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What Muslim invaders really did to India

By Rizwan Salim
Hindustan Times

On the anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition (December 6, 1992), it is important for Hindus (and Muslims) to understand the importance of the event in the context of Hindustan's history, past and recent, present and the future.

Savages at a very low level of civilisation and no culture worth the name, from Arabia and west Asia, began entering India from the early century onwards. Islamic invaders demolished countless Hindu temples, shattered uncountable sculpture and idols, plundered innumerable palaces and forts of Hindu kings, killed vast numbers of Hindu men and carried off Hindu women.

This story, the educated-and a lot of even the illiterate Indians-know very well. History books tell it in remarkable detail. But many Indians do not seem to recognise that the alien Muslim marauders destroyed the historical evolution of the earth's most mentally advanced civilisation, the most richly imaginative culture, and the most vigorously creative society.

It is clear that India at the time when Muslim invaders turned towards it (8 to 11th century) was the earth's richest region for its wealth in precious and semi-precious stones, gold and silver, religion and culture, and its fine arts and letters.

Tenth century Hindustan was also too far advanced than its contemporaries in the East and the West for its achievements in the realms of speculative philosophy and scientific theorising, mathematics and knowledge of nature's workings.

Hindus of the early medieval period were unquestionably superior in more things than the Chinese, the Persians (including the Sassanians), the Romans and the Byzantines of the immediate preceding centuries.

The followers of Siva and Vishnu on this subcontinent had created for themselves a society more mentally evolved-joyous and prosperous too-than had been realised by the Jews, Christians, and Muslim monotheists of the time.

Medieval India, until the Islamic invaders destroyed it, was history's most richly imaginative culture and one of the five most advanced civilisations of all times.

Look at the Hindu art that Muslim iconoclasts severely damaged or destroyed. Ancient Hindu sculpture is vigorous and sensual in the highest degree-more fascinating than human figural art created anywhere else on earth. (Only statues created by classical Greek artists are in the same class as Hindu temple sculpture).

Ancient Hindu temple architecture is the most awe-inspiring, ornate and spellbinding architectural style found anywhere in the world. (The Gothic art of cathedrals in France is the only other religious architecture that is comparable with the intricate architecture of Hindu temples).

No artist of any historical civilisation has ever revealed the same genius as ancient Hindustan's artists and artisans. Their minds filled with venom against the idol-worshippers of Hindustan, the Muslims destroyed a large number of ancient Hindu temples. This is a historical fact, mentioned by Muslim chroniclers and others of the time.

A number of temples were merely damaged and remained standing. But a large number-not hundreds but many thousands-of the ancient temples were broken into shreds of cracked stone. In the ancient cities of Varanasi and Mathura, Ujjain and Maheshwar, Jwalamukhi and Dwarka, not one temple survives whole and intact from the ancient times.

The wrecking of Hindu temples went on from the early years of the 8th century to well past 1700 AD a period of almost 1000 years. Every Muslim ruler in Delhi (or Governor of Provinces) spent most of his time warring against Hindu kings in the north and the south, the east and the west, and almost every Muslim Sultan and his army commanders indulged in large-scale destructions of Hindu temples and idols.

They also slaughtered a lot of Hindus. It is easy to conclude that virtually every Hindu temple built in the ancient times is a perfect work of art.

The evidence of the ferocity with which the Muslim invaders must have struck at the sculptures of gods and goddesses, demons and apsaras, kings and queens, dancers and musicians is frightful. At so many ancient temples of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, for example, shattered portions of stone images still lie scattered in the temple courtyards.

Considering the fury used on the idols and sculptures, the stone-breaking axe must have been applied to thousands upon thousands of images of hypnotic beauty. Living proof of the resentment that men belonging to an inferior civilisation feel upon encountering a superior civilisation of individuals with a more refined culture, Islamic invaders from Arabia and western Asia broke and burned everything beautiful they came across in Hindustan.

So morally degenerate were the Muslim Sultans that, rather than attract Hindu "infidels" to Islam through force of personal example and exhortation, they just built a number of mosques at the sites of torn down temples-and foolishly pretended they had triumphed over the minds and culture of the Hindus.

I have seen stones and columns of Hindu temples incorporated into the architecture of several mosques, including the Jama Masjid and Ahmed Shah Masjid in Ahmedabad; the mosque in the Uparkot fort of Junagadh (Gujarat) and in Vidisha (near Bhopal); the Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra right next to the famous dargah in Ajmer-and the currently controversial Bhojshala "mosque" in Dhar (near Indore).

Hindu culture was at its imaginative best and vigorously creative when the severely-allergic-to-images Muslims entered Hindustan.

Islamic invaders did not just destroy countless temples and constructions but also suppressed cultural and religious practices; damaged the pristine vigour of Hindu religion, prevented the intensification of Hindu culture, debilitating it permanently, stopped the development of Hindu arts ended the creative impulse in all realms of thought and action, damaged the people's cultural pride, disrupted the transmission of values and wisdom, cultural practices and tradition from one generation to the next; destroyed the proper historical evolution of Hindu kingdoms and society, affected severely the acquisition of knowledge, research and reflection and violated the moral basis of Hindu society.

The Hindus suffered immense psychic damage. The Muslims also plundered the wealth of the Hindu kingdoms, impoverished the Hindu populace, and destroyed the prosperity of Hindustan.

Gaze in wonder at the Kailas Mandir in the Ellora caves and remember that it is carved out of a solid stone hill, an effort that (inscriptions say) took nearly 200 years. This is art as devotion. The temple built by the Rashtrakuta kings (who also built the colossal sculpture in the Elephanta caves off Mumbai harbour) gives proof of the ancient Hindus' religious fervour.

But the Kailas temple also indicated a will power, a creative imagination, and an intellect eager to take on the greatest of artistic challenges. The descendants of those who built the magnificent temples of Bhojpur and Thanjavur, Konark and Kailas, invented mathematics and brain surgery, created mind-body disciplines (yoga) of astonishing power, and built mighty empires would almost certainly have attained technological superiority over Europe.

It is not just for "political reasons" that Hindus want to build grand temples at the sites of the (wrecked) Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, and the Mathura idgah. The efforts of religion-intoxicated and politically active Hindus to rebuild the Ram Mandir, the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, and the Krishna

Mandir are just three episodes in a one thousand year long Hindu struggle to reclaim their culture and religion from alien invaders.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 was just one episode in the millennial struggle of the Hindus to repossess their religion-centered culture and nation. Meanwhile, hundreds of ancient Hindu temples forsaken all over Hindustan await the reawakening of Hindu cultural pride to be repaired or rebuilt and restored to their original, ancient glory.

OUR GUEST

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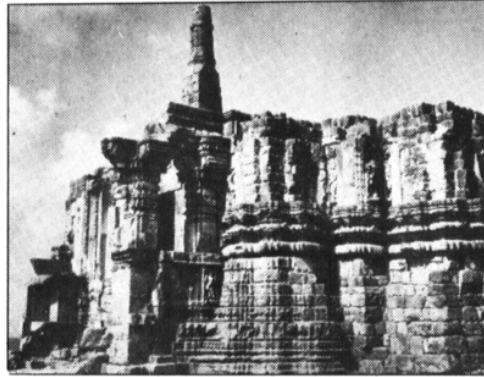
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Somnath temple in its depleted glory

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Heritage

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