# Event, Memory and Historical Analysis:

# A Reconstruction of Temple Destructions in India

Amit K. Suman and Namita Singh

## Abstract

This paper will highlight the myths that surround the question of mass conversion to Islam and the so called temple destructions by the Muslims during the formative years of the Sultanate and the Mughal rule in India. In this paper we would discuss the different studies that came up around the question of destruction of religious places by the conqueror and the political reasons and motive behind it. This paper will, in its limited capacity, also see the role of constructed memory by political agents over a period of time that have now become so deep rooted that they form the basis of our fundamental understanding of Islam. Some of the important questions dealt with in this paper are: Were the attacks on Hindu temples during the medieval period orchestrated to assert religious superiority or to establish political dominance? Were these Muslim kings the first ones to destroy the places of worship or was it also an indigenous practice? What purpose did destruction of temples serve? Did the contemporary audiences react in the same manner to these destructions or is it a recent outlook and reaction?

## Keywords

I

Every citizen of our country is familiar with the ongoing communal unrest within our country, especially with the communal violence and riots. Some of us might have been witness to it while others were probably too young to remember. There have been some who have yet to observe and experience the horrors of such violence, although they may have heard stories of it or seen depictions in popular cinema regarding the same. One of the most talked about episodes of communal violence in the recent past is the demolition of Babri mosque and the violence that followed it as a result of the demolition. Our paper discusses the fundamental causes and interpretations prompting the act of temple destruction by the Muslim rulers and the constructed memory of it that is a part of common perception amongst the masses. The aspect highlighted here is the role of memory and its manipulation over a period of time for specific agendas. We would also look deeper into and explore the then prevalent rationale behind the destruction of temples as a practice driven by reasons other than religion at its crux, leading us to investigate politico-economic and socio-religious angles as well.

The position and the role that need to be assigned to religion in history, especially in determining the content, direction and place of social change, are matters on which sympathizers of historical interpretations have widely diverged. After the riots of 1993, the historians were forced into looking for the genesis of such hatred and determine whether the root of such profound and ingrained detestation between Hindus and Muslims lay in the history of the establishment of Muslim rule in India. The first people to study the history of India using the modern tools were the imperialist historians who projected the medieval period as the Muslim period due to the destruction of supposedly large number of temples and Muslim conversion from Hinduism to Islam. The best example of such study is seen in the book *The History of India as told by its own*

**69**

*Historians,* by Elliot and Dowson[1]. This book is a translation of selected items from Persian sources and acted as the major source for the study of the medieval period. Their choice of abstract on the other hand was based on an objective to project India as a divisive society and hence not ready to rule itself. The subsequent imperialist historians took Elliot's thesis as the basis of their study. They also tried to portray the medieval state as the center of conflict between Hindus and Muslims because they tried to characterize the Indian people as spiritual in essence, hence extremely religious, and not hierarchical. They created a category by the virtue of essentialism of iconoclasm[2]. In their perception, the Indians were essentially religious in nature therefore all conflicts that took place had to be communal in nature. The grounds for such a conviction were the wrong perception and confusion about the Indian institutions where castes were confused with religion and the political rulers perceived only as Muslims. The focal point of nationalist sentiment is the most visible symbol of Hinduism, its temples. As many as 60,000 Hindu temples are said to have been torn down by Muslim rulers, and Mosques built on 3,000 of those temples' foundations [3] . Hindu nationalist historians have projected this vision of separateness into the past, stating that Indian Muslims of the Middle Ages were a community totally different from and implacably opposed to the Hindu majority on religious grounds. Moreover, Indian Muslims are defined as a social group that is not indigenous, but of foreign origin to the subcontinent. Secular Indian Historians have decried this interpretation as a misrepresentation, a reading of the past that modern communal biases distort. [4] At least at the

---

[1]H. M. (Henry Miers) Elliot & Sir Ed. John Dowson, (1872). *The History of India as told by its Own Historians; The Muhammadan Period*, London, Trübner & Co.

[2]Eaton, Richard, (2008). "Temple Desecration and Indo- Muslim States*",* In *Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples,* Sunil Kumar (ed.), Three essays collective, pp. 93-95.

[3] See Gold, Daniel. (1941). 'Organized Hinduism: from Vedic truth to Hindu Nation', in *Fundamentalism Observed*, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., Chicago University Press, pp. 531-93.

[4] Talbot, Cynthia, (1995). "Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-colonial India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37 (4): 692-722.

village level, secular historians argue that Hindus and Muslims shared a wide spectrum of customs and beliefs, at times even jointly worshipping the same saint or holy spot.

It is true that several temples were destroyed in the medieval period but it cannot entirely be attributed to the Muslim reaction or their hatred towards Hindus. The number of temples demolished or desecrated, as forwarded by a few of the nationalist historians in their zeal to prove India as victim, has been reported to be as high as 60000 only in sultanate period[5]. However a more recent and critical analysis has proved that the estimated number of such temples for the whole of the medieval period does not exceed 60 in all[6]. Some might argue that even the destruction of one temple and the violence accompanying it shows the barbaric nature of the state. It is here that it becomes imperative to probe into the various roles the temples played during that period or in other words what a temple meant in terms of its significance to the people in general. Deserving scrutiny and equal importance are the occasions on which the temple were attacked and the prime motive behind such attacks. The perception of an image kept in a temple in Medieval India represented the iconic nature of Indian culture based on primary and secondary significance. Nowhere are we able to find the evidence of intentional defilement or public mutilation of the idols by anyone who saw them[7]. Also the instances of destruction of religious spaces were a part of the Indian culture from 6th century AD as the temple formed a part of the affirmed political sovereignty of the ruler of a particular region and its destruction was seen as part of an acknowledged legitimacy of an imperial power. It also diversified the secondary meaning in implying the submission and subjugation of the previous power by the

---

4 Eaton, Richard, (2008). "Temple Desecration and Indo- Muslim States", In *Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples,* Sunil Kumar (ed.), Three essays collective, pp. 93-95.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Davis, Richard, (2008). *"Indian Art Objects as Loot", Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples?*, Sunil Kumar (ed.), Three essays collective, p. 34.

new imperial force. The temples had been the natural sites for contestation of kingly authority in India. The Turks, in an attempt to establish their rule, merely followed the old Indian traditions that existed prior to their invasion. In very few cases was the plunder actually followed by the subjugation, therefore, looting in the medieval south Asia was an important element in the rhetoric of kingship, evident from the epigraphic account of the Cholas over Chalukyas[8]. Even the *Manusmiriti*, a normative text of conduct in Hindu society states that property of plunder is matter of "victory" and not of theft[9].

Richard Davis, in his work, goes at length giving extensive description and evidence of the desecration of temples in an attempt to mark the authority and might of the conqueror. In 642 AD, according to the local tradition, the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I looted the image of Ganesha from the Chalukyan capital of Vapati. Fifty years later the Chalukya king Vinayaditya brought back from Northern India to the Deccan, the images of Ganga and Yamuna, supposedly looted from their defeated powers. A similar act was adopted by the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III in the 9th century when he occupied Kanchipuram, who in turn was sent several images by the Sri Lankan king (which represented the Sinhala kingdom) which were then placed by Govinda in his Shiva temple. The Pandyan king Srimara Srivallabha too seemed to have invaded the Sinhala kingdom around the same time and brought back a golden image of Buddha which was a part of the Sinhalese Jewel Palace. The Chola king Rajadhiraja and Harsha of Kashmir had also followed the tradition of looting and plundering kingdoms defeated by them in the 11th century. Therefore, the destruction of royal temples of the political adversaries was a common practice among the major Hindu dynasties. The attacks on Jain and Buddhist temples for the sake

---

[8]Ibid. p. 30.
[9]*Manusmiriti,* 7.96.

of war booties was also a regular practice during the early medieval period which seems to have been widely incorporated by the Hindu and Muslim kings alike. The attacks on the temples in the Gangetic plains by the early Turkish rulers like Balban are attributed to the need for money in order to safeguard their northwest frontier from the Mongol attacks. The menace caused by the Mongols and the fear inflicted into the rulers are evident by their political policies which have been discussed in detail by the contemporary court historians. Typically in India, temples formed an integral part of the constitution of the political power hence it was important to destroy the temples once the authority had been destroyed. Even during the Mughal period, the peace time had witnessed no destruction of temples, however, whenever there had been a military conquest, it led to the displacement of the idol in order to wipe off and overrule the political influence and legitimacy of the defeated king.

Richard M Eaton believes that temple destruction by Turks and other Muslim rulers throughout India was motivated by political, far more than religious, considerations. The temples destroyed lay either in kingdoms in the process of being conquered or within the realms of rebels. Because a royal temple symbolized the king's power in Hindu political thought, destroying it signified that king's utter humiliation. The characterization of Muslims as rabid iconoclasts driven to destroy idols because of religious ideology is far from truth, in Eaton's opinion.[10]

II

It is a well known fact that the Somnath temple was attacked all of 17 times by the Mahmud of Ghazni. This particular recurrent incident has been discussed and popularized by the politicians time and again and has certainly had a profound effect on the masses. In Indian history as well,

---

[10] Eaton, Richard M, (1993). *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

the Somnath temple has been a popular topic of study and most of the writers who have examined the case of Somnath have relied majorly on the Persian sources in which Ghazni's invasion of Somnath has been considered as a victory of Islam over the infidels[11]. This kind of a commendation for the victor by praising a newly instated religion could have been more of an attempt to win favour with the patrons of Islam than detestation for Hinduism. This is evident by the admiration of Indian wealth and knowledge of astrology mentioned in the same books by the same author. A more balanced study which is based on Sanskrit and Jain scriptures was undertaken by Romila Thapar. Her study, much to our shock, claims that the Somnath was a relatively insignificant temple of medieval times, therefore different sources had different notions or opinions regarding the attacks on the temple by Ghazni. Jaina sources in their recording indicate the incident as a victory of Jainism over Shavism and the supremacy of Mahavir over other Hindu deities[12]. Whereas most of Sanskrit sources have ignored it and have no mention of the Somnath plunder. Jain and Sanskrit sources both do not mention the Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion, leave alone any such memory of pain and devastation by Muslims among the contemporaries as is vehemently claimed by today's politically ambitious figures. The Jaina and Sanskrit sources did not consider the destruction of temples in their accounts. The recordings do not have a mention of the event as a major occurrence in history and right after 100 years of the event the sources go completely silent about it. This could have also been the case with the memory of the masses of that time period, since destruction of temples was tradition in India which had its roots in 100 A.D. These sources however do mention the renovation work of Somnath and other temples undertaken by the local rulers, who were either the Afghans or the Mughal nobles, once Malwa and Gujarat were conquered by Akbar. It is only when the religious

---

[11] Wink, Andre, (1990). *Al-Hind, Vol-1,* Delhi, pp 173-187.
[12] Thapar, Romila. (2005). *Somnath: The Many Voices of History*, Verso.

identity of one becomes hostile to another that the beginning of communalism is seen. Therefore the Somnath destruction and Mahmud's invasion was not a part of popular memory.

The destruction of temples in general used to be a part of political expansion and temples were not destroyed once the pacification or establishment of political formation had taken place. In most of the cases once the consolidation of power had taken place the same temples were patronized and maintained by the imperialist power. Also, had it been for the anti Hindu feeling behind the destruction of temples, it would only be logical that all the temples in a region would be destroyed, but in this case only the ones which were patronized by the king were attacked, majorly because it served as a legitimizing body and were political symbols within the military territory.

As far as the 17 attacks by Ghazni are concerned, they have been attributed to political as well as economic motives. Mahmud of Ghazni, at the given time, was facing a security threat in Ghazni which called for a standing army and maintaining such an army could have had been possible only with the availability of finances. It was for this money that he plundered the Somnath temple which was famous for its wealth. Ghazni not only attacked Somnath but also plundered a mosque in Mansurah. Besides, more than Somnath, it was Gujarat that was more promising for Ghazni as Gujarat was situated near a port and was the epicenter of horse trade and incidentally, horse trade happened to be the main source of income for the Ghaznavid Empire. Hence it was only normal for Ghazni to want to establish his monopoly over it by capturing the port.

III

The fundamentalists of today have also from time to time portrayed Aurangzeb as a religious fanatic over several issues, the most important ones being the ban on construction of temples and

**75**

the imposition of the Jazia. The religious policy of Aurangzeb is considerably clouded by controversies and has drawn attention of a number of historians. Historians like S.R. Sharma[13] and Jadunath Sarkar feel that Aurangzeb's reign marked the end of the era of enlightened liberalism which had its origin in Akbar's time, the reason being the bigoted and puritanical nature of the Emperor, who followed a communal policy. However recent scholarly research done by historians like Satish Chandra[14], M. Athar Ali[15], etc. feel that Aurangzeb has been the worst victim of prejudiced writing in history. According to them, no doubt with an orthodox bent of mind, Aurangzeb was also a statesman and that though he must have formulated these policies and might sometimes have given them religious colouring, it may have been done solely to ensure that such policies proved favorable to the stability of the Empire. Athar Ali says that it was just superficial Islamization. Therefore, in order to bring forth a clear perception of whether Aurangzeb was an Islamic Emperor or not, events have to be traced to their origin and causes behind the policies have to be analyzed and their diverse effects have to be studied in a historical sequence.

The example of Aurangzeb's fanaticism given by Jadunath Sarkar[16] is regarding temple destruction. Sarkar maintains that in 1669 AD, the Vishwanath Temple in Banaras and Keshavrai Temple were demolished. Further, Aurangzeb issued decrees known as Banaras *Farman* and Vrindavan *Farman* that no new temples were to be constructed and the old standing temples were not to be demolished. Though these *Farman*s must have, to a certain extent, discriminated

[13] Sharma ,Sri Ram (ed.) (2008). *Aurangzeb*, Oxford, New Delhi, 2008, and  Sri Ram Sharma (ed.) 2001*The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors,* Book Enclave.

[14]Chandra, Satish, (2007). *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications.

[15] Ali, M Athar, (2001). *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

[16]Sarkar, Jadunath, (1912). *History of Aurangzeb: Based on Persian Sources*, M.C. Sarkar & Sons, Calcutta.

the non-Muslims, yet no co-ordinate state policy is perceptible. However, in some cases the demolitions of temples were acts of retaliation against Aurangzeb's enemies in a bid to undo the support the temples offered to his enemies, as can be seen in the case of Banaras where the authorities played an important role in Shivaji's escape. Further we also find that Aurangzeb displayed a kind of ad-hocism in selecting the temples for demolition. Tt is interesting to note that despite ordering the demotion of certain temples, he also undertook construction of temples and granted donations to the *Maths*. The Vellalpur temple was built by him in 1658 AD in Bengal and furthermore, land grants were made to Satranjayo Arjun and the Abu temples in Gujarat.

IV

We now come to the last part of the essay which discusses the construction of a popular memory over a period of time. The implications of memory of historical events that have come to pass are varied ranging from passive to inflammatory and provocative, primarily due to two factors. The first factor is a biased study and account of events by historians influenced and driven by their own political or religious beliefs, eager to establish religious supremacy in their work, leading to prejudiced points of view. The second factor is the re-construction and popularizing of historical events in a distorted manner by some communal regional and national level political parties to achieve their political objectives. Construction of memory of chronological events is a commonly adopted practice by such historians engaged by political parties to influence the masses directing them towards a mindset conducive to their electoral agendas. As has been discussed above, the 1993 Mumbai riots are a classic example of such distorted construct and dissemination of memory leading to communal unrest, the root cause of the riots being the destruction of the Babri mosque by a national political party to establish and re-affirm their

**77**

Hindutva identity as a retaliatory exercise to counter the destruction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya by the Mughals. A popular belief was inculcated in support of such action where it was highlighted that temple destruction was undertaken in the medieval era by the then Mughal rulers purely on religious grounds in order to institute the preeminence of Islam over Hinduism.

In sharp contrast with the popular and constructed notion on the historical practice of destruction of temples carried out by the Islamic rulers, that has been developed for and propagated through the masses as a justification for the demolition of the Babri mosque, the ensuing riots and the resultant visible and delicate communal divide that has developed in our society, we have revealed in the preceding sections, that the destruction of temples was never really about asserting religious superiority, nor was it practiced only by the Islamic monarchy. Such practices were adopted by Hindu rulers as well, from as early as the $6^{th}$ century AD, to serve the purpose of affirmation of authority and as a mark of submission of the previous ruling power, and in certain cases as a method of restoration of the wealth, of which numerous examples have been cited. This precedent of temple destruction was taken up by the sultanate, with little evidence of such acts based on a religious premise, but more so to consolidate their financial position so as to sustain their military forces. Hence it is palpable and safe to assume that the current inculcated memory of the incidents of temple desecration by the Mughals is only proliferated to meet the desired results dictated by the divisive politics of certain active political forces.

The pillage and demolition of temples has in fact, not been given much importance in the historical recordings of the medieval era, so also with the significance associated with the temples themselves. The referenced work of Romila Thapar clearly highlights the inconsistency with respect to prevalent contemporary memory, in that the Somnath temple, though undeniably plundered 17 times by Ghazni, has been attributed to purely political and economic, and not

**78**

religious reasons. Further, the Somnath temple, carrying such colossal importance today, does not find a mention in the Sanskrit records. Evidently, that may have been the case with most temples existing during that era. We have also drawn attention to the contradiction in the constructed memory of Aurangzeb and the biased approach in which Aurangzeb's policies have been recorded, wherein he has been deemed fanatical in his religious practices and principles. His decree of restricting not only the construction of new temples but also mosques has been shown to be in line with economic reasons. And although Aurangzeb did demolish the Vishwanath Temple in Banaras and the Keshavrai Temple, these acts may have been prompted by the desire to assert his power over his adversaries. While such desecrations are attributed to Aurangzeb, it is equally important to keep sight of the fact that Aurangzeb also constructed temples and supported the cause of temple construction by providing financial aid and land grants as elucidated earlier in this paper.

Historical memory plays a very important part in our society. How the memory is actually constructed and delivered is even more significant. We have been and will be subject to such historical interpretations and precedents that have been defined in a particular manner, allowing them to play a very important role in shaping the future of our social order. In as much as we may desire and expect the truth about certain events in history, an accurate portrayal of such events is rare as historians possess their own influences, inherent beliefs and external factors tuned towards specific applicability and consequences that determine how they look at history and record it. Given this anomaly, historical work undertaken is sometimes slightly deviated and at other times grossly misconstrued. It is visible to us, keeping in mind the above presented discussion on the trend of temple destruction in medieval India, how the events in history have been misrepresented in certain cases and weaved into the very fabric of our memory as a means

of justification and validation of the current socio-political and religious activism, which brings us to the means and methods adopted by entities that are responsible for utilizing or creating such historical deviations to fulfill their prescribed agendas.

The dominant scholarly trend of the past ten years has emphasized colonialism's impact on identity formation. Because large-scale conflicts between Hindus and Muslims began under colonial rule, the emergence of broadly based community identities during the nineteenth century has been closely investigated. Communal violence in itself was a British construct in some analyses because many other kind of social strife were labeled as religious, due to the Orientalist assumption that religion was the fundamental division in Indian society. There is a general consensus that it is questionable whether a Hindu or Muslim identity existed prior to the nineteenth century in any meaningful sense. Most scholars of the colonial period feel that pre-colonial society was too fragmented by sub-caste and local loyalties to have allowed larger allegiances to emerge. The work of Benedict Anderson[17], with its stress on the role of print-capitalism, has been particularly influential in promoting the belief that identities uniting large numbers of people could arise only after a certain technological level had been attained. A case in point to highlight such opportunistic and self-serving historical distortion and its propagation can be illustrated through the work of Badri Narayan. In his article titled "Memories, Saffronising Statues and Constructing Communal Politics[18]", Badri Narayan, in all clarity, brings forth the concerted efforts in "managing the memories of different communities and reinterpreting them at the local level to suit the logic of a particular political group". He goes on to highlight that "Lesser known historical events associated with particular communities are

---

[17] Anderson, Benedict, (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition ed. London and New York: Verso.

[18] Narayan, Badri, (2006). "Memories, Saffronising Statues and Constructing Communal Politics*" Economic and Political Weekly*. 41(45): 4695-4701.

searched out and converted into popular memory in a way that suits the political agenda of the concerned political forces."

The article revolves around how the political force active in the region of northern Uttar Pradesh, inhabited by a majority of Hindu Dalits, picked up on local history and folklore and converted it into a heroic tale of a local Hindu ruler who gave up his life fighting against the oppressive Mughal antagonist, in a bid to empower and mobilize the Dalit electorate of the region by projecting the Dalits as the saviors and defenders of Hinduism, while presenting the Muslim monarch as the oppressor. It is quite interesting to note here that prior to such propaganda, the Hindu Dalits of the region in question were more reverent towards the Muslim ruler, Ghani Mian (Salar Massood), and folklore suggested that the Hindu king, Suhaldev was cruel and tyrannical in his rule. Badri Narayan points out that the tomb of Ghani Mian was frequented and held in high regard more by the Hindus of the region than by the Muslims. However, the distorted account of history fashioned by the political faction created an image contrary to the actuality in order to bring about discord between the Hindus and Muslims of the region to satisfy their own political motives. The story was disseminated through various means such as public gatherings, organizing community meals, articles in the local newspapers, theatre and dramatization, narratives and discourses, establishment of schools and forums, etc. in an attempt to glorify Suhaldev while at the same time rebuke Ghani Mian as a foreign invader bearing the purpose of discoloring the Hindu culture, thereby invoking a feeling of guilt in the minds of Hindus who visited the shrine of Ghani Mian to offer their prayers. In a further attempt to legitimize and concretize the twisted historical account of Suhaldev and GhaniMian, religious anecdotes and icons were incorporated within the story, such as the cow, where Ghani Mian was purported to have used cows as a line of defense in the battle and Suhaldev, on the other hand, risked his life

to free the cows and help them away from the battlefield. Such annotations not only helped the cause of the political parties in realizing their objectives, but also created irrevocable animosity between the religious groups in the region. The presented account of "the construction of a Hindutva oriented communal history of Salar Masood and Suhaldev can be observed for evoking feelings of hatred against the other community."[19]

Badri Narayan through his work tries to exemplify how some political parties communalize the psyche and successfully alter the identities of the community top down by creating myths and employing constructed memory as a powerful tool to generate a rift between an otherwise peacefully co-existing community of Hindus and Muslims. It is imperative to emphasize, therefore, that constructed history and memory may be used as potent weapons to not only mobilize the masses but also effect a permanent change in the mindset of communities and society.

The above and many such historical recordings have in fact brought to light that the Hindus and Muslims may have co-existed in relative peace and harmony during the medieval era. It may be brought forth here that the Muslim Sufi clan of saints were known to be very peaceful, tranquil and tolerant in their conduct and demeanor. It is history convoluted to suit political schema, much like the constructed memory of temple destruction, that has led to an unstable communal scenario in our society primarily fuelled by divisive politics, which have resulted in the occurrence of the 1993 Mumbai riots and numerous other incidents of communal violence all over the country by creating a sense of resentment between Hindus and Muslims on religious grounds.

---

[19] Ibid., pp. 4695-4701.

In conclusion, it may be categorically stated that, based on the aforementioned discussion of historical facts on the trend of temple destruction in the medieval period, it has been demonstrated amply that such a practice was not only adopted by the Mughal Sultanate but in essence, initiated by the Hindu kings as early as the 6th century BC. Additionally, it has also been observed that the desecration of temples seldom stemmed from a religious aspect but mostly to either symbolize victory and submission or to consolidate economic position. However, since such acts of destruction have indeed been carried out throughout history; it has been easy to distort the facts and reasons behind such acts. Understanding earlier forms of Hindu-Muslim identities may help us grasp the impulses leading to modern communal conflict. It even offers us the dim hope of defusing present-day tensions by demonstrating that the communities of the past were not identical to those of the present. For, as Sheldon Pollock states in reference to the present Indian situation, "the symbolic meaning system of a political culture is constructed, and perhaps knowing the processes of construction is a way to control it"[20]. Particularly critical is the recognition that Hindu and Muslim identities were not formed in isolation. Although it may not be possible to reconstruct a detailed picture of Hindu-Muslim interactions in medieval India in terms of actual practice and behavior, we can and must recover the history of their mutual self-perception. Identity formation in praxis always involves both processes-articulation of group boundaries that excludes others, and the development of internal criteria for solidarity. The communal political parties, in an attempt to assert and firmly establish their Hindutva identity have adopted misconstruction and misrepresentation of historical facts as a matter of policy to conceptualize deviated and constructed memory of such events in order to effectively influence the masses and ensure that their political ambition and agenda is well served.

---

[20] Pollock, Sheldon, (2006). *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

In a society rattled by communal violence and intolerance towards other faiths, such politically motivated constructed memory, effectively disseminated through the powerful methods of propagation available today, may only contribute to further unrest and instability.

**Bio-note**

Amit K. Suman is an Assistant Professor of History in the ARSD College, University of Delhi. He is also working on his Doctoral Thesis "Indigenous Education and Institutions of Higher Learning in Colonial North India" at Department of History, University of Delhi. He has graduated from Ramjas College, University of Delhi. He has presented many research papers in different national and international conferences, and also written many papers for different journals and edited books.

Namita Singh is an Assistant Professor of History in the Satyawati College, University of Delhi. She is also working on her M.Phil Dissertation at Department of History, Ambedkar University, Delhi. She has graduated from Kamla Nehru College, University of Delhi. She has presented many research papers in different national and international conferences.

**References**

Ali, M Athar, (2001). *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Anderson, Benedict. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition ed. London and New York: Verso.

Chandra, Satish. (2007). *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications.

Davis, Richard. (2008). *"*Indian Art Objects as Loot*", Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples?* Sunil Kumar (ed.) Three essays collective p. 34.

Eaton, Richard. (2008). "*Temple Desecration and Indo- Muslim States", Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples,* Sunil Kumar (ed.), Three essays collective.

Eaton, Richard M, (1993). *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gold, Daniel. (1941). 'Organized Hinduism: from Vedic truth to Hindu Nation', in *Fundamentalism Observed*, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., Chicago University Press, pp. 531-1992-93.

H. M. (Henry Miers) Elliot & Sir; Ed. John Dowson, (1872). *The History of India as told by its Own Historians; The Muhammadan Period*, London, Trübner& Co.

*Manusmiriti,* 7.96.

Narayan, Badri. (2006). "Memories, Saffronising Statues and Constructing Communal Politics*",  Economic and Political Weekly,* 41 (45): 4695-4701.

Pollock, Sheldon. (2006). *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Sarkar, Jadunath. (1912). *History of Aurangzeb: Based on Persian Sources*, M.C. Sarkar & Sons, Calcutta.

Sharma, Sri Ram (ed.) (2001). *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors,* Book Enclave.

Sharma, Sri Ram (ed.) (2008). *Aurangzeb*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Talbot, Cynthia. (1995). "Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-colonial India", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37(4): 692-722.

Thapar, Romila. (2005). *Somnath: The Many Voices of History*, Verso.

Wink, Andre. (1990). *Al-Hind, Vol-1,* Delhi.