

Gyanvapi Masjid case

May 14, 2022

In news—The Supreme Court has declined to pass any order on an appeal seeking urgent stay of the inspection of the Shringar Gauri temple-Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh recently.

What is Gyanvapi Masjid case?

- The **petition that was filed in the Supreme Court has alleged that the mosque was built by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb by demolishing a temple in the 16th century.**
- The petitioner **demand a detailed survey of the complex by the Archeological Survey of India.**
- However, **this is not the first time that the Gyanvapi mosque has been pulled into a controversy,** the masjid has been a centre of argument since 1194.
- According to the court archives and documents, in 1936, a trial to ascertain the validity of the Gyanvapi mosque witnessed many people including Professor Altekar's testimony.
- On 14 May 1937, historian of Banaras origin Professor Paramatma Sharan gave a statement on behalf of the British Government in which he presented excerpts of 'Ma Asire Alam Giri', written by the historian of Aurangzeb's time which said Gyanvapi Mosque was a temple in the 16th century.
- **In 1936, a case was filed in the District Court** against the British Government for the right to offer Namaz in the entire Gyanvapi complex.
- On 15 August 1937, the **right to offer Namaz in the Gyanvapi mosque was granted** explicitly adding that such prayers can't be offered anywhere else in the Gyanvapi complex.
- On 10 April 1942, upholding the decision of the lower court, the High Court dismissed the appeal.

- On 15 October 1991, **Pandit Somnath Vyas, Dr Ramrang Sharma and others filed suit in the Varanasi court for the construction of a new temple at Gyanvapi** and the right to worship
- Lawyer Vijay Shankar Rastogi who is representing the Hindu side said that under Section 57 (13) of the Indian Evidence Act, the historical fact mentioned in the general history books is recognized as evidence.
- Thus, Historical accounts of Altekar and the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang that are registered under the Indian Evidence Act 1872, talk about a temple and a hundred feet long Shiva Linga.
- Muslim leaders have called Gyanvapi Masjid vs Shringar Gauri case a “blatant violation” of the Places of Worship Act 1991.

About the mosque-

- There are several viewpoints pertaining to the construction of the Gyanvapi Masjid.
- **It is widely believed that during the 18th century, Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar of Malwa** kingdom built the present-day Kashi Vishwanath temple next to the mosque.
- **The Gyanvapi mosque shares a boundary wall with the Kashi Vishwanath temple.**
- As of today, the temple and mosque are adjacent to each other but have their entry and exit points in different directions.
- The temple has been demolished and rebuilt several times in its course of history.
- **According to historians, in 1669, Mughal emperor Aurangzeb built the Gyanvapi mosque on the site.**
- There is **another viewpoint as well. Some historians have said that both Kashi Vishwanath temple and the Gyanvapi mosque were constructed by Akbar** to further his system

of Din-e-Ilahi.

- Din-e-Ilahi was a system of religious beliefs introduced by Akbar in 1582 CE. The idea behind this was to combine Islam and Hinduism into one faith.
- The Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, in-charge of the Gyanvapi masjid, maintains this theory.
- The remnants of a Hindu temple can be seen on the walls of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi.

Further

reading:

<https://journalsofindia.com/kashi-vishwanath-corridor-project/>