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The Partition of Indian Subcontinent: Crisis of Identity and Uprooted Nationalities Resulting in Double Disaster for Pakistan

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The theory that Hindus and Muslims of the Indian subcontinent constituted two distinct nations and therefore needed separate states to pursue their respective destinies has proved to be wrong; supporting the view that 'they (India and Pakistan) will bitterly regret the decision they are about to make'. 1

The problem with the 'two-nation theory' was that it treated the people of south Asia as two homogenous groups of Hindus and Muslims, making no allowances for the vast cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences that contribute to the colourful and vibrant mosaic that is the subcontinent. This theory sought to bind a Muslim in Karachi with one in Kolkata, and a Hindu in Lahore with one in Lucknow. The reality is very different. A Muslim Bengali had far more in common with a Hindu from Kolkata than a Punjabi Muslim, while a Pushtun from Durra is closer culturally and ethnically to his cousin in Jalalabad in Afghanistan than he is to a Muslim in Chittagaon. The very real differences are glossed over by the oversimplification on which the two-nation theory is based.

'Leaving behind scores of thousands of dead and dying sacrificial offerings to freedom,' 2 millions of Muslims and Hindus migrated in both directions in 1947. Millions of others choose to stay where they were, unable to leave whatever they have collected, 'bit by bit through their own efforts.' 3 The fact that even after partition India continued to have a significant Muslim population, weakened the concept on which Pakistan had been created. The creation of Pakistan has created a permanent problem for India. 'Partition would not solve the communal problem but would make it a permanent feature of country.' 4 The questionable premise was further eroded by the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, creating third state in the subcontinent, each with roughly 150 million Muslims. Detractors of the two-nation-theory point out that had India not been partitioned there would have been around 450 million Muslims living there, such a large population can hardly be termed a persecuted minority. Though emergence of Pakistan would not eliminate the problem of minorities, it would reduce the area of conflict between Hindus and Muslims and give each country an equal interest in the protection of the minorities within its borders.

The damning argument against Pakistan is that it took a community spread throughout the subcontinent, chopped it into several communities, gave it first one country and then two, and left the other dangling in mid air. People who once possessed the culture were left with neither a nation nor an idea of themselves as community. Pakistan was a double disaster for the Muslims in India: first they lost their sense of the coherence and political strength in the Indian union along with their leadership and middle classes which migrated to Pakistan by thousands; secondly, they were forever damned in India for having voted for Pakistan and broken the unity of India. ‘...Breaking up a great sub-continent of numerous nations which could live together in peace and harmony, who could united play a great role in the world: but who, divided not even rank as a second-class power.’⁵ Jinnah exploited religion to whip up communal frenzy among the millions and made them believe that only a separate homeland carved out of united India would free them from Hindu domination. He claims, ‘there is only one practical realistic way of resolving Muslim-Hindu differences that is to divide India into two sovereign parts of Hindustan and Pakistan...’⁶ The result has been exactly the opposite. In undivided India, Muslims were in power in five out of the eleven provinces; being one third of population they were a decisive factor at centre. After the partition they have been divided into three parts: Pakistani Muslims, Indian Muslims and Bangladeshi Muslims with little contact with one another. Far from being free of ‘Hindu domination’⁷ two-third of them has been put under to use Jinnah’s terminology: ‘permanent Hindu domination.’ And in Pakistan they neither have democracy nor basic human rights. The Indian immigrants, who are called ‘Mojahirs’, who want Pakistan in hope of finding a heaven there, are living in hell.

‘Partition was the unfortunate consequence of the aged-old Hindu-Muslim rift of the two communities, failure to agree on how and to whom power was to be transferred’.⁸ Hindutva ideologues were as much believers in the core idea of the two nation theory that Hindus and Muslims were antithetical communities as the Muslim league. The president of the Hindu Mahasabha, had frequently referred to Hindus and Muslims as two nations. A historically-minded Hindu, Vir Savarkar has written, ‘The so-called two-nation theory was formulated long before Mr. Jinnah or the Muslim league, in truth it was not a theory at all, it was a fact of history.’⁹ However, these are the ifs and buts of history. The bottom line is that; for good or bad, right or wrong, Pakistan came into being over half a century ago, and need no longer justify its fortunate or unfortunate existence to India or to the rest of the world or to its own citizens. Over a period of times, a state requires legitimacy and a certain momentum just by virtue of its existence. It does not have to explain why it was created? Unfortunately, Pakistani leaders and self-appointed ideologues have consistently taken upon themselves the impossible and exceedingly futile task of defending a defunct theory. To do so they have gone through bizarre and tortuous intellectual contortions that might have been amusing were it not for the strains they have placed on the fabric of the Pakistani state. First and foremost, the defenders of the so-called ideology of Pakistani has tried to establish the geographically untenable position that they are part of the Mid-East and not of South-Asia. To sustain this function, they have done their wicked worst to purge culture of sub-continental influences. Thus classical dancing is under a virtual official ban in Pakistan, and theatre and music exist on sufferance. They feel that they must constantly harp on the theme of their Islamic nature and their separateness from the rest of India, or Indian people with whom they share culture,

language, music, all sorts of things. So that this is a case where the Geo-political reality is sought to be transcended by an emphasis on a narrower identity. Students in Pakistan are taught Arabic at an early age and indoctrinated to despise everything Indian. Unlike entire world they even do not respect Mahatma Gandhi, who was gunned down by a Hindu for he was blindly favouring Muslims. Chaudhari Muhammad Ali, Prime Minister of Pakistan (1955-56) describes Mahatma Gandhi thus:

He assumed the garb of poverty and was known and worshipped, as the Mahatma, or the great soul. In that garb and with that name he remained the undisputed master of the Congress political machine for the remaining twenty-eight years of his life. 10

The other fiction that underpins the official doctrine is that history begins for Pakistan when Mohammad Bin Qasim landed on 712 A.D. and conquered and converted much of Sindh. Akabar, the great, ruled India, however, he was a Muslim but he ruled Pakistan from Delhi, when nothing like Pakistan was in existence. The fact is unbearable for Pakistan, for in world-history he is known as the emperor of India. 'The Moslems wanted the Taj Mahal broken up and shipped to Pakistan because it had been built by a Moghul.'¹¹ The flowering of Gandhar civilization and the magnificent earlier achievements of the Indus valley civilization are largely glossed over except in the tawdry publications, India produce for the benefit of the few foreign tourist who venture here. Those contortions have resulted in a major identity crisis that has robbed at least two generations of their creativity: by cutting the people out off from their real roots.

Pakistani ideologues have fabricated a nation that is unsure of its position in the region and the world. One reason why they are so full of doom and gloom is that they are invariably subjected to long-winded and fatuous explanations about why Pakistan came into being. It is almost as if they were constantly being asked to prove the legitimacy of their dominion at every step. Instead of getting on with life, much of their energy and vitality have been dissipated in this sterile and pointless but avoidable disputation: after all these years, what does it matter why Pakistan was created? What matters it was created and need to stop justifying its creation. But Pakistan cannot help doing so. Scores of nations and states have come into being, after 1947, and most of them do not feel the compulsion to defend their existence. The world is not asking Pakistan to produce a certificate of legitimacy; it only wants Muslims of Pakistan to join the rest of the human race and accept reality as it is.

Another malformation that Two-Nation-Theory has produced is the compulsion for Pakistan to ascertain themselves in terms of India. Pakistan tries to show how different it is from India at every turn; inevitably, an Indian misfortune is seen as Pakistan's good fortune. Keith Callard observes, 'It would be quite wrong to suggest that the feeling of Pakistan towards India is one of simple hatred. Their demeanour is rather one of intense rivalry to the point of bitter jealousy.'¹² This zero-sum game is a debilitating exercise and has resulted in tunnel vision, in which India for Pakistan and Pakistan for India has become only horizon.

Pakistan's internal and external policies are largely aimed at somehow countering real and perceived Indian threats and hegemonic design. Any theory that seeks to promote

separateness denies Pakistani's humanity and the ability of civilised people to live together, despite differences in colour, caste or creed. First, Muslims said they could not live with Hindus and created Pakistan, and then they said they could no longer live with Bengalis and the Bangladesh was the result. Now Sunnis are saying they cannot live with Shias. Where will it all stop? Where indeed? Kashmir and Pakistan's idea of itself lies at the core of the India–Pakistan conflict. On Aug. 1951, Dr. Zakir Hussain and other prominent Muslim intellectuals wrote in a memorandum to Frank P. Graham, United Nations Representative:

Pakistan's policy in general and her attitude towards Kashmir in particular thus tend to create conditions in this country which in the long run can only bring to us Muslims widespread suffering and destruction. Its policy prevents us from settling down, from being honourable citizens of a state, free from suspicion of our fellow – countrymen and adapting ourselves to changing conditions to promote the interests and welfare of India.¹³

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the demand for Pakistan was a bargaining position initially adopted by the Muslims league. Whatever the reality, it is certain that the bloodletting that accompanied ever-present partition shook the foundation of the new state and caused the decades of suspicion and rancour that have marked the Indo-Pakistan relation.

Pakistan's identity crisis is the root cause for the tensions between the two nations, between the newly born Pakistan and India. The feeling in Pakistan that they are newborn state, they have come into being and yet they are not being accepted in their new identity, in their new sovereignty and this has led to certain hostility in Pakistan towards India. The crisis of identity is the root cause of all the undoing of Pakistan against India.

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