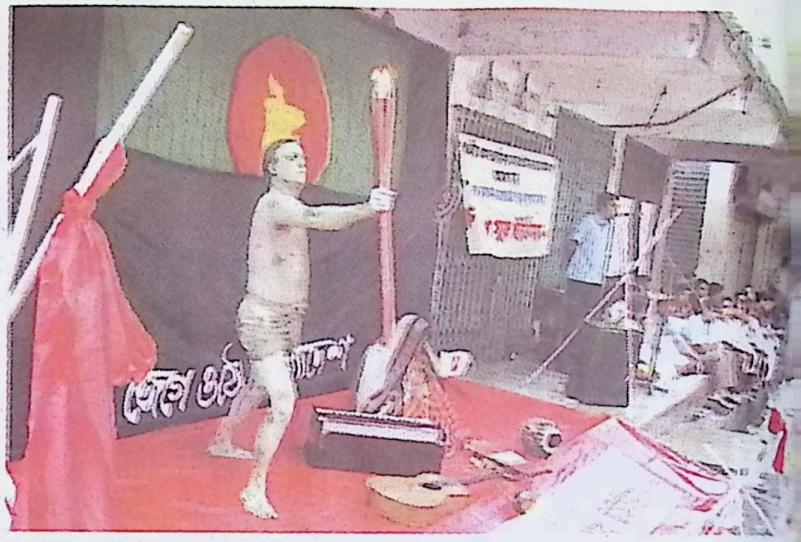
A news report, on the Turkish Daily News, very recently wrote about the researches done by a famous religious scholar, Makki, according to which the Quran specifies no specific injunction against the making of statues. He says that in Sura 34, verse 13, of the Quran, statues are mentioned in a favourable manner, made for the Prophet Solomon by the Jinn -- They (the Jinn) made for him what he willed, palaces and statues, basins like wells and boilers built into the ground. Even though, Sura 5, verse 90 in the Quran clearly prohibits, as elsewhere in the Koran, idolatry, (Believers, wine and games of chance, idols and divining arrows are abominations devised by Satan), according to Makki's researches, if a statue is made, not for worship but for other reasons, and is not treated as an idol, then it is clear that there is no prohibition of sculpture in the Quran. According to Makki, in the early periods of Islam, people were not confused between sculptures and idols. It was only much later that the confusion between the two ideas came about. The same news report mentions the historian Abu al Hassan 'Ali al Masudi who recounts how in 896 AD, a large brass statue of a Hindu Goddess, brought to Baghdad was exhibited on certain days to the population of Baghdad, drawing large crowds. It seems evident that without the intent to worship, statues of themselves, even those of goddesses, were not defaced or smashed but were instead regarded with interest by the population in the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate.

Other than Makki, there are hundreds of other scholars as well who have done similar researches and come up with the same results. Promising bloodshed on the streets by the so-called Islamic leaders will neither help their so-called fight to establish an Islamic state nor will it have any meaning to the common man. Instead, research should be encouraged to learn more about a religion, Islam in this case, which seems to hold much more than what has been shown to us or taught to us.

Unfortunately, the demolition act probably had much more to do with gaining political power rather than dealing with religious extremism. Last week, many cultural activists said that the installation of "low-quality sculptures" at the airport intersection and their removal under pressure from fundamentalists was a "stage-managed drama" to abet fanatics in their conspiracy to destroy the country's arts and culture.

There is no way one can deny the significance of baul traditions of Bangladesh that includes the acetic lifestyle of these mystical men and the spiritual essence of their music that has been inspiring millions for centuries. Maqsoodul Haque, a well known musician, who has extensively researched the baul history of Bangladesh, writes in his book 'Bauliana' published from Inmark in June 2007, about Fakir Lalon Shah's (known as Shaiji to his followers), date of





While cultural activists, students, and artists come together to protest the demolition of the sculptures, religious fanatics on the other hand demand the removal of all sculptures in the country.

However, not only have their activities created a bigger distance between religion and the common people, they have also openly shown to the world a distorted, violent image of Islam. They have presented Islam as a religion that promotes intolerance, bigotry, bloodshed and inequality, which is quite the contrary of what the religion preaches.