

# KEY STAKEHOLDERS NEED TO STRIVE FOR SOCIAL CONSENSUS

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We should not attach the Ayodhya issue with our sense of religious identity

The Supreme Court judgement on Ayodhya is a unanimous verdict to give the disputed land to Hindus and provide alternative land at an appropriate and prominent place to Muslims. The historic decision came after a long legal battle between various sides on this issue. What would be the impact of the verdict on the social fabric of India? How it is going to affect social balance, peace and harmony?

Although it is important for everyone to respect the court's decision, we know it is difficult to always satisfy all the groups fully. But we expect our opinion makers, social leaders, political agencies and parties, elders (*puranias* and *sayanas*) and mature people in the villages, towns and cities, media and civil society organizations to work to prepare the social consensus for this decision.

This decision needs to attain social consensus yet from different sections and social groups. This social consensus may not evolve automatically and spontaneously. We will need to nurse this social consensus by evolving a respectful and convincing public dialogue at various levels on this issue.

It is the responsibility of society as whole to attain consensus, peace and social harmony. In this context, the role of majority social groups is more prominent than that of others. They need to involve and include social groups of minorities with cordiality and respect at every public place.

If any disagreement or wound appears on this decision, we will need to evolve ourselves to remove them convincingly.

We should not attach this issue with our religious identity any more, either as winner identity or loser identity. Otherwise, it may lead to social tension.

After this verdict, all the positions of identities caused by this issue will need to be galvanized and submerged under the democratic fabric of the country.

It is true that we are arguing for dissolving polarizational elements of identities caused by the Ayodhya dispute, but we know it will remain alive in our electoral politics and may emerge from time to time as a polarizational point in our processes of political mobilization.

For instance, the Hindu voting bloc may be mobilized by saying "Ram Janmabhoomi temple is going to be constructed due to our efforts". On the other hand, minority groups may be mobilized by politicians who may argue, "Your cause is not being well taken under this regime, so be mobilized on our side".

If this happens, it may also keep alive this issue as a cause for creating social imbalance and tension in our society. In spite of the commitment by our important leaders of all the political parties to not make provocative statements, on the ground level, it will be very difficult to nurse a restricted public version of narratives on this issue for local leaders, activists and fringe elements.

They may evolve their own version on this issue for political and electoral polarization. If this happens, it will be unfortunate for our democratic fabric because it may keep generating dissatisfaction that may produce social imbalance and tension.

So, what I propose is that while accepting the decision of our apex court, we should detach this issue from our sense of religious identity. Our political, cultural and religious agencies may evolve a guarded public political discourse while discussing this issue.

The coming few weeks will be very important for all of us, and the state and its agencies should keep an eye on people who may have an interest in flaring up this issue.

*Badri Narayan is director at Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad.*

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