das filed a suit to gain legal title to the land and for permission to construct a temple on the Chabutra. What was significant about this suit was that (a) Mahant Raghubar Das claimed to be the mahant of the janmasthan (birthplace) Ayodhya; (b) the janmasthan was claimed to be the chabutra; and (c) no claim was made that any temple had actually stood where the mosque did. The suit as well as appeals was dismissed in 1886.

Between 1870 and 1923, several official publications, such as gazetteers, began to record that at least three temples in Ayodhya had been destroyed and mosques constructed on their sites, and among these was the Babri masjid. This official view was endorsed by placing a stone marker which read “No 1 Rama Janmabhoomi” at the main entrance of the mosque. In mid-December 1949, a nine-day recitation of the *Ramcharitmanas* by Tulsidas was organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Ramayana Mahasabha and at the end of it, on the night of 22-23 December, idols of Rama and Sita were placed inside the Babri masjid. On 29 December 1949, the Babri masjid was declared a disputed property. An order was passed by which Muslims were forbidden from even entering the masjid. Locks were put on the main gate. On the other hand, Hindus gained permission for a *darshan* (devotional glimpse) of the idols from a side gate. Four pujaris (priests) were employed and they had free access to the idols.

On 16 January 1950, a civil suit was filed by Gopal Singh Visharad (a member of the Hindu Mahasabha) asking for worship

without obstruction and a perpetual injunction against the removal of the idols. In 1959, the Nirmohi Akhara filed a suit claiming that the entire mosque be handed over to it as it was not a mosque but a temple. On 18 December 1961, the Sunni Central Board of Waqfs filed a suit claiming that the Babri masjid be handed over to it. On 7-8 April 1984, at a session in Delhi, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) called for the removal of the mosques in Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi, but said it would first take up the case of Ayodhya (for more details, see Panikkar 1991). In 1986, the locks on the Babri masjid were opened, and, in 1987, the suits were withdrawn from Faizabad and transferred to the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court. The suit filed by Visharad came to be known as Suit 1. Another suit (Suit 2), filed by Paramhans Ramchandra Dass, was subsequently withdrawn. Suit 3 was the one filed by the Nirmohi Akhara and that filed by the Sunni Central Board of Waqfs was Suit 4. In 1989, Suit 5 was filed in the name of Rama Lalla Virajman by Deoki Nandan Agrawal, a retired Allahabad High Court judge and vice-president of the VHP. This suit was filed by him as Rama Lalla’s *sakha* (“next friend”, a representative in law). After his death, T P Verma became the *sakha*. When he fell ill, Triloki Nath Pandey, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) *pracharak* (activist), now residing in Karsewakpuram, became the *sakha*. The senior counsel for Suit 5 was Ravi Shankar Prasad of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

### Archaeology of Ayodhya: The Historical Background

Soon after taking over as the first director general (DG) of the ASI, Alexander Cunningham surveyed Ayodhya in 1862-63. His primary interest was to identify historical places mentioned in the Buddhist pilgrim records of Xuanzang and Faxien, which he also did in the case of what he called Ajudhya. He noted three mounds as places of great antiquity (Mani Parbat, Kuber Parbat and Sugriva Parbat) and identified them respectively as two stupas (domed Buddhist structures), the first of Ashoka, the second supposedly containing the hair and nails of the Buddha; and the third as a monastery. He also recorded oral traditions and places associated with the *Ramayana* story, among which are mentioned the Janam Asthana or birthplace temple of Ram. What is noteworthy is that Cunningham (1871: 321) wrote, “There are no high mounds of ruins covered with broken statues and sculptured pillars such as mark the sites of other ancient cities, but only a low irregular mass of rubbish heaps, from which all the bricks have been excavated for the houses of the neighbouring city of Faizabad.” He referred to several brahmanical temples but mentioned that they were all of modern construction, perhaps built on the sites of older temples destroyed by Muslims. What is remarkable is that although he referred to the existence of a Janam Asthana temple, it had no connection to the Babri masjid; he made no mention at all of the latter. In other words, while he recorded several traditions associated with Ram, nowhere did he refer to the Babri masjid as standing on the spot of a destroyed temple.

More than a century later, a team from Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi, including A K Narain, T N Roy and P Singh, carried out excavations in Ayodhya with the specific aim of

understanding the occupational history of the site (IAR 1969-70: 40-41). Three trial cuttings were made on Jain Ghat, Lakshman Tekri and Nal Tila, respectively. Three cultural periods, two of which were continuous, and the third following after a desertion, were noted. However, no chronological details or cultural materials were mentioned except for the earliest period which had northern black polished ware (NBPW) and associated grey and red wares as well as other artefacts. They also explored Kuber Tila, first mentioned by Cunningham, and exposed a massive brick structure, about which they have provided no information.

In 1972, after having resigned from the post of director general of the ASI and joined Jiwaji University, Gwalior, Lal conceived a national project called "The archaeology of the Ramayana sites" that was inaugurated in 1975 in Ayodhya by Union Minister of State for Education and Culture S Nurul Hasan. After a short while, Lal shifted to the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, and the project was resumed in 1977. The project was co-sponsored by the institute and the ASI, with the latter providing staff and finances. The project ended in 1986. Apart from Ayodhya, he excavated in Sringerapur, Bharadvaja Ashram, Nandigram and Chitrakoot (Lal 2002: 42). Till today, no report, except for one on a tank in Sringerapur, has been published even though 24 years have gone by since the project ended. Regarding the excavations in Ayodhya, the only information we have is from IAR 1976-77 and 1979-80. Unlike the excavations by the BHU team, Lal focused on the Ram janmabhoomi mound and the open area to the west of Hanumangarhi, along with a few trenches at Sita-ki-Rasoi. He found evidence for occupation from the seventh century BC to the AD third century. He also found that the Gupta period (AD fourth to early sixth century) was not well represented at the site and that after the early historic period (sixth century BC to AD sixth century) "there is a break in occupation, with considerable debris and pit formations before the site was again occupied around the 11th century AD. Several later medieval brick-and-kankar lime floors have been met with, but the entire late period was devoid of any special interest" (IAR 1976-77: 53). The report in the IAR for 1979-80 does not make any special mention of the medieval deposits in Ayodhya (76-77).

In October 1990, Lal wrote an article for the RSS magazine *Manthan*. In this, he published a photograph from the excavations that he conducted in Ayodhya between 1975 and 1980. In this photograph, there were several brickbat heaps, which he claimed were the pillar bases of a temple that had been destroyed by Babar. These pillar bases were claimed to be important archaeological evidence of the existence of a temple. It is, therefore, surprising that this information was not published in an archaeological journal but in a magazine affiliated to a political organisation.<sup>3</sup> In a paper read at the World Archaeological Inter-Congress from 3 to 7 May 1998 in Croatia (Lal 1998), he mentioned that on 10 February 1991, while delivering a lecture at Vijayawada, he had said the only way to establish a relationship between the pillar bases excavated by him and the stone pillars that formed part of the Babri masjid, and also to ascertain whether any temple lay beneath the Babri masjid, was to dig under the mosque. His statement was carried by *The Hindustan*

*Times* on 11 February 1991. When his statement was critiqued, he issued a rejoinder in *The Statesman* on 13 February 1991. In his rejoinder, he reiterated the need to carry out excavations. The implications and the consequences of a former director general of the ASI calling for such excavations cannot be ignored. His task was completed by the institution that he once served, the ASI, under the directions of the court. In a way, the final interpretations that would be reached by the ASI in its excavations were more than obvious.

### Excavations in Ayodhya: 2003

The most recent archaeological investigations in Ayodhya began with a high court order, on 1 August 2002, to the ASI calling for excavations at the site. But till objections from the parties were heard, a ground penetrating survey (GPR) of the site where the Babri masjid had once stood was to be done. The GPR survey was outsourced by the ASI to Tojo-Vikas International, which conducted it from 30 December 2002 to 17 January 2003 and submitted its report to the director general of the ASI. Its report concluded that "the GPR survey reflects in general a variety of anomalies<sup>4</sup> ranging from 0.5 to 5.5 m in depth that could be associated with ancient and contemporaneous structures such as pillars, foundation walls, slab flooring, extending over a large portion of the site. However, the exact nature of those anomalies has to be confirmed by systematic ground truthing, such as provided by archeological trenching" (Robillard et al 2003: 31). For a GPR report to conclude that there would be walls and floors underneath was stating the obvious as any 10-metre high mound is bound to have such structures under it. Again, it is not the normal practice for GPR surveys to label the structures that lie under the ground. What would have been more appropriate was to have just mentioned that there were anomalies at varying depths.

Third, the GPR report mentions pillars underneath but no pillars were found in the excavations. Two pillars were found in the debris of the Babri masjid (Manjhi and Mani 2003: 140, 148). When the Babri masjid was demolished on 6 December 1992 by *kar sevaks*, the debris of the mosque was gathered together and piled up, on top of which the makeshift shrine came up with the deity of Rama Lalla. For at least three days, there was a complete breakdown of law and order; nobody really knows how the shrine came up and what transpired on the spot after the demolition. It must be reiterated that the material lying on the surface cannot be considered as valid archaeological evidence as it could have been brought from anywhere at that time. Fourth, even a layperson looking at the geophysical interpretation map in Annexure A of the GPR report can find no alignments reflecting the supposed pillar bases recovered by the ASI. Fifth, in trying to confirm the anomalies noted by the GPR survey, the ASI recorded that "out of 184 anomalies, 39 of them were confirmed at the specified depth and location where they were shown and 74 were not found in spite of digging up to the required depth" (Manjhi and Mani 2003: 19). Because the ASI felt that some of the higher-level structures were too important to dig up to proceed further down, it was not able to verify another 27 anomalies. However, on checking the veracity of its claim for ourselves, we found that actually only 21 anomalies were confirmed at the depth (within

20 centimetres) and location mentioned. Of these, 10 anomalies were identified as flooring or paving, five as “pillar bases”, two as architectural features, three as structures, and one as a wall. The remaining that were said to be confirmed were in the same location but were actually at considerably different depths<sup>5</sup> than those pointed out by the GPR report.

After the survey had ascertained the presence of walls, pillars and slab flooring under the ground, the high court passed an order on 5 March 2003 directing the ASI to carry out excavations to confirm “the exact nature of anomalies/objects” as was pointed out by the GPR survey (Manjhi and Mani 2003: 8) and to ascertain “whether the building has been constructed on the site of an alleged Hindu temple after demolishing the same”.<sup>6</sup> The ASI began with a general survey of the site and layout of trenches on 12 March 2003, which continued until 7 August 2003. It followed the Wheeler method of excavating in a grid, leaving 1-metre baulks of unexcavated soil between trenches with cutting edges of 4 × 4 m.<sup>7</sup> Digging was done using manual labourers, and each trench was under a trench supervisor, who was expected to maintain daily records on that trench. However, each trench may have been supervised by more than one person in the sense that supervisors were often shifted around. Thus, one finds that the “site note books”<sup>8</sup> often have information on more than one trench as the supervisors probably used them for several trenches. The information maintained in the site note books was the starting and closing depths, layer numbers, the features and the artefacts found in the trench at the end of each day. There is no documentation of the actual process of recovery of individual features, as is now the norm with the use of context forms in excavations, where the various stages of recovery after each dig are described. Apart from the site note books, a daily register was maintained with information on the trenches dug on a single day, the starting and closing depths, and artefacts, bones and glazed ware found.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the working day, all the “antiquities” (an outdated term still used by the ASI for artefacts recovered from excavations), bones and glazed material were brought before the parties concerned who signed in the daily register. An antiquity register was also maintained, which had details of artefacts (trench and layer numbers, depths, dimensions and descriptions). These artefacts were given registration numbers in this register. A total of 90 trenches were excavated, which was practically the entire area.

The report of the excavations was submitted in two volumes (Volume I as the Text and Volume II as the Plates) to the court in August 2003. As in the conventional style, the report included an introduction, and chapters on the cuttings, stratigraphy and chronology, pottery, architectural fragments, terracotta figurines, inscriptions, seals, sealings, coins, and miscellaneous objects as well as a summary of the results. However, unlike other ASI reports, what is surprising is that while all the chapters have either a single author or multiple authors, the summary of the results has no author. Moreover, there are no chapters on either the animal bones recovered during the excavations or the human skeletal remains found in graves (Manjhi and Mani 2003: Plate 58). The latter were probably the remnants of a Muslim

graveyard that was located to the north and south of the Babri masjid.

### Structural Evidence under the Babri Masjid

The summary of results in the AYD report has this statement in its concluding paragraph,

Now, viewing in totality and taking into account the archaeological evidence of a massive structure just below the disputed structure and evidence of continuity in structural phases from the tenth century onwards up to the construction of the disputed structure along with the yield of stone and decorated bricks as well as mutilated sculpture of divine couple and carved architectural members including foliage patterns, *āmlaka*, *kapotapali* doorjamb with semicircular pilaster, broken octagonal shaft of schist pillar, lotus motif, circular shrine having *pranāla* (water chute) in the north, 50 pillar bases in association of the huge structure are indicative of remains which are distinctive features found associated with the temples of north India (Manjhi and Mani 2003: 272).

Thus, essentially, the archaeological evidence that has been put forward in support of there being a temple under the Babri masjid<sup>10</sup> comprises two categories – (1) architectural fragments, and (2) a “massive structure” of which only the western wall (1.77 m wide) has been found with 50 “pillar bases”.

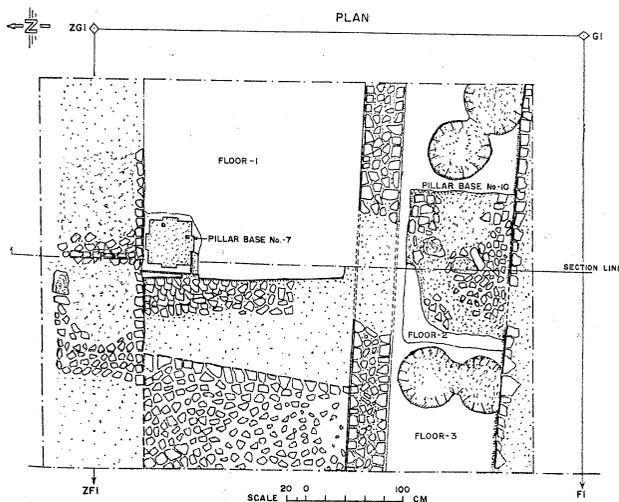
In the chapter on architectural fragments, 445 have been listed, of which only 40 came from stratified contexts and none of these was specific to a temple. As for the 12 that have been specifically mentioned in the report, all 12 came from the debris lying on the surface of the mound, not from the excavation under the Babri masjid. As mentioned earlier, the debris does not constitute valid archaeological evidence because it was not from a sealed deposit. In this excavation, therefore, what has been found under the floor of the Babri masjid is the evidence that should actually be considered, not what was lying above the floor, which could have been introduced from anywhere. The 12 pieces comprised a stone slab with a *srivatsa* design (symbol of an endless knot), which is associated with Jainism; a stone slab with a lotus design, which could be a symbol in Buddhist or even Jain representations; a stone slab with a lozenge design, which could have belonged to the Babri masjid itself as it matches the lower portion of the Arabic inscription that was there on the mosque; the octagonal shaft of a pillar and a pillar; an *amalaka* (ornamental feature on the top a tapering tower); a broken door jamb with a semicircular pilaster; two stencil-cut designs with lotus and foliage; two carved stones with lotus and floral designs; and a sculpture showing the waist of two human figurines, which has been described as a “divine couple”.

An entry for 6 July 2003 on page 7 of site note book No 36 says, “A noteworthy findings (sic). A badly damaged/mutilated sculpture part of a human figure? (has also come to light at a depth of 1.2 m). Right leg clearly visible (damaged). The figure is in sitting position.” The daily register (I) on page 276 lists the object as “sculpture (broken) sandstone”. The antiquity register describes the object as “sculpture fragment (defaced)” under object, and as “broken, couple” under remarks. The AYD report in its table on page 130 describes the object as “a highly mutilated divine couple seated in *alinganamudra*. The extant portion depicts the waist, thigh and foot.” The object was studied for the antiquity register

on 17 July 2003 (according to the register that maintained the dates on which each bag of artefacts was opened), after which the bag in which it and another object had been sealed and it was mentioned that the bag would be resealed after being opened later for photography. The bag was reopened for photography on 22 July 2003 with the accompanying note “two objects opened for photography. Sealed after photography.” Hence, it is obvious that the object was studied at the time of its recovery (6 July 2003) and when it was documented in the antiquity register (17 July 2003) and was eventually photographed on the 22 July 2003. No other study was apparently done. It then needs to be considered how the object was described so differently in the AYD report. The description in the AYD report does not accord with the words of the archaeologist who recovered it or with those who studied the object at the time of its documentation. Who, then, further studied the object and attributed divinity to it? Moreover, the Plates accompanying the AYD report (Manjhi and Mani 2003: Plate 235) has the object initially named as Uma-Maheshwar, which was then whitened out and changed to “divine couple”. This change is visible if one holds the back of the page against the light. Was this rectified because an Uma-Maheshwar figure would have been highly inconvenient if found in a Vaishnav shrine?

The temple theory largely rests on the “pillar bases” that were supposedly recovered by the ASI in the 2003 excavations. As mentioned earlier, it was Lal who had first talked about the importance of the “pillar bases” as evidence for a pillared temple under the Babri masjid in his article published in *Manthan*. Pillar bases are supposed to be foundations on which stone pillars stood. In turn, the roof would have been supported by these pillars. So, pillar bases are required to be load-bearing and stable in nature. It appears that the ASI in its excavations just followed Lal’s line of

**Figure 1: Plan of ‘Pillar Bases’ 7 and 10** (after Manjhi and Mani 2003: Fig 8)



thinking and created 50 “pillar bases” as further evidence for the temple. It was necessary for the ASI to find pillar bases because, without them, the theory of a temple would fall apart.

As far as these “pillar bases” are concerned, they are largely irregular in shape, comprising brickbats (which are often tilted and not in courses, as reported by the ASI) and mud, are dissimilar

to each other and have a distance between them ranging from 1.98 m to 5.00 m. These irregular shaped “pillar bases” of brickbats have been considered by the ASI to be identical to 10 pillar bases that we consider genuine, which were recovered in the north. The pillar bases in the north had a sandstone slab at the base encased by four sandstone orthostats, providing a square cavity within which the pillar would have fitted. However, there is absolutely no similarity between the northern pillar bases and those that are claimed to have been found in the rest of the excavated area. In Figure 1, pillar base No 7 is an example of the northern pillar bases while “pillar base” No 10 is one of the 40 that has been traced out in the rest of the area. The black stone pillars that were in the Babri masjid were considered by Lal and the ASI to have been the original pillars of the temple, which, according to them, was under the mosque. If that was the case, then these pillars should have fitted into the only bases that were recovered intact in the excavations, that is, in the north. However, these pillars have dimensions that do not fit the pillar bases recovered in the north. The inner dimensions of the northern pillar bases range from 48.5 × 43 cm, 50 × 50 cm, 47 × 46 cm, 48 × 56 cm, 49.5 × 49 cm and 51 × 51 cm, while the dimensions of the black stone pillars are 21 × 21 cm to 24 × 24 cm. So, the pillars that would have stood on the northern pillar bases were not the black stone pillars. We will later discuss these northern pillar bases and their possible interpretation.

We have pointed out that the pillar bases in the north were very different from those recovered in the rest of the excavation. We also feel that barring the 10 in the north, the rest claimed to be “pillar bases” by the ASI are actually no such things. Our interpretation, based on our observations while the excavations were being conducted, is that these heaps of brickbats are nothing but parts of the base on which floors were laid. Under the Babri masjid’s floor (Floor 1) lay three lime-*surkhi* (paste of brick dust and adhesive to protect from damp) floors that were excavated by the ASI. Between Floor 1 and Floor 2 there was a gap of about 40 cm, between Floor 2 and Floor 3, 20 cm, and between Floor 3 and Floor 4, about 40 cm. Under each of these lime-*surkhi* floors lay brickbats and mud interspersed with stone blocks. In other words, it was a combination of brickbats, mud and stones that served as a base for the floor. As we shall explain below, it was through a selective removal of brickbats from the base of the floor that “pillar bases” were created.

As mentioned earlier, we were present intermittently during the excavations for extended periods from 5 April to 26 July 2003. At times, there was only one of us, at other times, both of us were present. During this period, we noticed several problems in the excavation procedures and filed a total of 14 complaints, starting from 21 May 2003 to 26 July 2003. These complaints were signed and filed by the plaintiffs of Suit 4 as we had been told by the counsels that we could not file them in our names. The complaints covered several issues such as inaccuracies in recording depth measurements; selective collection of artefacts; discarding of bones, glazed pottery and glazed tiles; differential recording of material from the same deposits (moulded bricks, sculpted fragments and terracotta figurines were contextually recorded while bones and glazed ware and tiles were reported as coming from a

fill or dump or pit); discarding of bones from a human skeleton; and problems of stratigraphy (a single structure with alternate courses of calcrete and brickbats was reported with each course as a separate layer and artefacts recovered were also recorded as coming from separate layers, thereby confusing the chronology). However, the major complaints focused on the creation of “pillar bases” that were observed first-hand on several occasions in different trenches. What we found was that while the lime-*surkhi* floors were being excavated and dug through, layers of brickbats, mud and stone blocks were found. On finding the stone blocks, the ASI archaeologists left them in place along with the brickbats around them, sometimes on top, sometimes below. The rest of the brickbats lying in the trench under the whole floor were cleared away. Through this exercise, they created “pillar bases” at intervals ranging from 1.98 m to 5.00 m. We made detailed observations through the day of particular trenches where these “pillar bases” were being created. Complaints along with detailed drawings of the observations were submitted in the case of trenches ZF1, G5, F3, F2/G2 baulk and for two in trench G2.

A study of sections in several trenches also revealed the selective removal of brickbats to create “pillar bases”. In archaeology, whenever sections are made during an excavation, protruding artefacts or bricks, stone and brickbats are never scraped level with the section but allowed to protrude. This provides a correct picture of the section and its cultural material.<sup>11</sup> Some of these complaints were addressed but not really answered by the ASI during the excavation when all it was able to say was that correct procedures were being followed. Some of these claims have been dismissed in the judgment but we shall see how. One of the points raised is that we were not signing the daily register. However, we deliberately did not sign the register (and it was not compulsory for us to do so) as we had serious objections to the ASI’s recording procedures and creation of “pillar bases”. Signing would have meant accepting the ASI’s findings. Second, references are made to the site note books, but this is of little significance when, as we have seen above, the note books mention only the end result and not the process of recovery of features. Third, in connection with a complaint regarding the pulling out of brickbats from the east-facing section of F9, it is noted that no complaint was made for two months even though nine people had signed the daily register, implying that the proceedings had been under close scrutiny. However, none of the nine people present were archaeologists. Moreover, this particular complaint was made later on the basis of the examination of the sections rather than on observation of the digging in F9. Much is also made of the presence of two members of the higher judicial service as “observers” suggesting transparency in the excavation proceedings. However, neither of the two observers was an expert in archaeology and, in any case, rarely moved out from the enclosure within which they sat during the day in the southern part of the excavated area. It is also clear that all the objections regarding the creation of “pillar bases” have been conflated without going into the specificities of each case.

We reproduce here the complaint regarding the creation of a “pillar base” in F3, which makes it clear that there was already a

preconceived idea in the minds of ASI archaeologists of creating such bases and declaring them in the progress report even before fully exposing them in excavation. This is the text of the complaint.

**Complaint filed on 26 July 2003 on the creation of a “pillar base” in Trench F3**

The Progress Report (22.05.03 to 05.06.03) mentions a circular “pillar base” of brickbats below an “L” shaped wall in Trench F3. Excavation work was stopped in this trench around the 6th of June 2003 and thereafter filled up with sandbags.

This trench was reopened nearly a month later and excavation work began on July 8th 2003. Till that date the trench had been excavated to a depth of 3.08 m from the dump surface or 0.95 m below the top floor. However, the excavated area had not been cleaned yet and there was loose soil in the trench, rendering the features in the trench as indistinct. What was clearly visible was an “L” shaped wall in the south-east corner of the excavated area and a sandstone slab abutting diagonally from the section in the north-west corner. A few brickbats were also visible immediately below and to the west of the slab (see Fig 1 showing the trench before cleaning).

In the afternoon of July 8th 2003 the excavated area was cleared of the loose soil and prepared for photography. By 5 pm that day all the features were clearly discernible and this would have been the situation on 6th June 2003 when the trench was last excavated. Floor 2, damaged in parts, was visible as a circular patch in the south-east area and brickbats lay in the remaining area (see Fig 2). Moreover, there was no circular “pillar base” of brickbats below the “L” shaped wall. It therefore remains an enigma as to how such a “pillar base” was reported in the Progress Report of 22.05.03 to 05.06.03. It is, hence, likely that the sandstone slab and brickbats in the north-west area were thought to be a “pillar base” and that the relationship with the “L” shaped wall was in depth rather than in locus.

By 11.55 am on 9th July 2003, brickbats lying in the southern half of the excavated area had been removed (see Fig 3) and in the next ten minutes brickbats in the north-east area too were removed. Further digging revealed more of Floor 2 and where the floor was damaged, brickbats underneath it were exposed (see Fig 4). In the afternoon Floor 2 (of lime *surkhi*) was cut and brickbats underneath it were now visible in the entire area that had been dug (see Fig 5). Once again brickbats (barring those in the north-west corner) were removed at 4.30 pm (see Fig 6).

On 10th July 2003, Floor 3, which was exposed in the morning (see Fig 7), was cut in the afternoon. With the partial removal of brickbats (that lay underneath successive floors), a visual impression of a “pillar base” had finally been created (see Fig 8). However, the “pillar base” that had been created is not circular as reported in the Progress Report (22.05.03 to 05.06.03) but squarish. Much more disturbing, however, is the fact that even before the “pillar base” had actually been carved out, the ASI had already declared the existence of one in their Progress Report. This clearly reveals the preconceived notions with which the ASI is carrying out these excavations. It also shows that the ASI has decided beforehand as to where these “pillar bases” have to be carved out and the haste with which a combination of stone and brickbats is judged to be a “pillar base”.

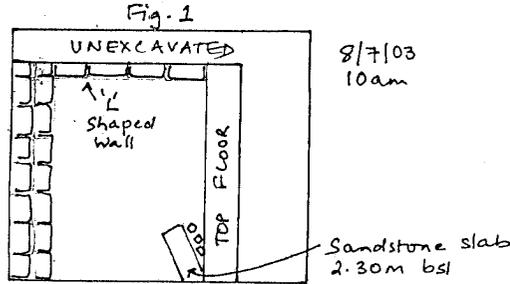
Subsequent diggings on 11th July 2003 revealed a layer of brick and stone nodules under Floor 3. Thereafter, a layer of rammed earth was reached. Beneath the layer of rammed earth lay brickbats and brick nodules in scattered patches (see Fig 9). On 12th July 2003 at a depth of 3.90 m from the dump surface (or 1.77 m below the top floor) was once again exposed brickbats over the entire excavated area (see Fig 10) that went down to twenty-one courses till the 19th of July 2003.

Thus, the excavation carried out in F3 has made it evident that there is a preconceived plan of carving out pillar bases and this biased method of excavation violates the fundamental principles of archaeology.

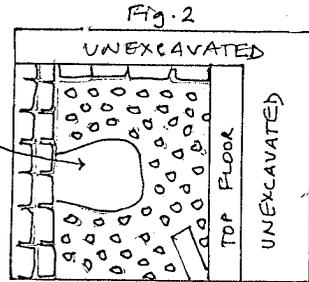
It is immediately requested that the structure in F3 be not labelled as a “pillar base” and be immediately dismantled.

In the case of F3, the first author was accused of not being present when the “pillar base” was created. However, as can be

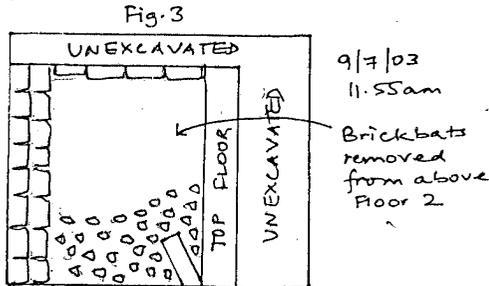
Figure 2: Illustrations Attached with Complaint on Creation of 'Pillar Base' in Trench F3



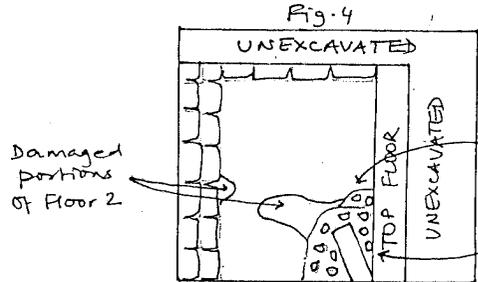
8/7/03  
10am



8/7/03  
5pm



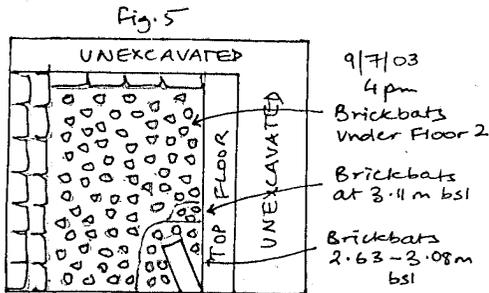
9/7/03  
11.55am



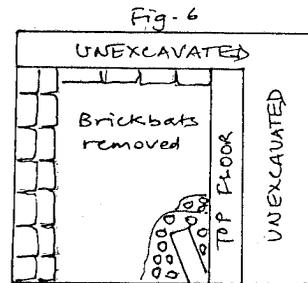
9/7/03  
12.05pm

Brickbats  
at 3.11m  
bsl

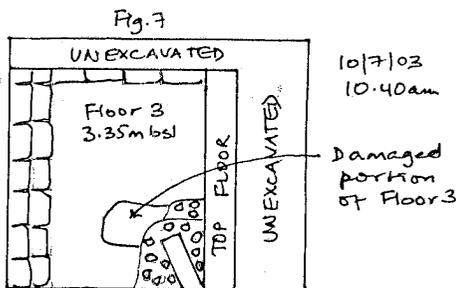
Brickbats  
2.63-  
3.08m bsl



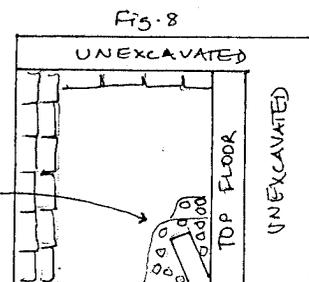
9/7/03  
4pm



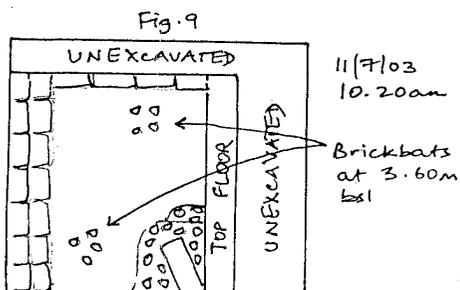
9/7/03  
4.30m



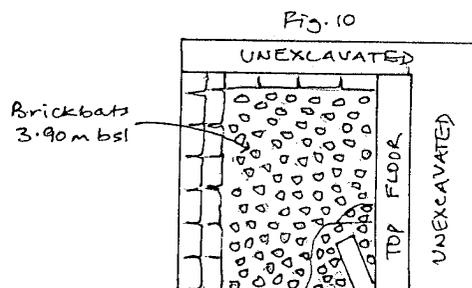
10/7/03  
10.40am



10/7/03  
2.45pm



11/7/03  
10.20am

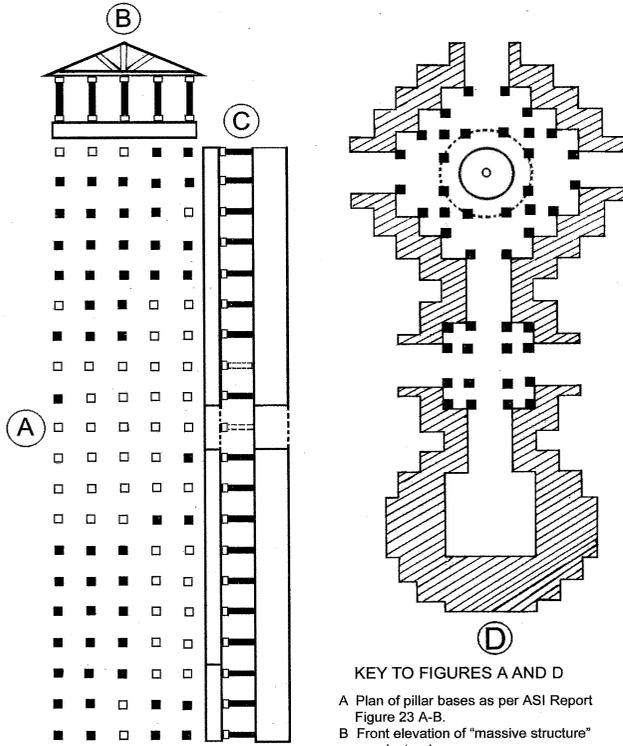


12/7/03  
5.15pm



All measurements from dump surface. Drawings not to scale.

Figure 3: Plans of 'Massive Structure' as Per AYD Report and a Typical North Indian Temple (after Mate 2009: 118)



KEY TO FIGURES A AND D  
 A Plan of pillar bases as per ASI Report Figure 23 A-B.  
 B Front elevation of "massive structure" -conjectural.  
 C Side elevation of "massive structure" -conjectural.  
 D Plan of a typical north-Indian (nagar) temple. It has 16 pillars & 28 pilasters. No north-Indian temple would consist of a hundred pillars as made out in Figs. A,B,C here and Figs. 23,23-A, 23-B of the ASI Report.

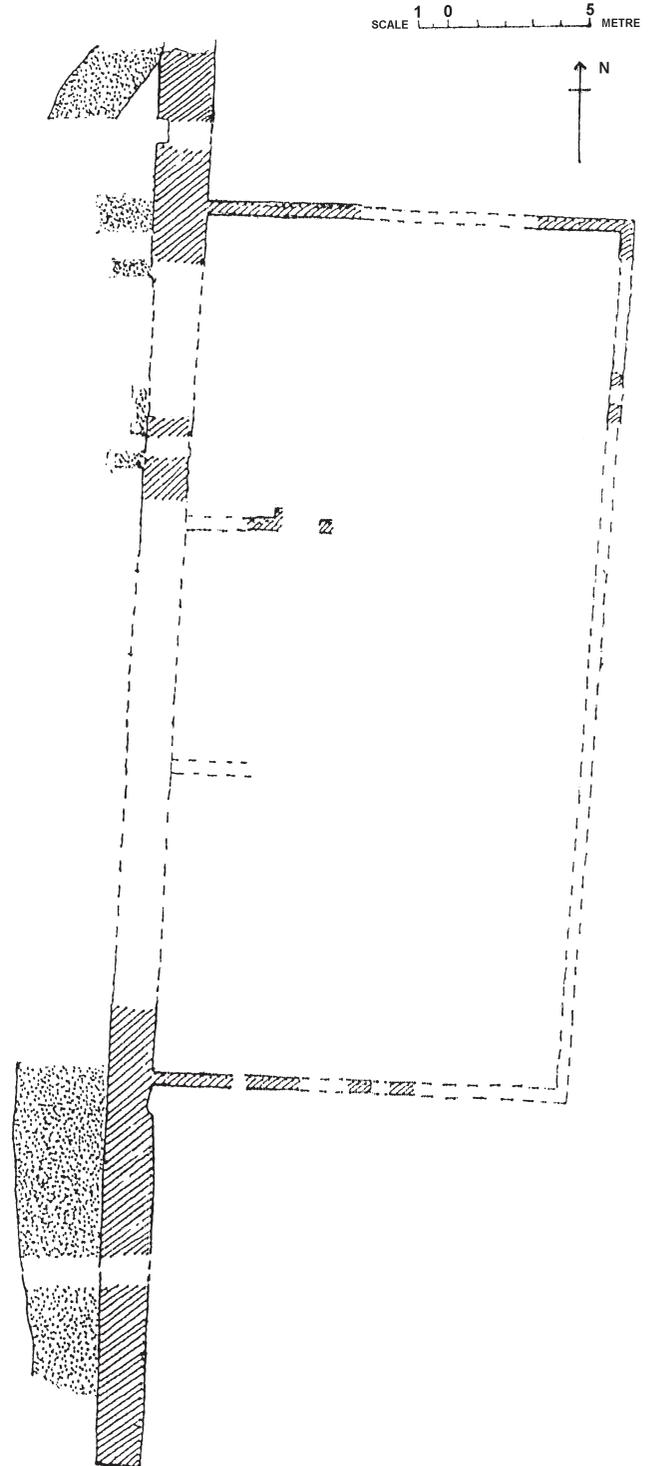
seen from the observations, this "pillar base" was actually created from 8 July to 12 July 2003 when she was present. What is also clear is that as soon as a stone block was found and even before the "pillar base" was fully exposed, it was declared a "pillar base" in the progress report (from 22 May 2003 to 5 June 2003) submitted by the ASI as well as in the site note book on 5 June 2003. As early as April 2003, we had been witness to the creation of "pillar bases" and complained that the ASI was working with a preconceived notion. Instead of answering this, our own arguments have been used against us and we have been accused of preparing a kind of anticipatory ground to criticise the ASI. It may be pointed out that one of the reasons why we were present, in our capacity as archaeologists, during the excavations was precisely to see that proper procedures were being followed.

Several other points regarding the "pillar bases" have been quoted in the judgment from the affidavit of the second author which included the following – several discrepancies between the number of "pillar bases" in the text of the report and Appendix iv; that they were not in alignment; walls were cut to make "pillar bases" as in F6; Floor 2, which was supposedly the floor to which the "pillar bases" were attached, actually seals several "bases"; that the creation of "pillar bases" was observed; and that the only real pillar bases in Ayodhya were the ones in the northern part of the excavated area. It should be noted that not a single one of these points has been answered. What is interesting is that the creation of "pillar bases" in G2 and F6 has been accepted in the judgment.

Similar complaints regarding the creation of "pillar bases" in ZF1, G5, F3, and another one in G2 and in the F2/G2 baulk were, however, oddly not accepted. We must also note that we actually never made an eyewitness complaint regarding the "pillar base" in trench F6.

If we discount the "pillar bases", then all that we actually have is the western wall, 1.77 m wide, with three lime-surkhi floors attached to it. It is curious that the ASI should have jumped to the conclusion of a temple when the hypothetical plan that it has

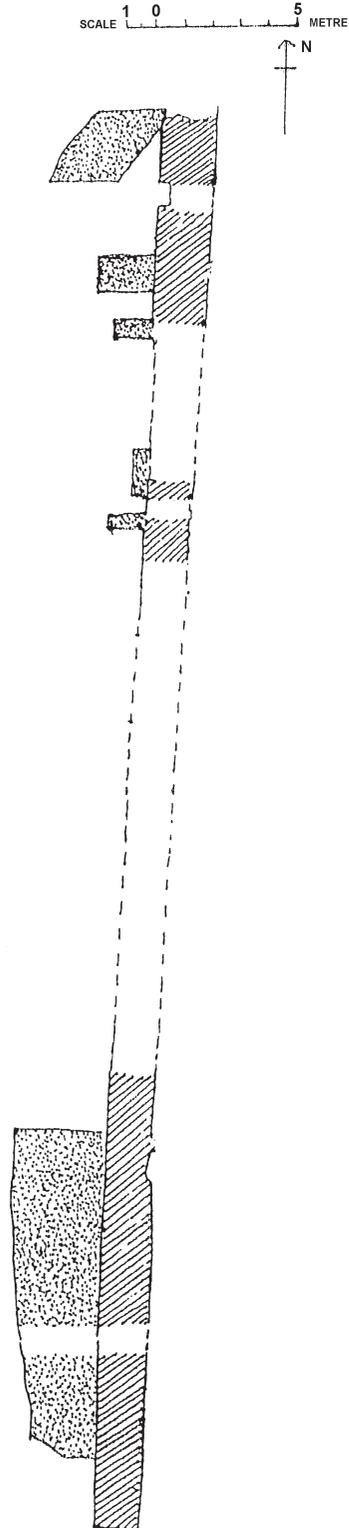
Figure 4: Plan of a Small Mosque in Phase 1 (after Manjhi and Mani 2003: Fig 3A)



come up with does not conform to any temple in north India. In the case of a north Indian temple, a plinth or a raised platform would be required and the walls would not be continuous but broken by offsets, providing a cruciform plan to the temple form (Krishna Deva 1995). Moreover, the temple would have *mandapas* (pillared porches for public rituals) in front of the *garbagriha*

(inner sanctuary) and any *mandapa* at the side of the latter would be very small and insignificant in nature. In this case, if the central area now under the makeshift structure was the *garbagriha*, as has been pointed out by the ASI, the rest of the temple should have mainly projected towards the east and not to such an extent to the north and south (see Figure 3, p 68). That the plan

**Figure 5: Plan of a Mosque in Phase 2**  
(after Manjhi and Mani 2003: Fig 3A)



**Figure 6: Plan of a Mosque with a Small Pillared Structure in the North in Phase 3**  
(after Manjhi and Mani 2003: Fig 3A)

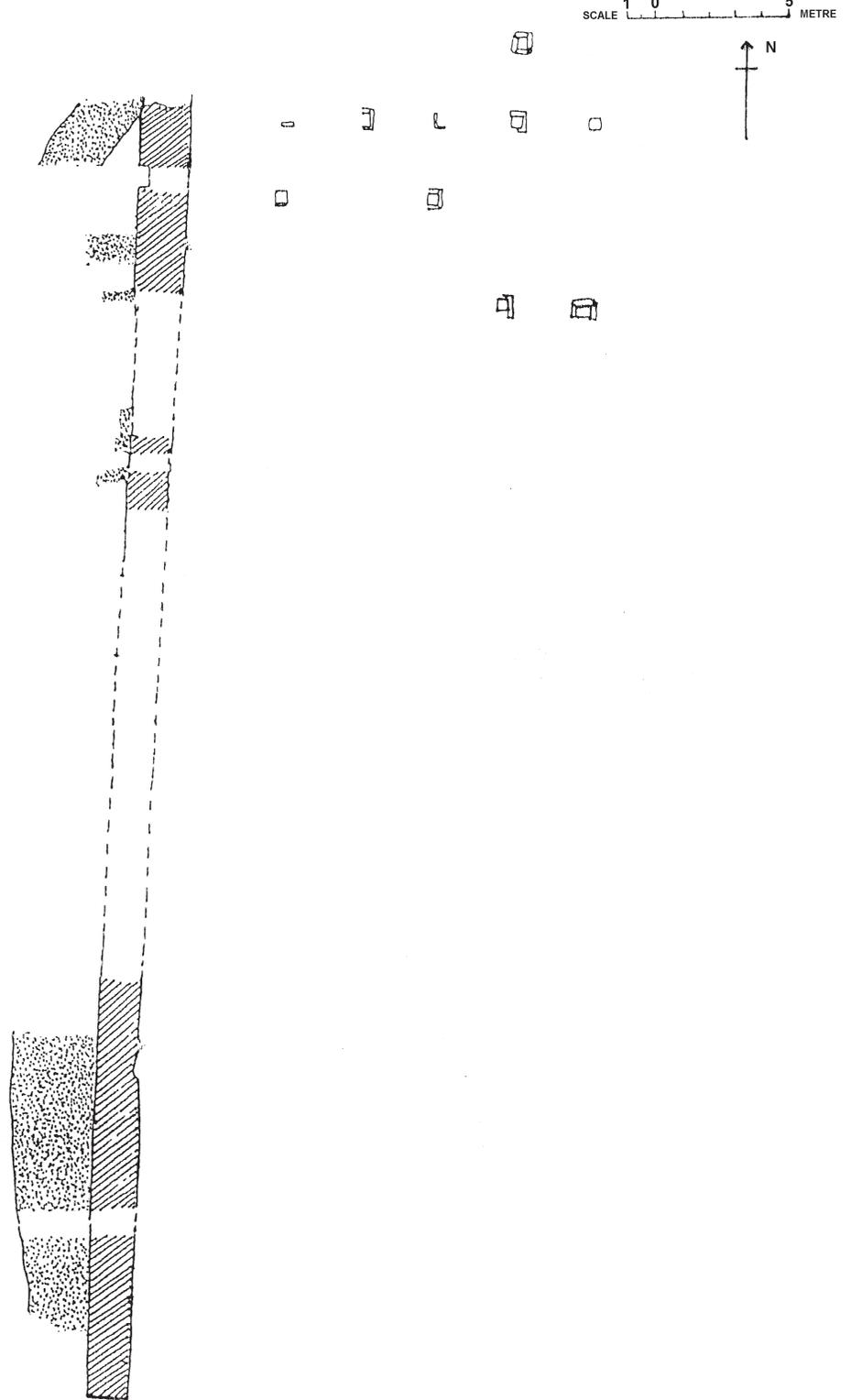
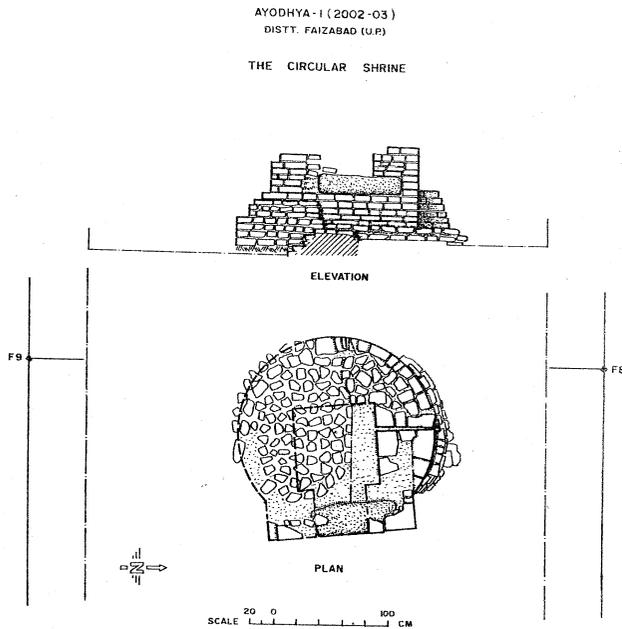


Figure 7: Plan and Elevation of the 'Circular Structure' (after Manjhi and Mani 2003: Fig 17)



of the structure unearthed by the ASI does not conform to a temple plan was also pointed out by M S Mate, retired professor of art, architecture and medieval archaeology at the Deccan College in Pune (Mate 2009: 117-19). He excavated the important medieval site of Daulatabad in Maharashtra and has written several books on medieval archaeology. Deccan College has, until now, been the premier institute for archaeology in India.

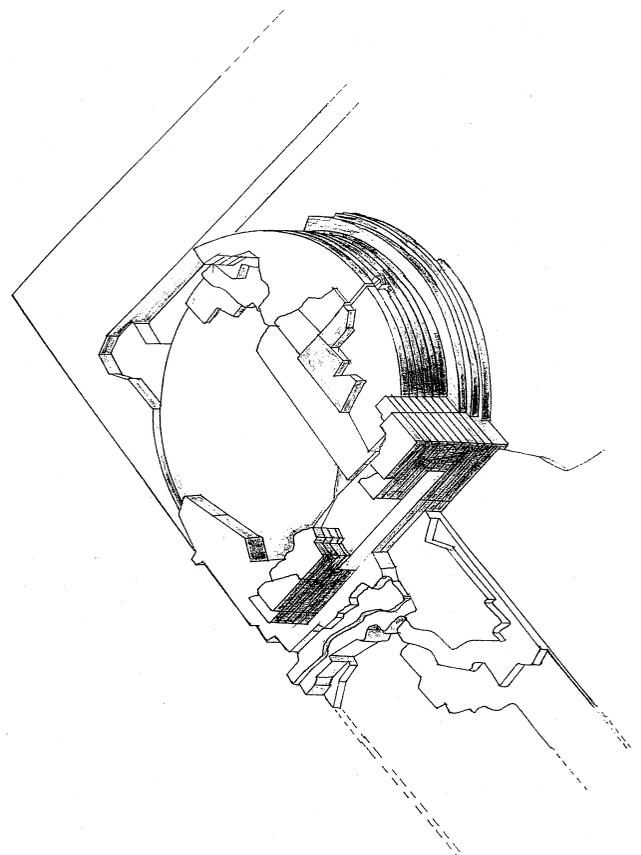
Further, the structure as seen in the plan (Figure 3) indicates the pre-eminence of the western wall, which is actually a feature of a mosque. Moreover, the western wall has a slight tilt towards the east, which is a feature of the western wall of a mosque in India because of the direction of Mecca, towards which it is meant to face. Given the archaeological data, it seems more plausible that there was another mosque with several phases of construction, rather than a temple, under the Babri masjid. At the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century, a mosque was built in Phase 1 with a well-polished lime-surkhi floor (Floor 4). There was a low enclosure wall (0.40-0.50 m wide) demarcating the area from trenches E6 to ZE1 and extending east to the H series of trenches (that is, 28 m north-south and 16 m east-west). Within this enclosure was probably a small central covered area, of which the northern part of the western wall with a niche can be seen in trench F2. This wall was narrower (0.35-0.40 m thick) (see Figure 4, p 68). Probably this was a flimsy structure as can be seen by the narrow walls with no foundations. When this collapsed, the entire area was filled in with brickbats, stone slabs, calcrete blocks, brick nodules and mud to raise the level to construct the next lime-surkhi floor in Phase 2, extending north and south to the edges of the mound and east to the J series of trenches. This Floor 3 would have extended about 60 m north-south and 20 m east-west (see Figure 5, p 69). When this floor was degraded, another floor was raised in Phase 3, which extended further east to the L series of trenches; that is, it had a width of about 30 m (Floor 2) (see Figure 6, p 69). It is in the last phase that a pillared structure was possibly built in the northern

area, of which the northern pillar bases are the only remnants. The latter two floors were of poor quality and had different extents.

The point is frequently raised that the Muslim parties made the case that the Babri masjid was built on barren land and that there was no structure under it. It is also pointed out that a new claim cannot be made or new evidence brought to show that there was an Islamic religious structure underneath. In contrast, it is maintained that because the Hindus had always insisted that there was a temple under the Babri masjid, when a structure was recovered in excavation, it necessarily had to be a temple. However, what we need to understand is that there may not be any historical or oral evidence of an earlier Islamic structure; yet, archaeological evidence may reveal otherwise. It is so ingrained a perception at the popular level as well as among a number of archaeologists and historians in India that the role of archaeology is only to find proof for what is written in the texts or prevails as oral traditions. And so, even when the evidence is to the contrary, the alternative explanation finds little or no acceptability.

We may also mention another structure here, the presence of which has been highlighted by the ASI to suggest that the area was used for Hindu religious activities since AD 10th century, which is the "circular shrine" (see Figures 7 and 8). This structure is built completely of brick, with an outer diameter of 1.66 m. On the eastern side there was a rectangular projection of about 32.5 cm. The ASI has suggested this was an entrance to the structure but this is too small as it measures less than 45 cm. It has been suggested that the structure is squarish on the inside

Figure 8: Isometric North-East View of the 'Circular Shrine' (after Manjhi and Mani 2003: Fig 24)



(Manjhi and Mani 2003: 70) but as per the drawing (see Figure 7), the squarish portion has been shown in dotted lines, which in archaeological terms means that it is purely conjectural in nature. The ASI has also alleged that there was a water chute or *pranala* that drained water out after the *abhisheka* (ritual bathing) of the deity within. This would imply that this was a Shaiva shrine with a *linga* (a representation of the deity Siva) inside. However, as it is completely solid, it would have been impossible to enter to perform an *abhisheka*. As far as the *pranala* is concerned, the slope was measured with the help of a spirit level by Ratnagar and Mandal (Mandal 2007: 42), who found that it did not have the required gradient for water to flow out of it. Moreover, according to the ASI, the “circular shrine” belongs to the post-Gupta-Rajput period (AD 9th-10th centuries),<sup>12</sup> whereas a study of the stratigraphy and the site notebooks indicate that the structure belongs to the Gupta period (AD 4th-6th centuries).<sup>13</sup> The site notebook, written by the excavator of the trench, very clearly indicates that the walls near the “circular shrine” are of the Gupta period. It appears that the ASI deliberately concealed the fact that the excavator of the trench clearly ascribed the walls to the Gupta period. The ASI altered the evidence to suit its hypothesis, which is a case of professional misconduct. One cannot change the evidence if it does not suit one’s hypothesis. This concealing of evidence would not have come to light had it not been for a perusal of the site notebook concerned, a piece of evidence that was not immediately available to the parties unlike the final report.

Very interestingly, Justice Sudhir Agarwal in paragraph 3937 dates the “circular shrine” to AD 9th-10th centuries on the basis of a radiocarbon date of AD 900-1030. However, the AYD report does not give any radiocarbon date for the “circular shrine”. When we checked the AYD report (Manjhi and Mani 2003: 69), we found that the ASI has used this particular C14 date for dating the “massive structure” below the Babri masjid. This carbon sample comes from the deposits in trench ZH1 in the north, while the “circular shrine” was excavated in trenches E8 and F8 in the southern area. The judgment has used the AYD report’s comparisons on a stylistic basis between the “circular shrine” to brick shrines in Sravasti, Chandrehe, Masaon near Rewa and Kurari and Tinduli in Fatehpur district of Uttar Pradesh. However, a study of at least the Kurari temple shows that “exteriorly the ground plan ... is a polygon of sixteen sides, of which three sides are cut off by a straight line so as to form the façade” (Vogel 1908-09: 20), quite unlike the “circular shrine” in Ayodhya where there are no facets to the exterior wall, which is completely plain and round. If we look at size too, the examples given have diameters that are either double or four times that of the “circular shrine”. Naturally, these are much bigger because none are solid and can easily be entered. Because the “circular structure” is solid and completely round (Figures 7 and 8), our suggestion is that it was more likely to have been a votive stupa. As can be seen in Figure 8, there is a slight difference in the diameter between the first few lower courses of bricks and the courses above them. This difference recalls the two parts of a stupa, the *medhi* (the drum) and the *anda* (the higher rounded portion of the stupa). Moreover, the rectangular projection, instead of an entrance, may just have been a niche for an image of the Buddha.

### The ASI as a Statist Organisation

Most archaeologists in India, when it comes to the historical period, see archaeology in the role of affirming what is written in the texts or prevails in oral traditions. This was also the mindset behind the projects on the archaeology of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. We are not arguing against the use of both textual and archaeological evidence for the archaeology of a historical period, but we need to keep in mind that the two may have very different narratives and the complexities of both needs to be understood. For instance, as far as the epics are concerned, there are innumerable versions circulating in different parts of the sub-continent. Apart from this, they also first circulated orally and then were compiled, collated and added to over a long period of time. Therefore, it is very difficult to fix the chronology of any event that is described. Moreover, the time depth of the epics has also meant that numerous very different societies that would have existed over different periods of time have been conflated within the texts. Given the above, it is a futile task to literally equate events in the epics with archaeological data. For example, archaeological findings of the remains of huts at the site of Bharadvaja Ashram, Allahabad, have been used to suggest that this was where Ram, Lakshman and Sita stayed before crossing the river Yamuna (Lal 2002: 41-42, 45-48).

It is this uncritical use of early texts that marks the kind of historical archaeology practised by the ASI. Further, the ASI’s excavation and recording methods continue unchanged from the emphasis on establishing a cultural sequence, introduced by Mortimer Wheeler in the 1940s, even though there have been radical departures and innovative methods introduced in the last 50 years both in India (in university departments of archaeology) and outside. This lack of reflexivity stems from a serious absence of academic engagement and training in the ASI, where its archaeologists see themselves primarily as government officers. Much of this can be explained by the fact that the ASI is a statist organisation answerable directly to the central government.

It is also distressing that few archaeologists are willing to critique the ASI, its excavations in Ayodhya and the report that was submitted. The reason, of course, is well known and lies with the ASI having complete control over heritage management in this country. Any archaeologist in India or from outside who wants to explore or excavate sites has to obtain a licence from the ASI. So no field archaeologist is willing to speak out against it or its outdated methods. This very point was raised by justice Agarwal to establish the expertise of the ASI or of former ASI officials compared to archaeologists in universities. He writes in paragraph 3879, “They [the ASI] are experts of expert. No archaeologist in this country can undertake an archaeological expedition at a historical site of importance without permission or licence from the ASI”. He also states, “The finds and researches as well as the determination and conclusion of any archaeological or other expert in this field is not normally recognised unless it has been scrutinised by ASI and after approval by it is also published in the regular journals of ASI”.

However, academically, the work that archaeologists of the ASI have produced has little standing within the social sciences in India and abroad. There is little interest in research or the

academic part of the discipline. Year after year, the ASI excavates sites because a budget exists for excavation, not because it has serious research questions in mind (Chadha 2007).<sup>14</sup> While commenting on ASI excavations, an assistant superintending archaeologist mentioned that these involve “everything else but

research. It is about money, corruption, public performance, politics, favouritism, personal gains, and everything else. Research is just an excuse. Go and ask any archaeologist and ask what is research and you will know that it means nothing to him” (Chadha 2007: 247).

NOTES

- 1 Supriya Varma was present during the excavations in Ayodhya from 5 to 12 April 2003, 11 to 31 May 2003, 22 to 27 June 2003 and from 8 to 19 July 2003, while Jaya Menon was present from 26 April to 2 May 2003, 20 to 31 May 2003, 22 to 27 June 2003 and from 19 to 26 July 2003.
- 2 We will be mainly using the judgment of justice Sudhir Agarwal since he has gone at great length into the archaeological “evidence”.
- 3 It cannot be a coincidence that once the issue of whether a temple was demolished to build the Babri masjid was implicated in the case in 1989, in early 1990, articles were published in the RSS magazines *Panchajanya* and *Manthan* by S P Gupta (retired director of the Allahabad Museum and then of the National Museum) that there was archaeological proof for the existence of a temple beneath the mosque, probably obtained from Lal. Soon after, Lal wrote his own piece for *Manthan*.
- 4 GPR uses radio waves to penetrate the soil. When there are obstructions to the passage of the waves, these are called “anomalies”, which could be interpreted as underlying structures.
- 5 They were off from 50 cm to 2 m.
- 6 This comprises Issue 1-b of Suit 4. In OOS 5, Issue No 14 was “whether the disputed structure claimed to be Babri masjid was erected after demolishing Janmasthan Temple at its site”.
- 7 An area that is to be excavated is divided into equal-sized squares in a north-south direction, which could be 10 × 10 m or 5 × 5 m. These squares are then excavated as trenches but between each square a 1-m area is left unexcavated to allow movement between the trenches as well as enable a study of the sections. This unexcavated area is referred to as a “balk”. As one digs down, the sides of the balk within a trench, which archaeologists term “sections”, reveal the strata or layers of different occupations. A study of these different strata or layers is called “stratigraphy”.
- 8 Normally, the records for a trench are maintained in a trench notebook, not site notebook. But the ASI calls these notebooks for individual trenches “site note books”.
- 9 Usually the ASI does not record ceramics and bones in a daily site register, but in this case this was done due to a court order because they were initially being thrown away instead of being collected and recorded.
- 10 The Babri masjid is never called so in the AYD report. It is always referred to as “disputed structure”, unlike other structures such as the Ram Chabutra.
- 11 Affidavit of Jaya Menon, p 22.
- 12 Very conveniently, the ASI has dated the “circular structure” to the post-Gupta-Rajput period (9th-10th centuries) so as to establish, from the 10th century onwards, a seeming continuity in Hindu religious structures at the site. However, in its own report (Manjhi and Mani 2003: 40), it has dated the post-Gupta-Rajput period from AD 7th to 10th centuries.
- 13 Site note book No 31 mentions on several pages (2, 3, 4, 5, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 48) that walls (19B and 22) in trench E8 were sealed by layer 7. Layer 7 in trench E8 in the AYD Report has been attributed to the Gupta level (AD 4th to 6th centuries). However, on page 70 of the AYD Report, wall 19B has been said to have

been sealed by layer 5A, which is contemporary to the “circular shrine”, and wall 22 was also contemporary to wall 19B (page 71). Layer 5A in trench E8 has been attributed to post-Gupta-Rajput period of AD 7th-10th centuries (page 40).

- 14 Ashish Chadha in a PhD thesis on the ASI submitted to the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford University in 2007 derived his data from interviews conducted between 2003 and 2005 with ASI personnel ranging from non-technical and technical staff to officers. A valid point made by Chadha is that “their domination in the area of archaeological knowledge production in India has legal legitimacy and objective sanctity because they are part of the statist bureaucratic machinery” (2007: 9). He points out that the ASI project on “the archaeology of the Ramayana sites” was solely responsible for providing an archaeological basis for demolishing the Babri masjid (2007: 24). The lack of an academic input in the work of ASI archaeologists can be seen from the close connection between the ASI and its Institute of Archaeology for training students, to which it is possible to get an admission only if one has connections to the archaeologists in the ASI. Almost all the assistant archaeologists who join the ASI are students of the institute whereas applicants from outside, even with PhDs, are seldom hired. As a former student put it, “in-breeding” was the main cause of the inability of the “ASI to learn new methods of digging and new techniques of excavation. This makes people in the ASI insecure about new theories in archaeology. They are closed and uninterested in learning” (Chadha 2007: 90). The excavation director at the site of Hansi said that “within the popular imagination of the ASI employees the prestige of an archaeologist was not assessed on the basis of his/her analytical or theoretical contribution to Indian archaeology but on the number of sites discovered and the temporal antiquity of the site. It was understood that the older the site, the more prestigious it was to discover and dig it. Discovery primarily meant uncovering new sites...” (Chadha 2007: 96). An assistant archaeologist in Bhirrana also stated that “specialists are in short supply in the ASI... to tell you the truth, they don't encourage specialisation in the ASI...there were no archaeozoologists, archaeobotanists, archaeometallurgists nor were there any lithic or ceramic specialists. These experts were usually invited from various university departments and asked to study the materials and invited to contribute in the final excavation report when it was written” (Chadha 2007: 239). An assistant superintending archaeologist in Baror, who had worked in the DG's office for a number of years, disclosed to Chadha that “all senior archaeologists in the ASI have right-wing sympathies. They might not be RSS *pracharaks*, but they are openly with the BJP. It is no secret that [R S] Bisht [retired joint DG] was always close to Guptaji [S P Gupta] and B B Lal, who, as we all know, are saffron archaeologists [bhagwa archaeologists] ... Gupta and Lal have RSS connections” (2007: 218). Given that the hon'ble judges have reiterated the integrity of the ASI, it is interesting to note that a number of top ASI officials, including half the directors who sit in the DG's office, have Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiries against them on various charges of corruption (Chadha 2007: 47, 80, 87).

REFERENCES

Chadha, A (2007): “Performing Science, Producing Nation: Archaeology and the State in Postcolonial India”, PhD Thesis, Stanford University, Stanford.

Cunningham, A (1871; Reprint 2000): *Four Reports Made During the Years 1862-63-64-65*, Vol I, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.

IAR, *Indian Archaeology: A Review 1969-70*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, pp 40-41.

IAR, *Indian Archaeology: A Review 1976-77*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, pp 52-53.

IAR, *Indian Archaeology: A Review 1979-80*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, pp 76-77.

Krishna, Deva (1995): *Temples of India*, Vol I (New Delhi: Aryan Books).

Lal, B B (1998): “A Note on the Excavations at Ayodhya with Reference to the Mandir-Masjid Issue”, [www.wac.uct.ac.za/croatia/lal.htm](http://www.wac.uct.ac.za/croatia/lal.htm), accessed on 10 August 2002.

– (2002): “Historicity of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*: What Has Archaeology to Say in the Matter?” in S Settar and R Korisettar (ed.), *Archaeology and Historiography, History, Theory and Method, Indian Archaeology in Retrospect*, Vol IV, (Delhi: ICHR and Manohar), pp 29-56.

Mandal, D (2007): “An Analysis of the ASI Report” in D Mandal and S Ratnagar, *Archaeology after Excavation* (New Delhi: ICHR), pp 25-100.

Manjhi, H and B R Mani (2003): *Ayodhya: 2002-03*, Vols I and II, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.

Mate, M S (2009): “Book Review of Ayodhya: Archaeology after Excavation”, *Man and Environment*, XXXIV(1), pp 117-19.

Panikkar, K N (1991): “A Historical Overview” in S Gopal (ed.), *Anatomy of a Confrontation – The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhumi Issue* (New Delhi: Penguin), pp 22-37.

Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Judgement, High Court of Allahabad, [www.rjbm.nic.in](http://www.rjbm.nic.in).

Robillard, C, M Kumar and R Rishi (2003): “Final Report on GPR Survey of the Disputed Site in Ayodhya”, Tojo-Vikas International, New Delhi.

Vogel, J Ph (1908-09): “The Temple at Bhitargaon”, *Archaeological Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, pp 5-21.

More Retail Outlets for EPW

The Economic & Political Weekly (EPW) is now available at a number of additional retail outlets.

You can now buy the latest issues of the EPW at Landmark, Odyssey, Crossword, Sankars and other select bookstores across the country. Please look for EPW at the **Outlook Counter** at the above mentioned stores.

If you need any help locating a store please call us at 022-40638282 and we would be able to assist you.