

Temple Desecration under Muslim Rule: Critical Analysis of Orientalist Perspective

Motia Bibi* 

Lecturer, Department of History, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Pakistan.

Abstract: An attempt has been made that temple desecration is not something that was introduced by the Muslim rulers. Temple desecration was full-fledged established tradition even before the arrival of Muslims in India. Muslims just followed the tradition. Then why there is a deliberate connectivity of the issue with only Muslims rulers? These sensitive concerns were highlighted and associated with the Muslim rulers in erroneous way just in order to create rifts between Hindus and Muslims, to divide them and rule, and also to justify the imperialistic ascendancy of the British. This article is an attempt to break the deliberate historical silence upon the matter of temple blinding and maintenance by the Muslim rulers. Furthermore, I made an attempted to dislodge another erroneous notion that all the temples were destroyed by the theory of iconoclasm. There were more political reasons behind the temple desecration rather than religious.

Keywords: Temple, desecration, portrayal, religious violence, polytheism, nationalism iconoclasm

Introduction

The phenomenon of temple desecration in pre-modern India is a highly charged political issue. The Hindu nationalist historians held the view that from eighth to fourteenth century, religious violence in form of forceful conversion and temple desecration remained a constant phenomenon in the history of Muslim rule in India. The state policy of the Muslim rule in India was driven by the theory of iconoclasm or the image breaker. The portrayal of the Muslim rulers is depicted as fanatics, looters, plunderers, and staunchest enemy of the Hindus polytheism. All these accounts of hatred and religious violence were brought into light by the “efforts” of orientalist scholars. The discovery of ancient India and the subsequent rise of Hindu Nationalism are also indebted to the orientalists in South Asia. V. A. Smith, an orientalist historian, held the same views regarding the phenomenon of temple desecration. Smith in his celebrated monumental work, *The Oxford History of India*, accused the Muslim rulers for destroying the worship places of native population and looting their temples which were identical to the royal treasury. Henceforth, to Smith, the Muslim rulers were held responsible for religious violence and making India a raiding ground.

Phenomenon of Temple Desecration under the Muslim Rule in Smith's Work

According to the Hindu nationalist historians as well as Orientalists, it was a one point agenda of all the Muslim rulers to flush out the Hindus from India and eliminate every sign of their culture and religion (Elliot and Dowson 1877: 79). According to a renowned Hindu nationalist historian, Sita Ram Goel, all the Muslim rulers were set out on the journey to clean the land of India from the idolaters (Goel 1990: 21). Smith held that countless sculptures, idols, and forts of the Hindus were demolished, and numerous temples were desecrated by the Muslim intruders. In order to establish Islam, they slaughtered a large number of the Hindus, took away their women, and enslaved their children (Smith 1919: 681).

According to Hindu nationalist historians, the plan and policy of Muslim rulers and their armed forces was all-encompassing devastation of idols and desecrations of temples. A large number of Hindus got slaughtered by the relentless sword of the Muslim rulers. According to the view point of Hindu nationalist and orientalist scholars, sword was the only arbitrator of the Muslim rule. Similarly, Goel accused the Muslim rulers for forceful conversion and desecrations of 60,000

*✉ hamnamunib2005@yahoo.com

temples by means of sword. To him, the Muslim should have done it by good conduct and peaceful preaching like Christian missionaries (Goel 1990: 23). Instead, they opted for brutal and inhuman way of blood and dagger. In order to spread Islam in India they desecrated temples and started to erect their mosques on the ruins of temples which generated more heart burning and hatred (Thapar 1984: 97).

In *The Oxford History of India*, while describing the nature of relation between both the communities, Smith aligned himself with the Hindus by arguing that the Muslims were aliens and foreigners, who ruled the native population with utmost oppression and cruelty. As discussed earlier, Smith offered very dreadful accounts of Hindu-Muslim relations. He accused the Muslim rulers of relentlessly oppressing the Hindu population. Smith argued that although the Muslims were in minority, they always had an upper hand over the miserable Hindus; and the latter, though a majority, neither were given a respectable status of citizen nor did they have any kind of privileges (Smith 1919: 755; Srivastava 1980: 187).

In the view of Smith, the Muslim rulers also admonished them to practice their religious rituals and, in order to spread Islam, they desecrated the Hindu temples. Smith supported his arguments with references from the medieval Persian chronicles. He stated that practice of temple desecration by the Muslim rulers in Medieval India is proved by these sources with extensive evidences (Smith 1919: 668; Elliot and Dowson 1877: 335; Al-Badaoni 1976: 335). Smith asserted that:

“the temples were converted into mosques and abodes of goodness, and the ejaculations of the bead-counters [worshippers using rosaries] and the voices of the summoners to prayer ascended to the highest heaven, and the very name of idolatry was annihilated... Fifty thousand men came under the collar of slaver, and the plain becomes black as pitch with Hindus (Smith 1919: 222).”

To Smith, the ancient temples which were cradle of Hindu Civilization were practically

reduced to rubble owing to the religious fanaticism of the Muslim rulers. The phenomenon of temple desecration and the construction of Muslim structure on that particular site were so common that almost majority of mosques, dargahs and other Islamic architectures are stood on the ruins of the Hindu temples (Smith 1919: 227). The Muslim rulers looted the temples one after other and then built their religious sites by the remnants of the demolished temples.

Smith mentioned about Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna that he was habitual of using the winter season for his expeditions and within three months, he used to get done with the massacre of thousands, collection of enormous amounts of wealth, capture of numerous slaves; he would then leave to spending summers at his capital. In 1009 CE, he stormed down the rich temple of Kangara, the treasure included; “jewels and unbored pearls and rubies, shine like sparks, or like wine congealed with ice, and emeralds like fresh springs of myrtle and diamonds in size and weight like pomegranates.” After pillaging the Kangara temple, his next target was Mathura, the holy city of Krishna. Mahmud ordered his army to pulverize ancient temples and burn them to the ground. He is well-known for his expedition of Somnath temple (Fig. 1). Smith stated that during the Somnath expedition, more than 50,000 Hindus were slain and a huge amount of treasury was looted (Smith 1919: 193). In words of Smith, “Mahmud was simply a bandit.” The expeditions of Mahmud resulted in the loss of lives, destruction of temples and plundering of priceless monuments. Smith stated,

“plunder, devastation, and slaughter were continued. Every man that was found was slain, and all the women and children were made prisoners. All the palaces and edifices of the Mahmudi king's which had no equals in the world (Smith 1919: 218).”

He also stated that “many nobles’ monuments of the ancient civilization of India were irretrievably wrecked in the course of early Muhammadan invasions.” About Muhammad Ghori, Smith opines that he almost slaughtered all shaved headed Brahmins, burnt their great library,



Figure 1. Somnatha Temple at Somnath, Prabhas Patan, in Gujarat, (Courtesy: c. 1869 by D.H. Sykes)

and everything he came across. Noble monuments of ancient civilizations were reduced to rubbles and Muslim architecture and edifices were built all over in Bengal after its subjugation by Ghori Empire. Smith accused Ghori that he “defeated the huge Hindu host with immense slaughter at Chandrawar in the Etawah district near the Jumna (Smith 1919: 221).”

About Sultan Iltutmish, Smith suggested that in his efforts to construct the Muslim architect, the Hindu temples were destroyed. He is of the view that, “the materials of no less than twenty-seven Hindu temples were used in the erection of the ‘Kutb’ mosque” (Smith 1919: 221). To him, most important sources of evidences regarding temples desecrations are that of the Persian chroniclers, epigraphic data cited from the translated works of early scholars, and literary sources of famous court historians of that time (Smith 1919: 337).

The medieval Persian sources recorded the offenses and cruelties of the Muslim rulers including the demolition of the temples. The Muslim rulers felt pride over the desecration of temples because they take it as religious and moral duty to destroy all the temples on earth. In fact, they wanted to purify the whole Indian land from the existence of infidels (Srivastava 1980: 185). In the words of Smith:

“All the leaders in the Muslims conquest in the Hindustan similarly rejoiced in committing wholesale massacres of Hindu idolaters armed or unarmed. Their rapid success was largely due to their pitiless ‘frightfulness’ (Smith 1919: 223).

Smith argued that in the process of temple desecration and their replacement with the Islamic architecture across the length and breadth

of India, the Muslim rulers were responsible for the assassination of moral fiber of Indian religion and culture. To him, the so called pseudo-secularists Mughal rulers were no different than their predecessors of the Delhi Sultanate for they too demolished an unknown number of temples and never accepted the long list of their misdeeds and cruelties on their Hindu subject (Smith 1919: 323).

Temple Demolition during the Pre-Sultanate and Sultanate Eras

According to Smith, from eighth to eleventh century, when Muslim invaders turned their heads toward India, it used to be a richest region on Earth. India at that time was celebrated and recognized as the hub of silver, gold, spirituality, cultural diversity, home of precious and semi-precious jewels and stones. Unfortunately, the Muslim invaders, following to the theory of iconoclasm, severely damaged and desecrated the ancient Hindu religious monuments (Basham 1975: 13).

The Muslim approach towards the temples was obsessed with their hate and abhorrence for idol-worship. The Muslim invaders destroyed temples and other Hindu edifices of art and architecture and reduced them to rubble (Goel 1990: 53). This historical fact was held by the Muslim chroniclers and cited by large numbers of historians. The historical sites of Maheshwar, Dwarka, Ujjain, Mathura, and Varanasi were left totally deprived of any sign of temples (Smith 1919: 662). Virtually the period of thousand years was spent smashing, desecrating, and demolishing the temples with a deliberate move to eliminate the Hindus along with their culture and civilization.

The Delhi Sultanate had successfully established itself after the demise of Ghori. By this time, the policy of state consolidation was replaced by the policy of expansionism (Young and Norman 1857: 14). During this period, instances of temple desecrations were motivated by the humiliation of the political rival (Juzjani 1881: 816; Barani 2004: 169). Kashmir, Malwa, and Rajasthan became the victims of the same established tradition by Sikander Lodi in the early sixteen century. The Muslim rule is full of

such kind of events. In eastern Andhra, in 1478, when the Bahamian battalion was found guilty of betrayal and treachery, the Sultan personally fought the war and destroyed the client temple after the blockade of six months (Juzjani 1881: 511). In addition, a mosque was erected by sultan's order on the very site of that temple. Similar pattern was followed by the Sultans of Adil Shahi dynasty. In order to punish the Maratha mutineer, the temple of Shiv ji was demolished. Furthermore, pieces of desecrated temples were used in building the edifices of the Muslims. Ahmed Shah Mosque and Jamia Mosque in Ahmadabad, Fort of Junagarh, and mosque in Uparkot, and Bhojshala Masjid in Indore were erected on the ruins of the temples. Adding to the misery of the Hindus, the Muslim invaders forbade them to practice their religious and cultural rituals (Upadhyay 1979: 274). They spoiled the ancient Indian wisdom, astronomy, mathematics, science, and culture along with other oral traditions. The Muslim barbarians violated the moral practices of Hindu culture and polity. The Hindu religious elite along with their associated temples underwent massive devastation under the Muslim rule (Basham 1975: 245).

Temple Demolition by Mughal Rulers

The Mughal era is marked with peace regarding conflicts with the Hindus (Goel 1990: 122). In Mughal period there are a very few instances of temple desecrations with the exception of Aurangzeb. However during Babur's period the accusation, the destruction of Ayodha temple by Mir Baqi, is frequently cited by the Hindu nationalist historians (Eaton 2004: 116). They claimed that the Baburi mosque was built on the site of Ayodha temple which is the birth place of Ram (Banerji 1936: 76). Emperor Jahangir also followed the policy of temple desecration. In 1613, he desecrated the client temple of Varah which was associated to the Rana Amer of Mewar. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, a number of ancient temples were demolished. Smith, while discussing the rule of Shah Jahan, stated that, "at Benares, all through his dominions in every lace, all temples that had begun should be cast down. It was now reported from the province of Allahabad that sixty-seven temples had been destroyed in the

district of Benares.” Smith while describing the rule of Aurangzeb assessed, “to all the governors of the provinces to destroy with a willing hand the schools and the temples of the infidels; and they were strictly enjoined to put an entire stop to teaching and practice of idolatrous forms of worship” (Smith 1919: 397; Sharma 2005: 96).

Critical Analysis of Smith's Views

The phenomenon of temple desecration has taken its new shape after the demolition of Baburi Masjid by Sangh Parivar in December 6, 1992. Academic blocks and researchers have started to draw new parallels between the Indo-Muslim rule and religious violence. Sita Ram Goel, a Hindu nationalist historian, as cited above, has presented a text regarding the desecration of temples and claimed that sixty thousand temples were destroyed during the Muslim rule in India (Goel 1990: 57). Smith, with orientalist approach, charged the Muslim rule in the same manner as the Hindu nationalists are doing today. In order to understand the recurrent occurrence of temple desecration, one should bear the following questions in mind: in pre-modern India, why temples were destroyed? Under which circumstances temples were desecrated and who was the destroyer? What were the motives behind this demolition? What was the nature of the nexus between religion and politics in pre-modern India?

Temple Destruction and Persian Chroniclers

Persian chronicles were the main source from which Smith and Hindu nationalist historians have cited their references and data. These sources were in fact the translated works of orientalist scholars during British colonial rule (Eaton 2004: 101). The most popular of all the sources is *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, an eighth volume compiled by Sir Henry M. Elliot (Elliot and Dowson 1877: 67). It was first published in 1849. The work is full of exaggerated events, including forceful conversion, butchering of those Hindus who had disputes with the Muslims, temples desecration, remarkable British achievements, powerful Muslim despotic rule, imposition of *Jiziya*, ban on worships and religious processions of Hindus, demolition of idols, forced

marriages of the Hindu women with the Muslim men, wholesale massacres of natives, intoxicated Muslim rulers in power and women, and tyrant nature of the Muslim rulers (Barani 1991: 683; Sirhindi 2004: 184).

The eight volumes of this mighty work is full of vilification of Islam and the Muslim rule. The commencement of “new” era in the history of India is marked by the arrival of the British when the true motives of colonialism, came under the lame light with the transformation of economic drive into political interest. After the subjugation of India, there was beginning in the production of knowledge. As decoded by Edward Said, Orientalism is the field of full fledges scholarship (Edward 1978: 97; Farishta 1612: 167). Persian sources were translated by the ‘official scholars’ in accordance with the theory of knowledge and power. The motive of the orientalist scholars was to create a space for colonial ascendancy by defaming the Muslim rule and they did it through academic sponsorship. For this reason, Smith portrayed the Muslims as foreigners with strange dressing unlike Hindus, flesh eaters, drinkers, and demolishers of temples. Smith aided his research with the help of Persian chronicles and sources of that time. Orientalist works; translations and edited documents are based on selective data and manifest their approach to highlight the tyrannies of the Muslims rulers on their Hindu subjects. They have cited the selective facts and records and introduced limited epigraphic data. Besides, these translated works are taken at their face value (Cohn 1996: 79; Grewal 1975: 111-17; Thapar 1984: 97). V.A. Smith is no different than other orientalist scholars and his work was also meant to achieve the same objective of defaming the Muslim rule in India. All these works required scrutinized study.

As the Muslims had always been a minority in the subcontinent, they were interested in commemoration of their deeds and achievements. It is the key factor that these Persian chronicles are obsessed with the glorification of the ancestors and provided a source of remembrance and celebrations (Khan 2013:7; Juzjani 1881: 523; Eaton 2006: 14). Furthermore, these chronicles were meant for the targeted audience i.e. the

Muslim minority (Eaton 2004: 197). Being written for the adulation of the Muslim rulers, these sources are exceedingly exaggerated, and those exaggerated accounts were manipulated by the orientalist scholars to implement their “divide and rule” policy and also to justify their imperialist designs (Heehs 2003: 170; Sharafuddin 1994: 1-43). Thus, Persian chronicles provided British with a market place where the latter could sell their agendas.

Economic Motives for Temples Destruction

As far as temple desecration is concerned, it is historical fact, according to Smith, that in 986 CE, Ghaznavid leader, Subuktigin overpowered the Hindu-Shahi Raja looted and plundered wealth, burnt alive the Hindu infidels, demolished all their temples and established Islam as religion. The same pattern continued to the end of the Muslim rule (Smith 1919: 217). The practice of early Ghaznavid rulers was apparently iconoclastic but economic in nature for the Hindu temples were the repositories of wealth. Henceforth, these early raids were marked with political i.e. to expand their influence, as well as economic motives i.e. to finance army. For instance, from the first raid of city Ray in 1029 CE, Mahmud managed to collect jewels worth five hundred thousand dinars, gold and silver worth three hundred thousand dinars, and coined money equal two hundred and sixty thousand dinars (Eaton 2004: 84). As soon as the Ghorid Empire replaced the Ghaznavid, the policy was transformed. In order to build an indigenous Muslim state in India, the very first signal was given by the socio-political circumstances of Delhi (Nijjar 1979: 110). After establishing dynasty, legitimacy was established through the Chishti sufis in medieval India (Anjum 1998: 99; Qadir 1992: 239). On the contrary, their Hindu counterparts drove their legitimacy and power from ‘patron god’ in royal temples (Eaton 2004: 57; Davis 1991: 6). Political and royal authority was connected with the state deity. Temples associated and identified with political sovereignty were the main motivations behind the policy of iconoclasm.

The gesture of establishing mosques on the sites of the temples can be contextualized in the light of disestablishing and delegitimizing the enemy’s

rule and power. Owing to the same cause Ulugh Khan looted the temple of Somanth and sent its image to palace of ‘Ala-al-din Khilji as a trophy of victory (Hardy 1998: 217). Moreover, in Mughal rule whenever a Hindu official was found guilty of treachery or disloyalty, his temple and patron god was desecrated as punishment. Proceeding to the Mughals, Emperor Jahangir also pursued the policy of temple desecration and in 1613 CE, he desecrated the client temple of Varah which was associated with the Rana Amer of Mewar (Elliot and Dowson 1877: 93).

Temple as a Site of Religio-political Contestation

In Indo-Muslim state in pre-modern India, mosques bear no resemblance with temples regarding political charged motives. While on the other hand, the power nexus of royal temple, state deity, and patron-client was very assertive and threatening in nature. Moreover, temples remained the natural sites for political contestations throughout ancient, medieval, and modern India. Contrary to it, the construction of mosque by any ruler or a wealthy man was considered an act of piety and religious duty. The mosque had never been associated with power politics and its administrators were not the stakeholders of power along with ruler or any other political actor (Eaton 2004: 111). Mosques are the symbolic representation of God’s superiority over the ruler. In Islamic rituals, it is the house of God and hence, it was His property only. While the temples were the expressions of deity’s power and their occupation over the certain territory (Eaton 2006: 173). Mosques had no associations either with territory of sovereignty or dynastic authority. Consequently, mosques are politically immobile and dormant.

Although Persian chronicles condemned the practices of idolatry but it is also a fact that only those temples were desecrated who bore the charges of political affiliations or having state deity in them. Furthermore, highly sovereign powers were attributed with that state deity and geography in which the temple was constructed. The link between the deity and the geography was a complicated. It was believed that the patron god

had his or her share in power exercised by the ruler. Owing to power sharing and political affiliation, the temples were brought to desecrations. Besides, divine powers were also associated to the state deity and its manifestation was claimed through the ruler on earth who was the owner and administrator of the temple (Thapar 1984: 9).

Temple Desecration by Hindu Rulers

The complicated power nexus of state deity, ruler, and royal temple is an established fact in the ancient Indian epics. For instance, infringement of *Shiva-linga* is the symbol of termination of the ruler and his regime. The history of ancient India is also marked with the temple desecration during the inter-dynastic conflicts (Eaton 2006: 187). Figure of Genesha was plundered by the Pallava king Narasimha Varman I from Chlukyan, capital of Vatapi, in 642 CE. Similarly, after half a decade, the icon of Ganga was looted and plundered by Chalukyan dynasty in revenge (Will 1993: 59; Majumdar 1977: 357-61; Thapar et al. 1969: 14). The historical account of ninth century presents that emperor Govinda III invaded Sri-Lanka and stolen the Buddhist image of gold which symbolized the Sinhala state at that time in commencement of tenth century as a gesture of revenge, Paratihara king Herambapala managed to secure pure golden image of Vishnu god from the ruler of Kangra (Hardy 1998: 122).

The practice was carried on during the eleventh century when Rajendra ruler of Chola dynasty created an exhibition room of numerous images which he looted from neighboring sovereigns. For instance, the image of Kali from Kalingas of Orissa, Ganesha and Durga as the image symbols of Chalukyas, Shiva of Bengali Palas, and Nandi image from the eastern Chalukyas. Sometimes these looted images were hanged on the main door of palace of victorious king as the symbols of trophy. The ruler of Kashmir Harsha had identified the status of temple desecration with the legitimacy in the end of eleventh century. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the Muslim rulers were engaged in establishing an indigenous empire in Northern India, a Jain temple in Gujarat was invaded and looted by the Paramara dynasty (Shulman 1980: 48).

In the light of above cited examples, it is clear that the tradition of temple desecration was not introduced by the Muslim invaders as was presumed by the orientalist scholars. The historical tradition of looting and plundering was passed to the Muslim rulers from the Hindus Temples were the accepted sites for the contestations of political authorities since ancient times.

Religious Symbolism and Temple Demolition

Political leadership of the Mughal Empire was enlightened enough to perceive the considerations of highly charged political symbolism of temples. The supposed connections between the royal Hindu patrons and client temples were a source of revolts; they were a power base, parallel to royal authority (Blochmann 1873: 57-59). There remained a possibility of reassertion to the previous state of confrontation. Due to this, whenever a Hindu official was found guilty of disloyalty, his patron temple was desecrated publicly. This act was completely justified and lawful by the central authority as all temples were the property of state; hence, state could punish the traitors by demolishing the disloyal client temple with his patron official (Goel 1990: 43).

During Aurangzeb's regime in 1661, a famous temple of Benares was demolished for its support to the act of treason (Elphinstone 1841:196; Friedmann 1975:21; Jalal and Bose 1997: 25). It is said that the ruler of Benares helped Shivaji to escape and also supported the rebellion against the Mughal Empire. Shivaji was the arch-enemy of Aurangzeb; therefore, as an act of punishment, he not only desecrated that particular temple but also banned the construction of new temples in Benares (Elphinstone 1841:199). Owing to the same case, an Islamic edifice of *eidgah* (place for the congregation prayer of Eid Festival of the Muslims) was erected at the site of Keshva Deva temple in Mathura city in 1670 CE, by Aurangzeb. Similarly, many temples became the victim of imperial animosity and were demolished. In Rajasthan, Khandela, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Chitor and all those temples which sided with Dara Shikoh, the rival of Aurangzeb for throne, were destructed (Sarkar 1981: 57). The act of temple desecration was to punish the

treachery of officials and leaders. Conversely, the Muslim officials who were involved in treason were usually dismissed from the ranks and were deprived of all the privileges and in case, if the act of disloyalty was too serious, it resulted in the death of those Muslim officers or leaders.

Smith's Silence on Temple Building and Maintenance by Muslim Rulers

The Mughal era was marked by the pragmatic approach, and politically uncharged temples were mostly left untouched. Sanskrit inscriptions are the evidence that Muhammad bin Tughluq had deputed the officials to repair the Shiva temple of northern India after many years of its annexation in 1326 CE and demolition (Hussain 1967: 66; Wagner 1996: 851). The pattern of temple desecration of pre-modern India was gradually transformed into the protection of temples in post-subjugation period. The architectural master of Mughals' ideology was Abul-Fazl (Beveridge 1979: 69; Ahmed 2015: 143). According to him, India was not a country of infidels who must be confronted and converted. Akbar systematized a complex involvement of political and religious power nexus to run the administration system in a smooth manner. Thus, Rajput officials under Akbar were allowed to build their colossal temples (Beveridge 1979: 270). Raja Man Singh was the patron of the great Govind Deva temple of Brindavan. Even after 1605 CE, Muslim monarchs had raised the status of temples to the state property which meant that the task of maintenance of temples was no more duty of particular sect but it was responsibility of the government of the day. Akbar's descendant had restored the cult of Orissa temple. Shah Jahan in his personal and official capacity used to participate in the religious festivals and celebrations of Orissa temple.

Aurangzeb was accused of religious bigotry, yet ironically during his reign with the exception of ambiguous temple of Benares, no other temple was desecrated elsewhere, he united himself with his liberal predecessor by ordering that not a single ancient temple should be desecrated but he broke with the tradition by stating that neither a new temple will be erected (Ali 2001: 51; Sarkar 1981: 57). Simultaneously, this statement was

generalized over all period of Aurangzeb. Contrary to the assumptions of orientalist together with the nationalists, this order of Aurangzeb was merely confined to Benares (Ali 2001: 52). Apart from this region, practice of building and maintenance of temples remained continued everywhere else (Jalal and Bose 1997: 27).

The early Muslim rulers had tagged on and sustained what they found as legitimate pattern. Indo-Muslim chronicles were meant for selective audience and the purpose of exaggeration was to glorify and commemorate the religious zeal and zest of ancestors of the Muslim rulers. Attributions of temples desecration was sometime associated to those rulers who had never experienced the phenomenon at all. According to the contemporary epigraphic data, more than 80 percent temples were destroyed by the Muslim rulers owing to religious zeal. But if we compare these facts and figures to the claim of nationalist historians of India, it fell short. Hindu nationalist historians accused Muslim rulers for desecration of 60,000 temples which is an exaggeration.

However, moving to the next question, under which circumstances temples were desecrated and who is the destroyer? It seems appropriate to state that only those temples were desecrated who had political affiliation and were symbols of state deity or patron god. All other temples were left unharmed. Next to it, this recurrent pattern was only followed in the areas of moving military zones. Desecrations were sometime occurred by military commanders and sometime by the rulers, not by religious leader. Furthermore, the main drive behind the temple desecration was economic in nature, regardless of religion. As cited above, temples were the rich repositories of wealth and thus naturally attracted the opponents. In order to establish, maintain, and consolidate an empire, huge sum of wealth was required and temples were the magnetic zones of wealth (Eaton 2000:66). Apart from internal consolidation, the constant threat of Mongol invasion was also a key factor which heavily drained the economy of the Delhi Sultanate (Young and Norman 1857:14-21). Therefore, one can see that early attacks on temples and raiding were not for the cause of annexation but were merely wealth drove moves

to finance wars against repeatedly Mongols invasions (Eaton 2000:76).

Henceforth, the phenomenon of temple desecration by Muslim rulers is misleading. These sensitive issues were over generalized and over emphasized by orientalist like V. A. Smith. He also offered extensive accounts of forceful conversion of Hindu populace by Muslim rulers. These sensitive concerns were highlighted in erroneous way just in order to create rifts between Hindus and Muslims, to divide them and rule, and also to justify the imperialistic ascendancy of the British.

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