

Humbug of common culture

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For over a decade now, a segment of misinformed Pakistani intellectuals working under the evil influence of their Indian counterparts have been singing songs of a so-called *common heritage* and shared cultural values between Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent. Some of them have been going to the extent of declaring the two-nation theory as a political ruse employed by the Muslim leaders who fought the battle for the establishment of a separate homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. There are others who have been unabashedly criticising the Quaid-i Azam and the creation of Pakistan, thus playing in the hands of the anti-Pakistan lobby in India. As far as India is concerned, it never sincerely accepted the two-nation theory even though it had agreed to partition, a scheme the very basis of which was that theory.

Soon after the dismemberment of Pakistan as a result of the Indian manoeuvres in 1971, India started claiming that the event had buried the two-nation theory forever. The primary objectives of this claim was:

*To convince the naive intellectuals of Pakistan that the partition of the subcontinent had been nothing more than a political blunder;

*To prepare the ground for weakening the bond of common religion that still held together the remaining federating units of Pakistan, with the ultimate aim of total disintegration of this country.

It was in order to achieve the above objective that a well-orchestrated Indian psychological offensive was launched against Pakistan subsequent to the tragic events of 1971, making maximum use of the fast-growing information technology and the electronic media. The task of the powerful Indian propaganda machinery has been made easy by the lukewarm response of the official information agencies of Pakistan, which do not have any well-planned strategy to effectively counter India's nefarious designs against this country. Whatever measures our official agencies adopt are defensive and apologetic in nature,

instead of being at least as offensive and original as those employed by India. The degree to which many of the Pakistani intellectuals and members of the new generation of Pakistanis have been influenced by this sinister Indian assault proves its effectiveness.

A sad testimony to this effect is a book titled "*Common Heritage*" published in Pakistan by the Oxford University Press on the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's creation. It contains eight articles written by eminent Indian and Pakistani writers, all of them suffering from nostalgia common to the upper strata of society in both countries, reflecting the feelings of a generation of Pakistanis that has had only a superficial experience of the state of affairs in the subcontinent before partition. They have either not experienced the hatred that a common Hindu citizen nourishes against a common Muslim, or they have thought it more expedient to hide the true facts in order to demonstrate that they are quite liberal.

The latest outburst of Hindu hatred against the Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat should be an eye opener for the so-called liberal Pakistani intellectuals who keep placating India by sacrificing the long-term interests of their own country. A large number of innocent Muslim men, women and children have been killed in cold blood; there are cases of entire families being roasted alive; properties and humble possessions of Muslim citizens have been destroyed; mosques have been desecrated and many burnt to ashes. And this is not the first time that the incorrigible *Hindutva* mentality of the fundamentalist Hindus has played havoc with hundreds of their Muslim fellow citizens. Holocausts similar to this latest carnage keep occurring every now and then despite the facade of *common heritage* and shared culture, which forms the main theme of the Indian propaganda designed to mislead the world in general and the



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naive Pakistanis in particular.

An orgy of even greater magnitude was

silently witnessed by the world almost a decade ago when the 16th century Babri mosque was razed to the ground by the Hindu fundamentalists who are now bent upon building a temple at the site of the demolished mosque. The worst part of such tragedies is that both the Indian police and army personnel, mostly Hindus, watch as mere spectators the murder and burning of innocent Muslims, instead of protecting their lives and properties. On top of all this, when those indulging in murder and arson enjoy the support of the Indian government itself, there is no guaranty that such genocides of Indian Muslims will not occur again. If the genocide of Indian Muslims continues at such an alarmingly large scale, they may all seek security in their forced conversion to Hinduism or migrate from their homeland for good, leaving India as a purely Hindu state, free to keep shouting its pet slogan of secularism to befool the world.

As for the two-nation theory, it stands vindicated once again as a result of the Gujarat massacre. How can people belonging to two diametrically opposed religions like Islam and Hinduism have a common culture? Religion is one of the most important factors that shape the culture of any society. In this particular case, the language spoken by the Muslims is different from that spoken by the Hindus; the dress worn by a majority of members of both communities is different, and so are their eating habits. There is hardly anything common between their respective social structures and the ways of life. While Islam teaches equality among all human beings, irrespective of the colour of their skins, the race to which they belong or the professions they pursue, the Hindu society is based on a strict division of human beings into various classes determined on the

basis of the accident of their birth, the lowest class being treated with maximum hatred by those belonging to the higher classes. Even in the matter of worship, while Muslims believe in one God, Hindus have a number of gods and goddesses represented by their statues. The religious differences between these two communities are illustrated further by the fact that while the Hindus worship the cow, the Muslims relish its meat, and this very fact has been the cause of hundreds of communal riots in India during the last one hundred years.

Then there is the inborn hatred that a majority of Hindus nourish against the Muslims of India and Pakistan. The extent of this revulsion can be judged from the fact that orthodox Hindus considered it sacrilege to allow a Muslim into their kitchen or to use a utensil previously used by a Muslim without washing it seven times. I remember before partition there used to be separate water points for the two communities at every railway platform throughout India. Hindu hawkers used to sell eatables for Hindus because the latter would never buy such stuff from a Muslim vendor. Similarly, in almost every town of India, there used to be separate localities inhabited exclusively either by Hindus or Muslims. A Muslim never felt secure living in a locality where a majority of residents was Hindu.

With such a wide gulf separating Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent, the question of a *common heritage* or a shared culture between them just does not arise. Those who cite inter-marriages among Hindus and Muslims to prove that the members of these two communities can live together in harmony intentionally conceal the point that such cases have been very rare and hence they do not prove the point. Let us accept that for their peaceful coexistence, the two communities must change their frame of mind towards each other, rather than wilfully creating the false impression that the partition of India was unwarranted in view of *common heritage* between Hindus and Muslims of the region.