

The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

(ACT NO. 42 OF 1991)

[*As on the* 15*th December*, 2025]

AMENDING ACT

The Repealing and Amending Act, 2001 (30 of 2001)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

Cl., cls.	*for*	Clause, clauses.
Ins.	,,	Inserted.
Notifn.	,,	Notification.
S., ss.	,,	Section, sections.
Sch.	,,	Schedule.
Subs.	,,	Substituted.
w.e.f.	,,	with effect from.

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THE PLACES OF WORSHIP (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) ACT, 1991

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

SECTIONS

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8. [*Repealed*.]

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THE PLACES OF WORSHIP (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) ACT, 1991

ACT NO. 42 OF 1991

[18*th September*, 1991.]

An Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Forty-second Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. Short title, extent and commencement.—(*1*) This Act may be called the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

(*2*) It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir*.

(*3*) The provisions of sections 3, 6 and 8 shall come into force at once and the remaining provisions of this Act shall be deemed to have come into force on the 11th day of July, 1991.

2. Definitions.—In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(*a*) "commencement of this Act" means the commencement of this Act on the 11th day of July, 1991;

(*b*) "conversion", with its grammatical variations, includes alteration or change of whatever nature;

(*c*) "place of worship" means a temple, mosque, gurudwara, church, monastery or any other place of public religious worship of any religious denomination or any section thereof, by whatever name called.

3. Bar of conversion of places of worship.—No person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination or any section thereof into a place of worship of a different section of the same religious denomination or of a different religious denomination or any section thereof.

4. Declaration as to the religious character of certain places of worship and bar of jurisdiction of courts, etc.—(*1*) It is hereby declared that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August, 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day.

(*2*) If, on the commencement of this Act, any suit, appeal or other proceeding with respect to the conversion of the religious character of any place of worship, existing on the 15th day of August, 1947, is pending before any court, tribunal or other authority, the same shall abate, and no suit, appeal or other proceeding with respect to any such matter shall lie on or after such commencement in any court, tribunal or other authority:

Provided that if any suit, appeal or other proceeding, instituted or filed on the ground that conversion has taken place in the religious character of any such place after the 15th day of August, 1947, is pending on the commencement of this Act, such suit, appeal or other proceeding shall not so abate and every such suit, appeal or other proceeding shall be disposed of in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (*1*).

(*3*) Nothing contained in sub-section (*1*) and sub-section (*2*) shall apply to,—

(*a*) any place of worship referred to in the said sub-sections which is an ancient and historical monument or an archaeological site or remains covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (24 of 1958) or any other law for the time being in force;

(*b*) any suit, appeal or other proceeding, with respect to any matter referred to in sub-section (*2*), finally decided, settled or disposed of by a court, tribunal or other authority before the commencement of this Act;

*. *Vide* Notifn. No. S.O. 3912(E), dated 30th October, 2019, this Act is made applicable to the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union territory of Ladakh.

(*c*) any dispute with respect to any such matter settled by the parties amongst themselves before such commencement;

(*d*) any conversion of any such place effected before such commencement by acquiescence;

(*e*) any conversion of any such place effected before such commencement which is not liable to be challenged in any court, tribunal or other authority being barred by limitation under any law for the time being in force.

5. Act not to apply to Ram Janma Bhumi-Babri Masjid.—Nothing contained in this Act shall apply to the place or place of worship commonly known as Ram Janma Bhumi-Babri Masjid situated in Ayodhya in the State of Uttar Pradesh and to any suit, appeal or other proceeding relating to the said place or place of worship.

6. Punishment for contravention of section 3.—(*1*) Whoever contravenes the provisions of section 3 shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.

(*2*) Whoever attempts to commit any offence punishable under sub-section (*1*) or to cause such offence to be committed and in such attempt does any act towards the commission of the offence shall be punishable with the punishment provided for the offence.

(*3*) Whoever abets, or is a party to a criminal conspiracy to commit, an offence punishable under sub-section (*1*) shall, whether such offence be or be not committed in consequence of such abetment or in pursuance of such criminal conspiracy, and notwithstanding anything contained in section 116 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860), be punishable with the punishment provided for the offence.

7. Act to override other enactments.—The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force or any instrument having effect by virtue of any law other than this Act.

8. [*Amendment of Act* 43 of 1951.]—*Rep. by the Repealing and Amending Act*, 2001 (30 *of* 2001), *s*. 2 *and the Sch. I* (w.e.f. 3-9-2001).

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

In view of the controversies arising from time to time with regard to conversions of places of worship, it is felt that such conversions should be prohibited.

2. In order to foreclose any controversy in respect of any place of worship that existed on 15th day of August, 1947 it is considered necessary to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of such place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947. As a consequence thereof, all the suits or other proceedings pending as on 11th day of July, 1991 with respect to any of such place of worship, may abate and also further suits or other proceedings may be barred.

3. However, since the case relating to the place commonly called Ram Janam Bhumi-Babri Masjid forms a class by itself, it has become necessary to exempt it entirely from the operation of this Act.

4. Moreover, in order to maintain communal harmony and peace, matters decided by court, tribunals or other authorities, or those settled by parties amongst themselves or through acquiescence, between 15th day of August, 1947 and the 11th day of July, 1991 are also exempted from the operation of this Act.

5. The 11th day of July, 1991 is proposed as the commencement date of the Act as on the day the President addressed the Parliament making such a declaration.

6. The Bill seeks to achieve the above objectives.

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NEW DELHI; S.B. CHAVAN.

The 22*nd August,* 1991.