

Reflections of Horror on Islamic Invasions in Medieval India

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Abstract

Pre-Islamic India had a great tradition in creating magnificent and sensual sculptures, and building wondrous architectures. After the coming of Muslim invaders, Indian builders and craftsmen mixed Islamic ideas to their own, creating a new Indo-Islamic mosaic in the new building and architecture, which became integrated into the “heritage” of the self-declared Islamic civilization. Apart from India’s intellectual and scientific achievements, SaidalAndalusi noted: ‘*The Indians, as known to all nations for many centuries, are the metal (essence) of wisdom, the source of fairness and objectivity. They are peoples of sublime pensiveness, universal apologue...*’¹ Indeed, India was not only a distinguished civilization in its achievements in science, literature, philosophy, arts, and architecture but also had distinguished itself from the invading Muslims in terms of its humanity, chivalry and ethical behavior. Prior to Islamic invasions, Hindu kings and princes of India used to engage in wars, like in any major civilization of the time, but such wars were relatively infrequent. Affirming this, Muslim traveler Merchant Sulaiman writes in his *SalsilatutTawarikh* : ‘*The Indians sometimes go to war for conquest, but the occasions are rare.*’² Ibn Battutah, while traveling with Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq’s diplomatic convoy to the Chinese emperor, was surprised to observe that the Hindu rulers of Malabar showed great respect for each other’s territory and exercised restraint against warfare. In Malabar, he wrote, ‘*there are twelve infidel sultans, some of them strong with armies numbering fifty thousand men, and others weak with armies of three thousand. Yet there is no discord whatever between them and the strong does not desire to seize the possessions of the weak.*’ Muslim invaders had unfurled continuous warfare in India (and everywhere else) not only against the Hindus but amongst themselves; there were ceaseless revolts by Muslim generals, chiefs and princes all over India during their entire period of Islamic rule. Battutah’s astonishment is then quite understandable. Sulaiman adds that the Indian kings even did not maintain troops in regular pays. They used to be paid only when they were called in for fighting. Once the war is over, ‘*They then come out (to civilian life), and maintain themselves without receiving anything from the king.*’³

It is evident from the discussion so far that the Islamic invaders of India brought a totally different code of war, based on the Quran and the *Sunnah*. Contemporary Muslim historians inform us that, as a general rule, they used to slay all enemy soldiers on the battlefield. After the victory, they often fell upon the civilian villages and towns often slaughtering the men of fighting age. They sacked and plundered the households for booty, and sometimes burned down the villages and towns. Of the civilian population, the Buddhist monks and priestly Brahmins, in whom the common people reposed their trust, became special targets for extermination. The centers of infidel religion and learning—namely Hindu and Jain temples, Buddhist monasteries, Sikh *Gurdwaras* and indigenous educational institutions—were their prime

targets for desecration, destruction and plunder. The women and children were captured as slaves in large numbers.

Keywords: Objectivity, pensiveness monasteries targets

They kept the young and beautiful women captives as sex-slaves, others were engaged in household chores, and the rest were sold. The magnitude of the booty, the captives included, was a measure of the glory and success of military missions; this is reflected in their glorifying narratives by leading medieval Muslim historians. The background of the early Muslim settlers in Northern India was different. The history of early Muslims in India is the history of Muslim merchants, missionaries, soldiers of fortune, invaders, Sultans, the ruling classes and commoners, who came to India from the time of the birth of Islam in the 8th to the 13th century to the end of century. Once in a while they came in groups, often in droves and sometimes like ants and locusts. To their population were added indigenous people converted to Islam. By the 13th century there could be no doubt in anybody's mind that the Muslims, immigrants and indigenous, had become a permanent sociopolitical entity in India. With them appeared new cloths, new fashions, new science and technology. Their mosques, their Madarasas languages, medicines, , their mode of worship, their arches and cavalry men their saints and scholars in long exotic robes, began to be seen in many large cities and towns, and their government, administration and laws began to influence Indian urban life. Thus influence would be so interesting to study but for the fact that the history of these early Muslims in India is told by chroniclers primarily with a motive to glorify the achievements of Arab and Turkish conquerors in capturing kingdoms and spreading Islam. 3 Islam was born at Mecca which had a long tradition of trade with India.

With the invasion of India by Mahmud Ghazni about 1000 A.D., began the Muslim invasions into the Indian subcontinent and they lasted for several centuries. Nadir Shah made a mountain of the skulls of the Hindus he killed in Delhi alone. Babur raised towers of Hindu skulls at Khanua when he defeated Rana Sanga in 1527 and later he repeated the same horrors after capturing the fort of Chanderi. Akbar ordered a general massacre of 30,000 Rajputs after he captured Chithorgarhin 1568. The Bahamani Sultans had an annual agenda of killing a minimum of 100,000 Hindus every year. The history of medieval India is full of such instances. The holocaust of the Hindus in India continued for 800 years, till the brutal regimes were effectively overpowered in a life and death struggle by the Sikhs in the Panjab and the Hindu Maratha armies in other parts of India in the late 1700's. We have elaborate literary evidence of the World's biggest holocaust from existing historical contemporary eyewitness accounts. The historians and biographers of the invading armies and subsequent rulers of India have left quite detailed records of the atrocities they committed in their day-to-day encounters with India's Hindus. These contemporary records boasted about and glorified the crimes that were committed – and the genocide of tens of millions of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhist and Jainist, mass rapes of women and the destruction of thousands of ancient Hindu / Buddhist temples and libraries have been well documented and provide solid proof of the World's biggest holocaust.

Dr. Koenraad Elst in his article “Was There an Islamic Genocide of Hindus?” states:

“There is no official estimate of the total death toll of Hindus at the hands of Islam. A first glance at important testimonies by Muslim chroniclers suggests that, over 13 centuries and a territory as vast as the Subcontinent, Muslim Holy Warriors easily killed more Hindus than the 6 million of the Holocaust. Ferishtha lists several occasions when the Bahmani sultans in central India (1347-1528) killed a hundred thousand Hindus, which they set as a minimum goal whenever they felt like punishing the Hindus; and they were only a third-rank provincial dynasty⁴”.

The biggest slaughters took place during the raids of Mahmud Ghaznavi (ca. 1000 CE); during the actual conquest of North India by Mohammed Ghori and his lieutenants (1192 ff.); and under the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526). Irfan Husain in his article “Demons from the Past” observes:

“While historical events should be judged in the context of their times, it cannot be denied that even in that bloody period of history, no mercy was shown to the Hindus unfortunate enough to be in the path of either the Arab conquerors of Sindh and south Punjab, or the Central Asians who swept in from Afghanistan...The Muslim heroes who figure larger than life in our history books committed some dreadful crimes. Mahmud of Ghazni, Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, Balban, Mohammed bin Qasim, and Sultan Mohammad Tughlak, all have blood-stained hands that the passage of years has not cleansed..Seen through Hindu eyes, the Muslim invasion of their homeland was an unmitigated disaster. Their temples were razed, their idols smashed, their women raped, their men killed or taken slaves. When Mahmud of Ghazni entered Somnath on one of his annual raids, he slaughtered all 50,000 inhabitants. Aibak killed and enslaved hundreds of thousands. The list of horrors is long and painful. These conquerors justified their deeds by claiming it was their religious duty to smite non-believers. Cloaking themselves in the banner of Islam, they claimed they were fighting for their faith when, in reality, they were indulging in straightforward slaughter and pillage...⁵” According to Habib and Raychaudhuri, when "Timur invaded India in 1398-99, the collection of slaves formed [as] an important object for his army; 100,000 Hindu slaves had been seized by his soldiers and camp followers". All of them were killed to avoid a rebellion before the attack on Delhi.^[70]

(Timur's) soldiers grew more eager for plunder and destruction. On that Friday night, there were about 15,000 men in the city who were engaged from early eve till morning in plundering and burning the houses. In many places the impure infidel *gabrs* (of Delhi) made resistance. (...) Every soldier obtained more than twenty persons as slaves, and some brought as many as fifty or a hundred men, women and children as slaves of the city. The other plunder and spoils were immense, gems and jewels of all sorts, rubies, diamonds, stuffs and fabrics, vases and vessels of gold and silver. (...) On the 19th of the month Old Delhi was thought of, for many Hindus had fled thither. Amir Shah Malik and Ali Sultan Tawachi, with 500 trusty men, proceeded against them, and falling upon them with the sword despatched them to hell. – Sharafuddin Yazdi, *Zafarnama* (ظفرنامه)^[73] Will Durant argued in his 1935 book “The Story of Civilisation: Our Oriental Heritage” (page 459):

“The Mohammedan conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. The Islamic historians and scholars have recorded with great glee and pride the slaughters of Hindus, forced conversions, abduction of Hindu women and children to slave markets and the destruction of temples carried out by the warriors of Islam during 800 AD to 1700 AD. Millions of Hindus were converted to Islam by sword during this period.”

Francois Gautier in his book ‘Rewriting Indian History’ (1996) wrote:

“The massacres perpetuated by Muslims in India are unparalleled in history, bigger than the Holocaust of the Jews by the Nazis; or the massacre of the Armenians by the Turks; more extensive even than the slaughter of the South American native populations by the invading Spanish and Portuguese.”⁶ India has a deep, long cultural history. Hinduism began there around 1,500 BC and Buddhism around the 6th century BC. This culture had evolved impressive intellectual, religious and artistic pursuits. Pre and post the early days of Islam, Indian scholars took their works in science, maths (zero, algebra, geometry, the decimal system, so-called ‘Arabic’ numbers are actually Hindu ones!), medicine, philosophy etc to the courts of others (including Muslims eg Baghdad). Others came to study in India’s established universities. Indian children (boys and girls) were educated in the relatively widespread education system in a wide variety of subjects eg science, medicine and philosophy. India’s art and architecture was magnificent. They were a prosperous people. Then came Islam – slaughter, slavery, rape, violence, pillage; destruction of religious sites, art and architecture; poverty, exploitation, humiliation, famine, forced conversion, decline in intellectual pursuits, social destruction and a worsening of social ills. To Islam, anything that is not Islamic is from a time of ignorance –Jahiliyya- and must be destroyed (or appropriated and called Islam’s!). The onslaught created the Roma (gypsies), destroyed ‘Hindu’ Afghanistan and formed Pakistan (Kashmir) and Bangladesh .The cost of the Muslim invasions is massive in lives, wealth and culture. Estimates suggest that 60-80 MILLION died at the hands of Muslim invaders and rulers between 1000 and 1525 alone (ie over 500 years-the population FELL). (Lal cited in Khan p 216) Impossible you think? In the war of Independence of Bangladesh, 1971, the Muslim Pakistani army killed 1.5-3 million people (mainly Muslims ...) in just 9 MONTHS. (Khan p 216). The world looked the other way—but don’t we always when it’s Muslims committing the violence! [*The actual number of Hindus brutally slaughtered by Muslims were around 400 million, not 60-80 million, according to Firishta [1560-1620], the author of the Tarikh-iFirishta and the Gulshan-i Ibrahim].

The Indian historian Professor K.S. Lal estimates that the Hindu population in India decreased by 80 million between 1000 AD and 1525 AD, an extermination unparalleled in World history. This slaughter of millions of people occurred over regular periods during many centuries of Arab, Afghan, Turkish and Mughal rule in India. Many Indian heroes emerged during these dark times – including the 10th Sikh Guru – Guru Gobind Singh and also the Hindu Maratha king – Shivaji Maratha – who led the resistance against this tyranny and eventually led to its defeat by the late 1700s – after centuries of death and destruction. The modern World today is facing a global threat from organizations and groups of terrorists such as the ISIS,

Taliban and Al-Qaeeda – whose ideology is chillingly similar to that of the perpetrators of the World’s biggest holocaust in India.

In the early 11th century Muslim invaders arrived in India’s North-West, with the Mongols following in the thirteenth century. By then Indo-Islamic states had been established in north and northWest India. Some invaders were seasonal based in present day Afghanistan and were influenced by Persian political and military models. These Central Asians came to loot and convert but eventually stayed on to rule.⁷ By 1290, nearly all of India was under the loose domination of Muslim rulers. Two and a half centuries of internecine war among various IndoIslamic Hindu states followed, after which the Mughals

established an Empire in the early 16th century that stretched from the North-West Frontier Province to Bengal and down to the Deccan. The attempts of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to extend his control to South India coupled with his brutal treatment of his subjects led to a crisis of empire. The Empire lasted until 1858, when it was finally eliminated by the British. There is a great difference between the Hindus and Muslims in tradition, in history and in their attitude towards life political, social and economic. The Muslims derive their inspiration from the Quran and Hadis, and the Hindus from the Vedas. The Muslims have got their traditions from the Prophet, the Caliph and Imams, while the Hindus have inherited them from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Gita. The construction of fearful Hindu beliefs about Muslims and in opposition the emergence of Muslims ethno-religious idiom and practices, religiously justify social segregation and theories of Hindu Nationalism in India. The division of humans into mutually exclusive group identities of tribe, nation, caste, religion and class seems to serve two important psychological functions. The first is to increase the feeling of well being in the narcissistic realm by locating one's own group at the centre of the universe, superior to others. The shared grandiose itself, maintained by legends, myths and rituals, seems to demand a conviction that other groups are inferior.

Every social group in its tales, rituals and other literature portrays itself nearer to a purer, divine state while denigrating and banishing others to the periphery. It is also undeniable that sharing a common ego-ideal and giving one's own group a super individual significance can inspire valued human attributes of loyalty and heroic self sacrifice. For the psychoanalyst it is the second function of division into ethnic groups, namely the need to have other groups as contains for one's disavowed aspects which is of greater significance. The term 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity'⁸ are used here to include religious, racial, linguistic, tribal and similar divides which have been activated in socio-political conflict in the present and past age. The use of a single generic term is justified by the palpable fact that the common features of these conflicts greatly overshadow the specificity of their religious, racial etc. character. A religious conflict in one area may have more in common with, say, a linguistic problem in another place, than with another religious conflict. The power of language is always greater than that of parole. To make matters more complicated the communal divisions of Indian society in many respects overlapping the class divisions. Muslim community, having lost political power, was reduced to general state of impoverishment, whereas the Hindu retained their hold on trade and commerce. The Indian bourgeoisie was predominantly Hindu, and although there were millions of poor Hindus, the Muslim community remained economically backward. It was only too easy to transform an economic resentment into a communal issue. In the conversion of class antagonism into communal struggle, capitalism, both Indian and foreign, naturally played a very decisive role. Just as the Anglo-Indian political conflict was basically cultural, the Hindu Muslim communal antagonism was mainly economic. If Indian nationalism had taken positive steps to remove social stratification and economic inequalities instead of heaping denunciations on the British disruptive attitudes, communal differences could have had less disastrous results.

The rise of Muslim separatism was rooted both in the north Indian Muslim responses to the loss of political power and Hindu resurgence. Its standard bearer was the Aligarh movement of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Sir Syed linked the strengthening of the consciousness and corporate will of the Indian Muslims with the wider advancement of Islam. If Indian Muslims were degraded, Islam itself would be

weakened. In order to build up the community, Sir Syed exhorted its members to educate and economically advance themselves. Material impoverishment threatened Islamic culture. It may be pointed out here that in plural societies, prevalence of a dominant group, politically and economically, regulate other smaller ethnic groups into a secondary position. It results in discontent in the society in a large or small number because policies of the state become beneficial to few and harmful to others.

From the formation of the Congress in 1885, Sir Syed resolutely warned Muslims of its dangers. Further steps towards political community were provided both by the short lived Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association which, significantly, was set up immediately following the rash of cow protection riots in 1893, and Syed Ameer Ali's Central National Mohammadan Association. The latter became moribund when its founder departed for England in 1904, but at its peak in 1888 it boasted 53 branches throughout India.

The first important religious movement to succeed in creating a sense of a Hindu nation as opposed to Muslims and the British was the Cow Protection Movement in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Large numbers of people were mobilized through the networks of local marketing systems. In the case of Saran district in Bihar, it was the transit of cattle intended for slaughter which led to widespread rioting. Not only cattle was on the move, but Hindu monks travelled the countryside as well as to organise people against the slaughter of the cow-goddess. Circular letters were used to spread the message of the Hindu nation. While the movement to protect mother cow from Muslim butchers and British barbarians concentrated on the Punjab, U.P. and Bihar, riots also took place elsewhere, notably in Calcutta and Bombay. The great success of Bombay Cow Protection riot of 1893 led Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the Maharashtrian Hindu leader, to continue to develop new ritual strategies for mass mobilization. The most striking among those was the reinvention of the festival for Ganapati, the elephant-headed Hindu God, and a series of rituals connected to the all but forgotten founder of the Maratha Empire, Shivaji (1627-80).⁸

August, 1947, when, after three hundred years in India, the British finally left, the subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Immediately, there began one of the greatest migrations in human history, as millions of Muslims trekked to West and East Pakistan (the latter now known as Bangladesh) while millions of Hindus and Sikhs headed in the opposite direction. Many hundreds of thousands never made it.

Across the Indian subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for almost a millennium attacked each other in a terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other—a mutual genocide as unexpected as it was unprecedented.

In Punjab and Bengal—provinces abutting India's borders with West and East Pakistan, respectively—the carnage was especially intense, with massacres, arson, forced conversions, mass abductions, and savage sexual violence. Some seventy-five thousand women were raped, and many of them were then disfigured or dismembered.⁹

The actual message, which we receive, when we go through the writings of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Bhishm Sahni's *Tamas*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* etc, is that violence is always harmful. It never benefits anyone. It causes a wild bloodshed, brutality, horror, trauma and scarred souls.

In the Chapter "Conclusion", I will seek to recapitulate and try to analyse how the novelists from medieval India to modern India have preserved the reflections of horror, brutality, and trauma of these sufferers in their works and how they have tried to project their solutions to end this communal hatred. I will try to argue how these Islamic invasions on India shattered the ethical values of India and spread darkness all over Indian Hinduism and spread terror by their want to quench their thirst with Hindu's blood from medieval India to partition of India. Of late, there has arisen a lot of interest in this subject. Many writers have written about the partition and the subsequent communal upheaval. They include Saddat Hasan Manto, Rahi Masoom Raza and many others. Even movies have been made on this theme. In the end, I will try to argue how this shameful and gruesome event accompanied independence with unprecedented suddenness and horror.

Origin of the Research Problem: The present project will seek to portray reflection of horror on Islamic invasions in medieval India and communal strife later on and to analyse the texts that discuss the horror, trauma, sadness, conversion and the plight of ordinary people during tragic times. It will also examine how some writers sensationalized and sentimentalised the suffering of Indian people either by putting them on pedestal or by painting them as evil. It will deal with the Islamic invasions in medieval India to partition of India. It will attempt a detailed study of changing of ethos due to invasions and partition as well.

Interdisciplinary Relevance: The study is interdisciplinary because it focuses not only on literary studies but also on historical and sociological aspects of India. Literature per se, has a social relevance, has its roots in the social life and a fabric of nation. This study will take account into the medieval and post-independent history and culture of India.

Review of Research and Development in the Subject: H. Morland and A.C. Chatterjee's *A Short Story of India*, K.M. Sen's *Medieval Mysticism in India*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* are widely read all over the world. These writers have international Status. While some works have been done on these texts, still no thorough treatment has been given to these texts.

Significance of the Study: The study tries to come out with concrete answers to the two fundamental questions that have encountered every citizen of India after so many invasions by outside powers and after partition. One why people who have lived together for centuries, suddenly turn upon their neighbours in agony of hatred? And second why women who had no active part to play in the slaughter of innocents, were subjected to indignities?

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