

COWARD HINDUS OR FAILED ISLAM IN INDIA?

Dr. Madan L. Goel
Professor Emeritus of Political Science
The University of West florida

Mahatma Gandhi once said: “Hindus are cowards and Muslims are bullies.” Many Hindus tend to accept this epithet. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In a civilizational war, Hindus stood their ground and did not succumb to Islam. This short essay lays out an argument.

Islam’s Rapid Expansion

Islam may be dated to 610 AD, when Mohammad began having conversations with Archangel Gabriel. Mohammad’s message one true God named Allah attracted a number of followers. But the leaders of Mecca rejected his new teaching. Conflict ensued. In 622, Mohammad was forced to flee to Medina, some 240 miles to the North. Mohammad became the leader of Medina and within a few years felt emboldened to raid Meccan caravans. Mecca signed a treaty of friendship and allowed Muslims to enter the city for pilgrimage. Subsequently, Prophet Muhammad captured Mecca in a bold move. By the time Mohammad died in 632 AD at age 62, he had become the supreme figure in all of Arabia.

Muslim conquests did not stop with the death of Mohammad. Within two years, the holy warriors attacked and conquered the two very powerful empires of the period: Byzantium and Persia. It seemed that, armed with faith in Allah, nothing could stop the soldiers of Islam. In 712, Arabs captured a slice of Sindh on the frontiers of India. In 715 they took Spain after conquering North Africa.

Thus, in less than 100 years after Mohammad’s death, the Islamic rule stretched from the frontiers of India all the way to Spain. Victories resumed after a hiatus of three centuries. Believers captured Anatolia (Turkey) in 1071, the throne of Delhi in 1201, and Constantinople in 1453. The Ottomans in Turkey took over the countries of Eastern Europe including the Balkans. Only in 1683 did the clock turn back when the Turks failed in their siege of Vienna and retreated.

Islam’s rapid rise from insignificance to a vast international empire had a touch of the miraculous. How could the Muslims have attained all this if Allah did not favor the Muslims? The fabulous military victories demonstrated to the faithful God’s pleasure with their ways and displeasure with the ways of the infidel.

The Failure of Islam in India

Islamic armies conquered and ruled Northern India for some 500 years, 1,200 to 1,700 roughly. Islam’s conquest of India was indeed a protracted and a bloody affair, but it did not fully succeed. It failed to subdue the southern provinces of the country. Majority of

the Hindus did not convert to Islam. This is in contrast to Islamic conquests of Persia, the several countries in the Middle East, Byzantium (Turkish empire in the Near East) and North Africa. Here, Jews, Christians and Pagans succumbed; large numbers were massacred or converted to Islam.

The Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul (*Beyond Belief*, 1998) observed that the Arabs were the most successful colonizers in the world. The Arabic language became the sacred language for over a billion people. Arabic heroes became heroes in the entire Islamic world. Bowing towards Mecca five times a day must surely count as an ultimate symbol of Arab cultural imperialism. Many Berbers in Tunisia, Algeria, Libya mistakenly believe that they are Arab rather than Berber. Similarly, Africans in northern Sudan identify themselves as Arab.

The Lament of Poets Hali and Iqbal

The failure of Islam in India is a singular exception. It was lamented by leading Muslim poets: Altaf Hussein Hali (1834-1914) and Allama Sir Mohammad Iqbal (1873-1938). Both sang the praises of Islam but bemoaned its failure in India. Hali's *Mussadas* is a famous poem which now is a required reading in many Pakistani schools. Hali lamented Islam's failure in India in the following often quoted lines.

I give the lines both in Urdu and in English translation (stanza # 113).

*Voh Din e Hijazi ka bebaak bera
Nishan jis ka aksay alam me pahuncha
Mazhaam hua koi khatra no jis ka
Na Oman me thithka Na Qulzum me jikhka*

*Kiye paar jis ne saton sumundar
Voh duba dahane me Ganga ke akar*

That fearless fleet of Hijaz (area of Mecca and Medina),
Whose mark reached the extreme limits of the World
Which no power could obstruct
Which did not falter in the Gulf of Oman or in the Red Sea

That Hijazi fleet which spanned the seven seas
Lies shattered in the mouth of the Ganges (India)

Allama Sir Mohammad Iqbal (1873-1938) also lamented the failure of Islam in India. He noted that Hindus (Kafirs) prospered while the Muslims were backward and poor. In his long poem *Shikwa* (Complaint), Iqbal penned the following often-quoted lines:

*Tujh ko maloom hai leta thaa koi naam tera
Qavat e buzoo e Muslim ne kiya kaam tera . . .
Qahar to yeh hai ke kafir ko mile Hur-o-qusur
Aur bichaare Muslmaan ko faqt vada i Hur*

Allah, do you know that none sang your story
It is the strength of the Muslim that spread your glory . . .
The shameful thing is that Kafirs enjoy *Houries* (virgins) in this life
But Poor Muslims have only a promise of *Houries* in after life

When Muslim raiders destroyed numerous Hindu and Buddhist shrines, people stood firm. They sang and chanted Lord's holy names in their native tongues. It is noteworthy that many Hindu sages and saints were born during the Muslim period in India. The list of Hindu saint-poets during the Islamic period is a long one, and includes: Mirabai, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Chaitanya, Namdev, Tukaram, Surdas, Ravidas, Tulsidas, Parandara Das, Tyagraj, to name just the leading ones. The devotional poetry derived from Hindu scripture helped subvert the draconian Islamic rule. The devotional poetry penned during the period is popular to this day in India and wherever Indians are settled.

It is easier to bring down monuments and temple walls. It is more difficult to bring down music and art. Who survives after 500 years--invading Babar or Guru Nanak?

Hindus should give up the false notion that Islam vanquished Hinduism in India when Muhammad Ghori usurped the throne of Delhi in 1201. Hindu resistance continued throughout the Muslim hegemony. Finally, Maharaja Shivaji defeated Mughal armies in 1659-60. During the next 75 years, the Marathas conquered vast erstwhile Mughal territories. Due to internal divisions and intrigue, the Marathas lost the empire to the British in 1818.

In summary, the extended Islamic rule of India never succeeded in converting the vast majority of the people to Islam. This is unlike the history of Islamic conquest in Persia, as well as the countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

It may also be noted that India was the first major country in Asia to throw off the British colonial yoke in 1947. Much of the rest of Asia and Africa followed.

Reading: The books by Ram Swarup and Sita Ram Goel are relevant here.
See: Hindu View of Christianity and Islam, by Ram Swarup

[Heroic Hindu Resistance to Muslim Invaders](#) by Sita Ram Goel

[The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India](#) by Sita Ram Goel.

These and other books are freely available at: <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/>.

Also see Dr. Goel's related articles at: <https://intellectualkshatriya.com/madan-l-goel/>