

Islam and Iconoclasm

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Geography has played a major role in the history of Arabia, both as homeland of Arabs and cradle of Islam. This huge quadrilateral shaped region is divided into almost two clear cut divisions. The south and part of west is surrounded by sea and is rain-fed. With only one river in south all the movement of men and material was land-based. The rest of the region is arid and inhabited by nomadic tribes generally on the move from oases to oases. "The peninsula, thus is a land of strident contrasts which contains in its frontiers the two extremes, side by side, as in the case of the fertile south, blessed with soil and climate... and the adjacent area to the northeast, a veritable hell on earth known as Empty Quarter, the arid area and the most extensive body of continuous sand in the whole world" (TCH)*. This area was dominated by domestication of camels by bedouins and date plants. Their life was a constant struggle for existence, hence war was natural institution waged by tribes for survival in the clan to which the bedouins belonged. The bedouins of the deserts and the sedentarized nomads of the oases were the two main group in the arid area of the north. Their language was *aribyya* (Arabic) with its various dialects.

The topography of the South-Western portion of the peninsula was inhabited by Sabeans of four areas. Their language was Sabean which was not Arabic, nor, Sabeans were of Arabic descent. "Those of the arid areas of the north, the Arabs lived mostly in north, both as nomads of the steppe and as sedentaries in the ring caravan cities (CHI-4) while the semetic south with developed civilization was prosperous and because of the international sea-traffic and land-traffic dominated the Arab peninsula. They were governed by *Mukarribs* (priest-kings) with a powerful chief called "qual". But the interface allowed migration on both sides to some extent "Religion was an important fact in the history of the south" (TCHI-7). "There was a close relationship between the deity and the man in south" (TCHI-9). The economic history is noteworthy in the development of Arabian peninsula. Of the luxury articles frank incense and myrrh and spices, etc. from Indian Ocean area were profitable trade items. Marib was the center of trade routes through north region also. The affluent society had internecine wars also on economic grounds. At this time the famous Arabian horses came into picture which greatly changed the political history of the peninsula after 300 CE. The religions of Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrian ideas soon percolated. Theirs was a business culture, their ideal was materialistic, relentlessly pursued towards the acquisition of wealth. There was, therefore, impermanence, except in their elegant and graceful scroll *musand*. This existence had its fall with the mission of Muhammad and the rise of Islam. Before this, however, the peninsula had developed in three zones of influences or orbits. The Persian, the Roman and the Sabean-Armenian influence was in north. Their clear manifestation was the adoption of its script as that of classical Arabic. Their influences lasted for three centuries till the rise of Islam. Changes were taking place and Mecca developed due to its sheltered western route. The literary changes developed a sort of common bond in the form of *al-arabiyya*, giving north a clear identity and awareness. Mecca slowly developed not only as a caravan station but also as a holy city. Founder or Querish dynasty (C.E. 500) contributed to

* For abbreviations, please see Bibliographical References in the end.

development of religious life which was unmistakably of polytheism and idolatry, which included the three goddesses Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat, the daughters of Allah. Nearly a century later was born Muhammad (570 CE Circa) who changed the face of not only Arabia but also of the whole world in the years to come. The common literary idiom perfected by the poets of pre-Islamic Arabia proved to be indispensable to Muhammad as Koranic revelations which took it as a model and which became a sacred, well understood and universal language of Islam through the Koran.

Till 624 C.E. Islam had many things in common with Jews and Christians. They prayed with their face towards Jerusalem. Abraham's role at this time became a decisive factor. "Muslims treated him neither as a Jew nor as a Christian, as he stood for pure monotheism." The Koran therefore claimed that it was restoring the pure monotheism of Abraham which had been corrupted in various ways, not clearly specified, by Jews and Christians. On 11th Feb. 624 C.E., an event is said to have taken place which symbolized the Muslim's break with the Jews, Muhammad was conducting prayers at salina clan's place of worship facing Jerusalem, as was customary, and this was itself a mark of Muhammad's desire to be accepted by Jews. As they prayed, however, he received revelation bidding him to take Mecca as his **qwibla**, that is, face in the direction of Mecca, and he and those praying above turned round. This break with Jews meant that from this time onward no attempt was made to win them by acceptance of Jewish practices. On the contrary Islam was developed as a separate religion, superior to Judaism and Christianity, and specially connected with the Arabs and Mecca. What appears as a religious decision, probably also had political aspects. Mecca's rich business community had not taken side of Muhammad. The battles of Badr and Uhud took place which made Muhammad's Medinese group stronger. Razias (Attack on caravana) became more common and lucrative. Even in the month of Ramazan, Muhammad allowed an attack on a caravan, resulting of course in bloodshed which was justified by the saying that a smaller sin is better to cover a bigger sin. For the next two decades or so treaties, alignments and consolidation of Islamic forces took place side by side with killing; violence, bloodshed became an integral part of Islamic expansion. However, not every thing went smoothly for *pax Islamica*, "as war of apostasy" (Ridda) shows.

The last two years and a half of Muhammad's life were thus occupied in dealing with the problems created by his successes. In March 632 C.E., he led the Great Pilgrimage or Haj to Mecca, and thereby incorporated in Islam pre-Islamic ceremonies. In June 632 C.E. the prophet breathed his last. It is said that a revelation which he revealed on his death bed was not recorded as people close to him felt that he was in delirium. What it was is not known. Muhammad's achievements during his life time itself was enormous in forging a strong religion based on political unit but the effects continue till date. He had the great gift of a seer *par excellence*, a gift of great charm in the handling of men and understanding their value to the cause. The rapid Arab expansion and the growth of Islamic culture would not have existed but for the unique combinations of gifts in Muhammad himself.

Naturally, after his death the people who founded schools of thought, as also some heretics, also came into that picture. It took almost a century and half for Islam to get established. However, despite stricture upon 'innovators', methods were employed which were not within the spirit of the Koran. Land belonging to Christian Churches were appropriated and possessions distributed among military chiefs (THL-126). Historians record that Sultan Chakmak once grew angry with Christians and ordered a number of their

Churches to be destroyed. The series of massacres and plundering which have marked Muslim rule over Christians had always some occasion which was not merely difference of belief. (THL-126).

"There are some peculiarities of Islam which are closely connected with its history (THL-4)." Firstly, a man must join Islam as a member and then only he can learn what his obligations are. While many religions enjoy some sort of knowledge of religion before a neophyte can join the order, it is not permitted in Islam, and if after joining he perverts, he forfeits his right to live. And it follows from this principle that martyrdom in Islam is different from, say that in Christianity. The Christian dies for his faith professing it, but not resisting it. A Muslim martyr is the man who dies for his faith on the battlefield, more often in endeavouring to force it upon others, than defending his ownself. His sacred book does not permit him to confess, which may result in torment or of death. Moral worthiness is secondary. All the past sins are washed off when he joins creed.

It follows, then, that Islam had to be preached with sword. They must pay homage to revelation first and then can examine any evidence, but then the evidence hardly matters. Muhammad argued for thirteen years and made converts by the unit or the decade; he drew the sword and won them by hundreds and thousands. Twenty years of fighting effected more than a thousand years of pleadings and arguing would effect. But just as the argument of reason is apt to be weakened if the sword be behind it, so the argument of the sword is not strengthened by the fact that the other form of reasoning has been tried in vain. Hence the periods of inquiry and probation are not desirable.

Islam started as a secret society and for sustenance it needed accretion of loyal members. Thus when Koran was compiled, they knew that some parts die abrogate others but no change was effected (Surah XXIX. 46-49 confirms this).

Probably there were more copies of Koran during compilation, but they were destroyed except the final version which we have today. To accept Islam simply meant to promise obedience to the prophet and the revelations. (Based on THL 8-19). The Koran eulogizes itself but rarely quotes itself, the only exception being the story of Abraham (Surah XIX 48 and others). It also states what is lawful and what is not.

At this stage we must carefully understand the meaning of two words which have guided the destiny of Islam since beginning.

(1) JIHAD "Striving", "exertion", usually translated as holy war against infidels; also the effort directed towards overcoming one's inner passions and imperfections of the soul (more specifically called *Jihad-al-nafs*).

(2) SHARIA The will of Allah, as expressed in the Koran and the Sunnah of prophet, the sacred law of Islam. (AITI, pp. 283, 287).

Islam grew in a melting pot of paganism, Jewish and Christian traditions in Mecca/Medina in the seventh century C.E. but established a totally clear identity of its religious principles which has grown to such an extent that it is the third largest religion followed in the world after Christianity and Buddhism.

The followers of Islam are called Muslims. The word Islam or correctly Al-Islam means, "The surrender" i.e. man's surrender to God's will and purpose. (Pickthal translation of the meaning of Glorious Koran-Surah II, p.32 fn.). While Prof. Waines in his book *An Introduction to Islam* translates it as "the willing and active recognition of and submission to

the command of the One, Allah" (pp. 3). Needless to say that both these authors are scholars of Arabic language and teachers of Islam in famous institutions. To understand Islam one must study the environs before its advent. Dr. Holt, Prof. of Arab History in University of London, has this to say (Introduction, pp. XI):

Primarily, of course, Islam is like Christianity a religion, the faith of Islam has, again like Christianity, been a great synthesizing agent. From its earliest days it displayed features of kinship with the earlier monotheisms of Judaism and Christianity...it was compelled to maintain and define its autonomy against older and more developed faiths.... It met the challenge of Greek philosophy. The first three centuries of Islam, like the first three centuries of Christianity were critical for establishing the norms of belief, practice and tradition. It did not stop here. The external frontier of Islam has continued to move until our own day. For most part this movement has been one of expansion into Central Asia, Indian Sub-continent and South-east Asia and into trans Saharan Africa. There have been retreats also.

"But besides this external frontier, which has largely been the creation of conquering armies there has also been throughout Islamic history an internal frontier the invisible line of division between Muslim and non-Muslim." This has brought both permanent and transient changes based on local effects. The Islamic *Ummah* or community of believer, organized power for mutual support in the maintenance of faith.

"Two of the principal institutions of Islam, Sharia and Jihad, the Holy Law and Holy War, are expression of the concern of its conservative and militant aspects respectively aspects moreover which are not wholly distinct since the Holy war is fought in defence of the Holy Law against its external and internal enemies."

"Like Christianity, Islam is a monotheism with an historical founder and a sacred book, although its theology in regard to both differs. There is a perceptible difference in the criteria of membership of the Community; whereas in Christianity acceptance of the Catholic creeds has been the basic criterion, in Islam creedal theology has been of less relative importance, adherence to the Holy Law is the characteristic manifestation of faith, and hence orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy has been the usual token of membership. Another difference is that Islam has no equivalent to the Christian sacraments, (although certain practices, notably the fast Ramadan and the Pilgrimage, appear to have an unacknowledged quasi sacramental character), and no priesthood, although the "Ulemā" (the religious scholars and the leaders of Sūfī orders have played an analogous part). The absence of Sacradotal hierarchy or of any conciliar system to define the faith, has made Islam more tolerant of variations of belief than Christianity. It is also true to say that since Islam is both a religious and a political community the distinction between religious and political dissent is not clearcut."

"The early historians (of Islam) were primarily religious scholars. The traditions which they recorded were in part "Tradition" in the technical Islamic sense i.e. Hadith, the memorials of the alleged acts and sayings of the Prophet, as transmitted by a chain of informants. There was no formal distinction between the historical Hadith and the main body of Traditions they in deed had in fact legal and social purposes. There is also the problem of knowing what is veritable record of Muhammad's activities, and how much is of subsequent and extraneous origins, assimilated in this form into Islam."

Recent ethnographic survey has found about 300 ethnic and linguistic group of people following Islam. Considering the ethnic, linguistic and geographical diversity of this vast group it may not be proper to speak of Muslim world in singular. This, worldwide forms the "Ummah" (in Arabic), which in the modern world, indicates a trans-national and cross-cultural loyalty shared by Muslims every where. This loyalty is based on the possession of a scripture which they hold to be the very words of Allah revealed through his messenger, Prophet Muhammad, for the guidance of his people and mankind. In this sense "Ummah" forms one community. But when you go further and analyse it you may find the manner in which Koran has been related. There is a persistent pluralism of views and customs throughout the history. One jurist may read the scripture to find a meaning which will be different from that of a mystic. In this sense religion is a happening and provides complex religious culture.

Dr. Margoliouth, Professor of Arabic in the University of Oxford in his "Hibbert Lectures" (1913) in the University of London has delved deeply in this psyche of Islam from which it will be possible to understand many events in correct perspective.

In Surah-1-of Koran is Al-Fatiha lat (the opening) which is treated as the essence of Koran. It is recited as an essential part in all worships, public or private by all Muslim. No agreement or solemn contract is valid without this. It was introduced probably in the tenth year before Hijrah, because by that time regular congregational prayers were offered by small groups of Muslims in Mecca. In that year, as the result of insult and attack by the idolators, the Prophet arranged for the services, which had till then been held out of doors, to take place in a private house (Marmaduke, *Koran*, p. 31).

THE OPENING

Revealed at Mecca

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Praise be to Allah. Lord of the worlds.
2. The Beneficent, the Merciful.
3. Owner of the day of the judgement.
4. Thee (alone) we worship, thee (alone) we ask for help.
5. Show us the straight path.
6. The path of those whom Thou hast favoured.
7. Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

This essence of Koran negates the Vedic saying एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति and denies the right of all other religions, the validity including Judadism and Christianity, to provide the reasoned approach towards worship of their religious rites, *et. al.* This very prayer divides the world into two simple groups, those who are believers and those who are not, i.e. all other religion and groups.

It is interesting to study the development of the word Allah. Mecca, where prophet Muhammad was born in Querish family, had Jews on one side, Christian on another side and the rest of the population was what is termed as pagan. Mostly Arabic tribes, who consistently fought each other for their clans supremacy. Arabic poets of these periods have mirrored the religious and moral values then existing. Among them was Zubair who flourished in the last days of paganism before the emergence of Islam. His cautionary words in a famous ode are highly revealing. It reads:

Do not conceal from
Allah whatever is in
Your breasts hoping it
May be hidden. Allah
Knows whatever is
concealed.

Zubair was reflecting upon the attempts of conciliators to terminate an eruption of bloodshed. These conflicts known as "the day of Arabs" was a warning to each to honour the agreement in good faith, for the inevitable consequence of deception would be the punishment of the betrayer.

The poets reference to Allah contradicted neither the pagan values nor the pessimistic ethos. Human life and artifacts were treated as inconstant destroyed by time. Yet certain natural phenomena resisted its destructive force like mountains, sky, etc. This was the beginning of the abstract notion of eternity. This was beyond *dahr* (Time) and embraced the idea of a single, unique eternal entity.

It was the god in whose name Zubair's younger contemporary, the prophet Muhammad, would address his first revelation to his kinsfolk and probably a secret society group. The poet's perception of Allah was of the prophets. The two were alike in name but not in substance. It was the prophets message which would displace the pagan conception of Allah providing dramatic departure from the cultural religious norms of his day and marking a new era on the religious map of Middle-East.

In pagan eyes "Allah" was the "High God"; neither the sole object of worship nor indeed the sole existent god, he was only above other tribal divinities. Thus in matters of daily concerns Allah occupied a particular place, but alongside other gods in the Arabic pantheon. In case of immanent danger the pagan responded not by acknowledging Allah's mercy but by reverting to worship of familiar graven images of tribal cults.

Tradition records that the city of Mecca was an important place of Pagan worship. Allah was lord of the central shrine, a cube like structure called Kabah. He was said to have three daughters, called Al-lat and Al-Uzzah, both astral deities and Al-Manat, a goddess of fate. In or around Kabah the representations of more than 300 gods were housed. One of them, the greatest was called Hubal, a bulk of red agate in the form of a man whose right hand was broken but was replaced by one of gold. The guardians of shrines were drawn from Muhammad's clan of Quresh. Other shrines also existed elsewhere but they were not important. There were portable gods also. Veneration of ancestors in some cases led to their elevation to deities. The after life held neither special terror nor concern for the Arabs then. Only tribal laws were upheld and ostracisation turned the person into a non-being.

There is historical evidence about discontent with such a concept. Before Muhammad *Hanifs* also had begun to seek religious alternative, to the problem of idol-worship. Ibn Ishaq, describes the *Hanifs* dismissal of the idols as objects which could "neither hear nor see, nor hurt, nor help". The word *Hanif* occurs several times in Koran but no definite or clear meaning is available. However, it is significantly associated with the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) who resembles Muhammad most in the Scripture (2.124, 10, 153). Both suffered a lot in their belief for omnipotent God, a belief which resulted finally in their bringing down the helpless idols worshipped by their peoples. Muhammad's mission was thus

to restore *Hanifite* faith. He is treated as the first Muslim, i.e. one who submitted himself to the act of belief in one God to the exclusion of others. The Koranic command (10.105) conveyed through Muhammad states "set your face steadfastly towards the true faith as a *Hanif*, and be not among others who ascribe divinity to others besides Allah (25.3). The conclusion was simple, the threat to the Meccan way of life was the replacement of Sunnah of their forefathers with the Sunnah of Allah (48.23). According to Ibn Ishaq, coercion inducement of wealth, power and prestige failed to deter Muhammad. His message was simple "Exalted be my Lord. I am but a mortal, a messenger of God" (17.93). Very soon, the power of Allah, the One omnipotent God made changes and the idols seemed to offer no real protection to society. Over two decades of wars turned most of these pagans into believers of one God. When Muhammad died, Abu Bakr admonished, "If any one worships Muhammad, Muhammad is dead, if anyone worships Allah, He is alive." After Muhammad's death these revelations were collected and set forth in the form of today's Koran.

We now come to the word "Icon". Its dictionary meaning is a figure, image, a portrait, carved painted etc. but not sculpture. Iconoclasm means breaking of images and opposition to Image-worship or an idea. In this sense Islam has been an iconoclasm religion right from the days of poet Zubayr, Prophet Abraham, and Prophet Muhammad. Today there are obviously no images of that period in Mecca Only the Kabah exists. Destruction started both in thought and physically right at that time. But very surprisingly there is no mention of the breaking of idols in the Koran. In various Surahs both of Mecca and Medina reference have been made against idolaters. Some of these are seen in the Appendix attached. The general impression is of exclusion and inferior status of the idolaters and their sufferings in after-life.

The revelation of Koran was not in Arabic language but in a "divine language" which was revealed by prophet for the benefit of the general masses (S.XLIII.2, XLIV.58).

At this juncture there emerged an aspect of more general world view against Kafirs (ungrateful disbeliever, 2.257) which says "Allah is the protector of the believers; He brings them out of the darkness into light. And the unbelievers whose protectors are the idols, that bring them forth from the light into darkness deep, those are the inhabitants of Fire, therein dwelling forever". By the eighth year of Hijrah (CE 630) the Muslim occupation of Mecca was complete. Ibn Ishaq describes the end of pagan Mecca, marked by the destruction of the idols of Kabah, on which occasion Muhammad recited the Koranic verse "The truth has come and falsehood has passed away" (S.17.82). Two years later prophet Muhammad passed away addressing the community in his final public address the words that "all Muslims are brothers and there should not be any fighting between themselves." It is also clear that there is no wholesale rejection of pagan moral ideals. Generosity, courage, loyalty, veracity and patience were assimilated but under the covering guidance and command of Allah.

Initially Islam was Mecca-Medina centric. The expansion due to conquests brought problems not acknowledged earlier. Because Koran cannot be described as a compendium of laws, not surprisingly traditions developed as a support structure. It had two components, the substance (*matn*) and the chain of transmitters (*isnad*). Kitab-ul-Muwatta (CE 795) contain many of the traditions. There is also "hadith quids" which was revealed by Allah but was not a part of the scripture.

This brought about the broad group of learned persons of Koran collectively known as "Ulema" who were responsible for reproduction and dissemination of religious knowledge. They were followed by clerics who guided the believers in day to day life and the

third group was that of the believing masses. This religious hierarchy stands even today. This resulted later in conflict (*fitnah*). The first major schism was of Suni's and Shias. A third and smaller group emerged as Kharijites, or as some say, the Fundamentalists."

A question which normally arises is why such differences arose. It is accepted that Surahs are not in any sequential order of time and principles. Thus a later Surah may not be in consonance with the previous one. The accepted principle in Islam is to accept that the later one is correct as the later revelation corrected the earlier one. Some say there is some error also in commentaries. The tradition was that the scripture/books would be copied and then get duly certified. Hariri, the author of the work which perhaps comes second to Koran in popularity, informs us that he would have introduced a correction had it not been that by that time he had certified 700 copies. Of course, the error is not known (THL-H8).

The Hibbert Lecturer gives another example. To many of the Surahs letters of alphabet are prefixed, like ALM, TSM, T.S. HMASQ etc. It has been explained as follows by Dr. Margoulith:

- A.L.M. : That is the writing those there is no mistaking it, for, those are the letters of wise writing.
- T.S.M. : Those are the letters of perspicuous writing.
- T.S. : Those are the letters of the reading and a perspicuous writing.
- HMASQ : Thus doth God (Allah) reveal unto thee as unto thy predecessors

With the help of the sword the Muslim victories grew in area but posed the problem of how to treat the subject of those areas. The Ulemas decided that as Muslims only were to follow Muslim way of life, the non-Muslim subjects were to be treated 'Dhimmi', or protected person. It included Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Samaritan and even idol-worshippers and fire worshippers. They were guaranteed safety of a person's life, property and religious practices on payment of Jizayah.

Gradual development of jurisprudence took place and four schools became prominent. The Baghdad School died early. The Hanafi school remained strong in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and India. The Maliki school went westward to Egypt, North Africa, and central and west Africa and the Iberian peninsula. The Shafi school developed in Cairo. It exists in Egypt, part of Arabia, East Africa, Central Asia and part of coastal India. The Hanabalis had a slow start and remained in Baghdad and Damascus and later it was adopted as official religious school (of *wahabis*) in Saudi Arabia. (The Taliban regime adopted the Wahabi School). Then came the turmoil created by Kharjities and the Musijites.

Later development was of Sūfī Path. A divine saying (Hadith qudsi) is "I am with my servant when he thinks of Me". Another is "My servant does not cease drawing near Me with devotions of his free will until I love him I am the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he works which he grasps and the foot with which he walks". This devotional attitude brought a tremendous amount of tolerance.

During the last 100 years, and particularly in last 50 years a lot of research has taken place both by Muslim scholars and western scholars of Europe and U.S.A. They take support from the available subsidiary material of that period. There are two groups, the 'hawks' banks and the 'doves'. Some of them have challenged that Koran was not Mecca-Medina Centric but was developed in the northern Arabia. There is also a view that Aristotalian ideas find place in Koran. However, these are not accepted by bulk of the scholars. As far as Hadith is

concerned there is a general agreement of its being not authentic, if not in whole, atleast in bulk of it.

The secular concept of statehood went against Islamic theology and reformers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (C. 1850) in India, and in Egypt voices arose to adjust other system of governance with Islamic ideas. There is no mention of idol-breaking as a divine order either in the Koran or in any other writing even till today. Yes, iconoclastic ideas have constantly perturbed everybody.

Every religion has a psyche as a whole which provides the general framework in which the adherents are to function. This, however, may or may not always be the same for the individual follower. He follows it to a great extent on his perception. Ajit Singh in his article calls this as their brand of religion. They can kill, maim, set ablaze, destroy, demolish without causing a ripple in their conscience for the sake of their so called religion. It becomes a subterfuge. Before we discuss iconoclasm, we see, as said earlier, Islam utilized the edge of sword as a means for finding adherents. The political history of Islam, the magnificent growth after the prophet, whether caliphate, Mamluks of Egypt, the great Ottoman empire, the incursion in Russian areas upto Mangolia, the torching of Moscow, the battle of Cyprus in which 350 ships were destroyed and 19,000 men were killed, were based on this psyche.

Their Islamisation of Persia and penetration in India all point to this factor. The victors had enough justification to destroy not only idols but all that was ever of some religious value for the unbelievers. Because according to Islam these unbelievers were already destined for Hell-fire. Michael Cook has struck a proper judicious saying: "The bottom line in the study of early Islamic tradition may well be that anyone can wriggle out of anything" (Princeton pps.).

For centuries Bamiyan and sculpture in Kabul museums were not un-Islamic. One fine day the then ruling Ulemā said, they were un-Islamic and they were destroyed knowing very well that like burning of the library of Alexandria human kinds' property was being destroyed with no chance of their reconstruction ever. The damage was not to material only but to human thought, effort and the grandeur of the creativity of art and knowledge.

"The experiences of the Prophet's life the constant bloodshed which marked his career at Medinah, seem to have impressed his followers with a profound belief in the value of bloodshed as opening the gates of paradise. Among the many pathetic stories which Tabari has preserved is that of the Penitents, inhabitants of Kufah who had invited the Prophet's grandson (daughter's son) Husain to come and be their sovereign but owing to the vigorous measures of the governor of Kufah, left Husain in the lurch, who was presently surrounded by the Umayyad troops at Karbela, where he and many members of his family met their deaths. The death of Husain has been to a large portion of the Moslem world the analogue of the Crucifixion: the culminating crime of the whole world, too horrible to mention, yet always to be kept in mind. When these Penitents became conscious of the offence which they had committed, they decided that they must not appear before their Creator without having taken steps to atone for it; they must take the life of those by whose hands Husain had fallen. When they had taken this resolution, there was already a considerable reaction against the Umayyads, for indeed the slaughter of the Prophet's household was eminently calculated to produce on; the authorities in Kufah promised the Penitents their aid and support, merely desiring that this endeavour to avenge Husain should be undertaken with caution and prudence: only the Penitents declined. It appeared that their desire was far more to lose their

own lives in the pursuit of their aim than to compass that aim, an avenue to paradise was opened to them, and they hastened to take it (THL. 55/56).

History has always justified such initial reaction but the interface later on proves that the initial reaction was not correct. Yet the violence and destruction of images and temples and churches satisfied the individual's psyche, but not of the religion (5.ix.6.S-II, 190, 5-IX.7).

(Appendix)

Relevant references from The Koran

- (i) Neither those disbeliever among the people of the Scriptures nor the idolaters love that there should be sent down unto you any good thing from your Lord. But Allah chooseth for his mercy whom He will, and Allah is of infinite bountry. (Surah-II, 105)
- (ii) Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth nor aggressors. (S-II, 190)
- (iii) And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter. And fight not with them at the Inviolable Place of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you there, then slay them. Such is the reward of disbelievers. (S-II, 191)
- (iv) Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein. (S-II, 257)
- (v) There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejeceth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer. Knower. (S-II, 256)
- (vi) Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters. (S-III, 67)
- (vii) Is one who followeth the pleasure of Allah as one who hath earned condemnation from Allah, whose habitation is the Fire, a hapless journey's end? (S-III, 162)
- (viii) O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. He among you who taketh them for friends is (one) of them Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk. (S-V, 51)
- (ix) And if anyone of the idolaters seeketh thy protection (O Muhammad), then protect him so that he may hear the word of Allah, and afterwards convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not. (S-IX, 6).
- (x) How can there be a treaty with Allah and with His messenger for the idolaters save those with whom ye made a treaty at the inviolable Place of Worship? So long as they are true to you, be true to them. Lo! Allah loveth those who keep their duty. (S-IX, 7)
- (xi) It is not for the idolaters to tend Allah's sanctuaries, bearing witness against themselves of disbelief. As for such, their works are vain and in the Fire they will abide. (S-IX, 17).
- (xii) Those who disbelieve, theirs will be an awful doom; and those who believe and do good works, theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward (S-XXXX, 7).
- (xiii) And those who put a way false gods lest they should worship them and turn to Allah in repentance, for them there are glad tidings. Therefore give good tidings (O Muhammad) to my bondmen. (S-XXXIX, 17)

- (xiv) He hath ordain for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which we inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which we commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying; Establish the religion and be not divided therein/ Dreadful for the idolaters is that unto which thou callest them. Allah chooseth for Himself whom. He will, and guideth unto Himself him who turneth (toward Him). (S-XLII, 13)
- (xv) That He may bring the believing men and the believing women into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide and may remit from them their evil deeds. That, in the sight of Allah, is the supreme triumph. (S-XLVIII, 5)
- (xvi) And may punish the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women and the idolatrous men and the idolatrous women who think an evil thought concerning Allah. For them is the evil turn of fortune, and Allah is worth against them and hath cursed them, and hath made ready for them hell, a hapless journey's end. (S-XLVII, 6)

(These revelations are taken from *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. An explanatory translation by Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthal, published by MENTOR BOOKS).

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7. एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति
("The Truth" is explained by Learned People in different ways.)

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