Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Case

Why in news?

Recently Supreme Court declined to stay an order issued by the Allahabad High Court allowing a survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura, believed to have been built at Krishna Janmasthan, the site where Lord Krishna was born.

What is the history of the Mathura Krishna Janmasthan site?

- **Mathura significance**- It is a city in northern India located on the banks of river *Yamuna*, became a prominent centre of commerce and governance under the ***Mauryan Empire***, which ruled most of South Asia from the 4th to the 2nd centuries BCE.
- **Religious diversity**- Mathura was also a major centre for Buddhism and Jainism, with many stupas and monasteries.
- **Traveller's record**- Chinese pilgrims *Fa Hien* and *Hiuen Tsang* and even later Muslim chroniclers described stupas and monasteries in Mathura.
- **Krishna Janmasthan**- It is the birthplace of Lord Krishna , a historian A W Entwistle recorded that the 1st Vaishnava temple at the Krishna Janmasthan site was probably built in the 1st century CE.

  A grandeur temple was constructed during the reign of Chandragupta II, also known as Vikramaditya, around 400 CE

- **Buddhist structure-** *Alexander Cunningham*, the first archaeologist of British India believed that the site originally contained Buddhist structures that were destroyed.
- Some of the remains have been used to build Hindu temple, excavations in the area have uncovered remains of a large Buddhist complex.
- **Invasion by Mahmud of Ghazini**- The ruler of Ghaznavid empire raided India in the early 11th century and attacked Mathura, causing fire and pillage for 20 days.
- The devotees of Krishna, called Vasudeva by *Al-Biruni*, remained steadfast in their faith and made Mathura a prominent pilgrimage site.
- **Katra Keshadev temple**- It was built around 1150 CE in Krishna Janmasthan, it is described by Sanskrit inscription as brilliantly white and touching the clouds.
- **Sikandar Lodhi's destruction of the site**- The Keshavdev temple at the Krishna Janmasthan site in Mathura was demolished by the Delhi Sultanate ruler Sikandar Lodhi in the 16th century, along with many other Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu structures.
- **Emergence of a new form of Vaishnavism-** The decline of the old religious centres in Mathura and nearby Vrindavan led to the rise of a new devotional movement of Vaishnavism.

- It is inspired by saints like Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Chaitanya, who emphasised a personal and emotional relationship with Lord Krishna.
- **Mughal dynasty**- Many small shrines dedicated to Lord Krishna were built in Mathura and Vridhavan.
- **Religious tolerance-** Akbar, the most powerful and tolerant Mughal emperor, supported the temples of different Vaishnavite sects in Mathura. He was interested in different faiths and visited the holy sites of Vaishnavism.
- **Raja Veer Singh Deo's temple-** It was built in 1618 during the reign of Jahangir at Katra site by the Orchha King, who was a Mughal vassal, built a magnificent temple.

  - French traveller *Jean-Baptiste Tavernier* described that the temple was octagonal in shape, and built with red sandstone.
  - Venetian traveller *Niccolao Manucci* wrote that the temple was of such a height that its gilded pinnacle could be seen from Agra.
  - The Mughal prince Dara Shikoh, who was tolerant of other religions, added a stone railing around the temple site in the mid-17th century.

- **Aurangzeb rule**- Abdul Nabi Khan, the governor of Mathura built the Jama Masjid at the location of the temple that had been destroyed by Sikandar Lodhi.

  In 1666, he destroyed the railing built by Dara Shikoh around the Keshavdev temple.

- **Destruction of Hindu temples-** The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of Hindu schools and temples across his empire, including the Keshavdev temple in Mathura, which was replaced by the Shahi Idgah mosque.
- **British India**- The land where the temple once stood was auctioned by the British East India Company in 1815 to a Hindu banker Raja Patnimal, who wanted to rebuild the temple but faced legal challenges.
- **Post-independence**- Raja Patnimal sold the land to Jugal Kishore Birla in 1944 who formed the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust in 1951 to built a temple, it was built next to the mosque.
- This piece of land is the subject of the ongoing litigation, with the Hindu side claiming that it included the Shahi Idgah mosque while the Muslim side saying that it did not.

What is the Allahabad High Court ruling in Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi case?

- The Court ordered the scientific survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque, which is believed to be built on the birthplace of Lord Krishna.
- The ruling is similar to the one in Varanasi's Gyanvapi Mosque, also built adjacent to a venerated Hindu temple.



- Hindu parties to the litigation claim that the 17th-century Mughal-era Mosque was built after demolishing a temple at the birthplace of the Lord Krishna.

- Muslim side’s claim that he Shahi Idgah Mosque does not fall within the ambit of land at Katra Keshav Dev.
- They counterclaimed that Hindu’s belief is based on guess work and is not substantiated by any documentary evidence.
- The Supreme Court declined to halt the Allahabad High Court's order permitting the survey of Mathura Shahi Idgah complex near the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple

References

1. Indian Express- History of Krishna Janmasthan temple
2. Indian Express- Allahabad HC allow survey of Mathura Idgah

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