

Brief Findings of the Survey

In compliance of the order of the Hon'ble District Court, Varanasi, dated 21.07.2023 in O.S. 18/2022; affirmed by Hon'ble High Court of Allahabad by order dated 03.08.2023 and Hon'ble Supreme Court of India by order dated 04.08.2023; the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) carried out scientific investigation/ survey in 2150.5 square meter area fenced with steel grill, in and around the existing structure (excluding the areas sealed by the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court), at Settlement Plot No. 9130, Varanasi, from 24.07.2023.

2. All the objects which were noticed during the scientific investigation/ survey in the complex were duly documented. These objects include inscriptions, sculptures, coins, architectural fragments, pottery, and objects of terracotta, stone, metal and glass. Objects which required first aid treatment were treated at the site. In compliance of the order dated 13.09.2023 these objects were handed over to the district administration on 06.11.2023 for their safe custody.

3. Scientific investigations/ survey operations were carried out carefully, ensuring that during all these operations no damage is caused to the existing structure.

GPR Survey

4. GPR Survey in the north hall indicated a small sinkhole-type cavity in the floor at 1-2 m depth towards the northern door, a steep and deep narrow cavity



48
adjacent to the central hall passage, and the floor having a larger accumulation of mortar bed thickness. 40/1/21 149

5. The presence of a rectangular gravel fill passage, akin to a side opening/door, towards the south, is observed at a depth of ~4-6 m at the basement level in the south corridor. A similar opening at a shallower level down to ~3 m is observed in the north corridor, north of the north hall and west of cellar N5.

6. Rows of 3-4 m wide cellars (S3, S4) are observed adjacent to the corridor area, and a 2 m wide well is concealed in cellar S1.

Pre-existing Structure

7. Based on the scientific studies and observations on -
- Central chamber and main entrance of the pre-existing structure in existing structure
 - Western chamber and western wall
 - Reuse of pillars and pilasters of pre-existing structure in existing structure
 - Inscriptions on the existing structure
 - Arabic and Persian inscription on the loose stone
 - Sculptural remains in cellars, etc.

it can be said that there existed a large Hindu temple, prior to the construction of the existing structure.



Central Chamber and Main Entrance

8. This temple had a big central chamber and at least one chamber to the north, south, east and west respectively. Remains of three chambers to the north, south and west still exist but the remains of the chamber to the east and any further extension of it could not be ascertained physically, as the area is covered under a platform with stone flooring.
9. Central chamber of the pre-existing structure forms the central hall of the existing structure. This structure with thick and strong walls, along with all architectural components and floral decorations was utilised as the main hall of the mosque. Animal figures carved at the lower ends of decorated arches of the pre-existing structure were mutilated, and inner part of dome is decorated with geometric designs.
10. Main entrance to the central chamber of the temple was from the west which was blocked by stone masonry. This entrance was decorated with carvings of animals and birds and an ornamental *torana*. This large arched gateway had another smaller entrance. Figure carved on the *lalatbimba* of this small entrance has been chopped off. A small part of it is visible as most of it is covered with bricks, stone and mortar which were used to block the entrance.
11. Remains of a bird figure carved on the doorsill appears to be of a cock.

12. On the other side of the blocked main entrance *quibla* was made. It is simple without any decoration as such and pilasters on either side are also damaged unevenly.

10451/151

Western Chamber and Western Wall

13. Eastern half of the western chamber still exists whereas the superstructure of western half has been destroyed. This chamber was also connected with north and south chambers through a corridor accessible from its north and south entrances respectively. Remains of this corridor in the northwest side came to light on removal of garbage and debris.

14. The western wall of the existing structure is the remaining part of a pre-existing Hindu temple. This wall, made of stones and decorated with horizontal mouldings, is formed by remaining parts of western chamber, western projections of the central chamber and western walls of the two chambers on its north and south. Central chamber attached to the wall still exists unchanged whereas modifications have been made to both the side chambers.

15. All these chambers had an opening in all the four directions. Decorated arched entrances of central, north and south chambers towards west have been blocked. The arched openings of north and south halls were converted into steps leading to the roof. Steps made in arched entrance of the north hall are still in use. Steps made in arched entrance of the south hall were blocked by stone masonry at some later date, however one can still enter them from the roof. A large decorated



entrance to the central chamber through the western chamber was blocked by stone masonry.

Pillars and Pilasters

16. The pillars and pilasters used in the existing structure were studied systematically and scientifically. For the enlargement of the mosque and constructing *sahan*, parts of the pre-existing temple including pillars and pilasters were reused with little modifications. Minute study of the pillars and pilasters in corridor suggest that they were originally part of the pre-existing Hindu temple. For their reuse in the existing structure, *vyala* figures carved on either side of lotus medallion were mutilated and after removing the stone mass from the corners that space was decorated with floral design. This observation is supported by two similar pilasters still existing on the northern and southern wall of the western chamber in their original place.

Inscriptions

17. During the survey, a number of inscriptions were noticed on the existing and pre-existing structures. A total of 34 inscriptions were recorded during the present survey and 32 estampages were taken. These are, in fact, inscriptions on the stones of the pre-existing Hindu temples, which have been re-used during the construction/ repair of the existing structure. They include inscriptions in Devanagari, Grantha, Telugu and Kannada scripts. Reuse of earlier inscriptions in the structure, suggest that the earlier structures were destroyed and their parts were reused in construction/ repair of the existing structure. Three names of deities such as Janārdhana, Rudra, and Umēśvara are found in these inscriptions. Terms



such as Mahā-muktimandapa mentioned in three inscriptions is of great significance.

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158

Inscription on Loose Stone

18. ASI had in its custody record of an inscription engraved on a loose stone which recorded construction of the mosque in the 20th regnal year of Hadrat Alamgir i.e., Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb corresponding to A.H. 1087 (1676-77 CE). This inscription also recorded that in the year A.H. 1207 (1792-93 CE), the mosque was repaired with sahan, etc. The photograph of this stone inscription was recorded in ASI records in the year 1965-66.

19. During the recent survey, this stone with inscription was recovered from a room in the mosque. However, the lines relating to construction of the mosque and its expansion have been scratched out.

20. This is also brought out by the biography of Emperor Aurangzeb, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, which mentions that Aurangzeb "issued orders to the governors of all the provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels" (Jadu-Nath Sarkar (tr.) 1947, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 51-52). On 2nd September, 1669 "it was reported that, according to the Emperor's command his officers had demolished the temple of Viswanath at Kashi" (Jadu-Nath Sarkar (tr.) 1947, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 55).



Sculptural Remains in Cellars

21. A series of cellars were also constructed to the east to create additional space and a large platform in front of the mosque for accommodating large number of people for prayers.

22. Pillars from earlier temples were reused while making cellars in eastern part of the platform. A pillar decorated with bells, niches for keeping lamps on all four sides, and bearing an inscription of Samvat 1669 (corresponding to 1613 CE, January 1, Friday) is reused in cellar N2.

23. Sculptures of Hindu deities and carved architectural members were found buried under the dumped soil in cellar S2.

Nature and Age

24. Existing architectural remains, decorated mouldings on the walls, *karna-ratha* and *prati-ratha* of central chamber, a large decorated entrance gate with *torana* on the eastern wall of the western chamber, a small entrance with mutilated image on *lalabimba*, birds and animals carved for decoration in and outside suggest that the western wall is remaining part of a Hindu temple. Based on art and architecture, this pre-existing structure can be identified as a Hindu temple.

The Arabic-Persian inscription found inside a room mentions that the mosque was built in the 20th regnal year of Aurangzeb (1676-77 CE). Hence, the pre-existing

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structure appears to have been destroyed in the 17th century, during the reign of Aurangzeb, and part of it was modified and reused in the existing structure.

Based on scientific studies/ survey carried out, study of architectural remains, exposed features and artefacts, inscriptions, art and sculptures, it can be said that there existed a Hindu temple prior to the construction of the existing structure.

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