

Notes

India-Pakistan Co-existence – the Historical Dimension

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There's no dearth of hawks - either in India or in Pakistan. They wear, their nationalism on their sleeves, and are always on the lookout to out-Herod Herod. They seem to believe that India and Pakistan cannot co-exist with one another, and miss no opportunity to indulge in a litany of grievances, to mouth hymns of hate, to arouse dark suspicions, to pollute the atmosphere and to demonise relations between the two South Asian neighbours. The problem is that these hawkish elements, far from being confined to the extremist fringe, constitute an integral, even an extremely influential, segment of mainstream politics.

Little do they seem to realize that you can canalise your national policies along a new course, burying the past, as France and Germany had done since the early 1950s, that you can also effect changes in other components of your national existence, but you simply cannot change geography. And geographical proximity ordains that India and Pakistan should somehow have to live with each other, whether at war or in peace, unless one overruns the other and wipes it out of existence, which, of course, is hardly in the realm of possibility. That constant in our geostrategic situation makes it incumbent on both the countries to somehow find a *modus vivendi*, to live as normal neighbours, rather than as warring neighbours, causing destitution, misery and desolation to their teeming millions.

For Pakistan, co-existence not only because the neighbour is an 'elephant' we have to sleep with, not only because of our overriding strategic compulsions, but also because of our history our traditions and legacy. Seldom is it realized that the very demand for Pakistan was

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irrevocably rooted in the principle of co-existence. And this principle is as well hollowed by our history, our traditions and legacy.

The most critical components of our legacy are: (i) Islam, (ii) Muslim rule in India, and (iii) the freedom movement. Islam provided Muslims with the basis for a separate identity, the Muslim rule in India endowed them with a distinct Indo-Muslim identity, and the Muslim struggle for emancipation and freedom from Sir Syed Ahmad Khan down to Muhammad Ali Jinnah had helped to crystallize that identity. Interestingly, all the three dimensions – the religious, the historical, and the political – stood for pluralism and co-existence.

Islam exhorts its followers to resolve differences through debate and discussion, and not through sheer force. Nor should bigotry and intransigence inform such discussions – not only amongst themselves, but also in their dealings with other communities. Islam rejects the culture of enmity, violence and terrorism, and of aggression against human beings. Indeed, it considers an attack on a human person as an attack on humanity as a whole.¹

Moreover, the Qur'an considers enmity as a mere passing phenomenon.² It permits war only in case of aggression, 'but if the enemy inclines towards peace, you should also incline towards peace, and trust in God'.³ Again: 'But if they cease let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression'.⁴ Thus the faithful are commanded to respond positively to any peace initiatives.

Likewise, as I have argued elsewhere, the Misaq-i-Madina, often referred to as 'the first written constitution of the world' (see Articles 25-34)⁵ and the charter given to the Christians of Najran sanctify the hollowed principle of pluralism and co-existence at the individual, community and state levels.

Of this principle, the Muslim rulers in India were also generally informed. In an age when Inquisition held Christian Europe hostage, Muslim rule in India, albeit bereft of popular underpinning, was yet, on the whole benevolent and tolerant.⁶ Had it been otherwise, it is

¹ Al-Qur'an, 5:32.

² *Ibid.*, Vol.60, p.70

³ *Ibid.*, Vol.8, p.61.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, p.193.

⁵ Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution of the World* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1968), pp.41-54, and W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Karachi: OUP, 1981), pp.221-25.

⁶ See Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1958).

inconceivable that after having ruled India over six centuries, the Muslims would have comprised but ten per cent of the population in 1842, as Lord Ellenborough's despatch after the battle of Ghazni asserts. By the same token, it was inconceivable that the United Provinces, which was the centre of the Muslim empire and the heartland of their power base, should have been home to a mere fourteen per cent of Muslim population, even after 90 years of *pax Britannica*.

And but for the enthronement of this principle, Hindus would not have manned the key financial sector almost throughout the Muslim rule; Rai Raja Jaswant Singh of Jaipur would not have been the commander-in-chief of the Army under Aurangzeb, often regarded as a puritan, nor would a Rajput general commissioned by him to subdue Shivaji after the disastrous failure of Afzal Khan and Shaista Khan. From Emperor Akbar (d.1610) to Akbar II (d. 1849), the penultimate Mughal emperor, several Mughal rulers had married Rajput princesses. Out of their wedlock were born children who would become rulers – e.g., Jehangir, Shahjehan and Bahadur Shah Zafar. And it is a measure of their tolerant approach that they built a Hindu temple in the royal palace grounds for these Rajput/Hindu princesses. In a sense, Amir Khusro, a disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia and one of the founders of Indian classical music, stands out as a symbol of the spirit of pluralism and coexistence that formed Muslim rule in India.

More than on the political plane, this principle was operative in the cultural life during mediaeval India. Culture is a two way street, and where contiguous spatially, cultures impact each other, both perceptibly and imperceptibly. White Tara Chand has delineated and celebrated Islam's impact on India, several authors have duly recognized that the Muslims had as well allowed themselves to be Indianized and influenced by their Hindu neighbours. And this in several spheres: food, dress, music, fine arts and architecture. Even in such an important characteristic of national life as language. After all, if Muslims had to rule the sprawling subcontinent with its overwhelming Hindu population they had to come to terms with the local traditions, the local sensibility and their over riding imperatives.

Urdu, born in the Deccan, during Malik Kafur's (d.1316) occupation of the south in the fourteenth century – as a result of the fortuitous confluence of the linguistic heritage of both Hindus and Muslims – was adopted as the language of discourse at the elite and intellectual levels. Thus, while Babar (d. 1530) and Jehangir (d.1627) wrote their Tuzuks in Chagatai Turkish and Persian respectively the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar (d. 1862), lamented his forced exile and poignant despondency in nostalgic Urdu verses. The Muslims

abandoned Persian, the court language, for Urdu, as part of the Indianization process they had subjected themselves to – i.e., as a concession to the principle of co-existence.

With the same spirit was the movement for Muslim emancipation and freedom informed. During the ninety years of British imperial rule (1858-1947), three outstanding personalities – Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1819-98), Maulana Mohamed Ali (1877-1931) and Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) – had dominated the Indo-Muslim political scene. And all of them had arrived at the threshold of Muslim ‘separatism’ only after having tried collaboration with the Hindus and having failed to establish a Hindu-Muslim entente. Hindu cultural ethnocentrism in the late nineteenth century had pushed Sir Syed to Muslim separatism.⁷ Gandhi’s whole sale condemnation of Muslims in the Kohat riots (1924), his patronage of the architects of militant, anti-Muslim movements – Shuddhi and Sangathan – in the mid 1920s, and his upholding of the ‘tyranny of numbers’ in the Nehru Report proposals at the All India National Convention in Calcutta (1928) dismayed and disillusioned Muhammad Ali to a point that he considered Gandhi’s movement in 1930,

‘not [as] a movement for the complete independence of India but for making the seventy millions of Indian Musalmans dependent of the Hindu Mahasabha’.⁸

And, finally Congress’s political unitarianism climaxing in the setting up of exclusively one-party government in the Hindu provinces in 1937 would drive Jinnah, the erstwhile ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, to Pakistan.⁹

Jinnah had stood on the Congress platform for some sixteen years (1904-20); he had also strived for a Hindu-Muslim settlement for another sixteen years (1921-37) – before his moment of truth came in 1937.¹⁰ Earlier, in 1936, Nehru had sought to impose a ‘two-forces’

⁷ See Sharif al Mujahid ‘Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muslim Nationalism in India’, *Islamic Studies* (Islamabad), 38:1 (Spring 1999), pp.87-101; Sikanar Hayat, ‘Syed Ahmad Khan and the Foundations of Muslim Separatist Political Movement in India’, *Pakistan Journal of Social Science* (Islamabad), viii: 1&2 (Jan-July-Dec 1982), pp.33-47.

⁸ R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem* (New York: OUP, 1944), Vol.I, p.iii.

⁹ Sharif al Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1981), Ch. I.

¹⁰ See Sharif al Mujahid, ‘Jinnah and the Congress Party’, in D. A. Low (ed.) *The Indian National Congress: Centenary Hindsight* (Delhi: OUP, 1988), pp.207-51.

doctrine on India's body-politic and counted Muslim out as a separate entity: '...the present contest', he asserted on 10 January 1937,

'lies between imperialism and nationalism. All 'third parties', middle and undecided groups etc. have no real importance to this historic sense ... The Congress represents Indian nationalism and is charged with a historic destiny The communal groupings have no such real importance inspite of the occasional importance being thrust upon them'.¹¹

To this Jinnah's firm riposte was: 'I refuse to accept this proposition. There is a third party in this country and that is Muslim India'.¹²

Clearly, Nehru stood for unitarianism, pure and simple – the political expression or corollary of the late nineteenth century Hindu cultural ethnocentrism, in the early twentieth century political context. Indeed, the most acrimonious and acerbic controversy in Indian politics in the late 1920s (since the Nehru Report) and all through the 1930s had hinged around the basic issue of Hindu unitarianism vs Muslim federalism. Federalism denotes a penchant for co-existence while unitarianism hegemonic ambitions. The difference in approach was reflected in the formation of ministries in the Hindu and Muslim majority provinces in mid 1937. While the Muslim provinces went in for coalition governments, the Hindu provinces under the Congress's aegis opted for exclusive one party governments.

Likewise, the Pakistan ideal did not stem out of any hostility towards the Hindus. Instead, it was informed by the principle of co-existence. Referring to the Congress's political conduct in 1937, Penderel Moon had perceptively remarked, 'there would be no room on the throne of India save for Congress and Congress's stooges'.¹³ This grim prospect of being denied a place on the throne of India had obliged the Muslims to create a throne for themselves in their demographically dominant regions. For Pakistan simply meant the setting up of an independent state for Muslims in their majority provinces. This presupposed that the Hindus would be dominant in their majority areas;

¹¹ S. Gopal (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970), Vol.8, pp.120-21. This statement, dated 10 January 1937, meant to rebut Jinnah's third party claim (see below) was a rephrasing and reiteration of Nehru's earliest statement of 18 September 1936.

¹² *Star of India* (Calcutta), 6 January 1937, Khurshid Ahmad Khan Yusufi (ed.), *Speeches, Statements and Message of the Quaid-e-Azam* (Lahore: Bazm-i-Iqbal, 1996), Vol.I, p.459.

¹³ Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit* (London: Chattoo and Wandus, 1961).

hence the Pakistan demand did not controvert the principle of co-existence. To quote Jinnah, '... The provinces in which the Mussalmans are in a majority should form themselves into an independent state and rest of India – which in $\frac{3}{4}$ - Hindustan.... (Thus) there will be two independent states, Pakistan and Hindustan'.¹⁴ On 29th February 1944, he demanded 'division of India into two sovereign nations – Pakistan for Muslims representing one quarter of the country, and Hindustan for Hindus, who would have three quarters of all India'.¹⁵ He further reiterated his demand on 31st March 1944 thus:

'Pakistan does not merely postulate freedom for the Mussalmans. We want freedom both for the Mussalmans and the Hindus. There cannot be Pakistan without securing the freedom of Hindustan'.¹⁶

And all through the campaign for Pakistan, Jinnah had consistently stressed the impelling need for good neighbourly relations between the two states once Pakistan was established. On 14 October 1944 he spoke of a 'Manroe Doctrine' in respect of the defences of the subcontinent;¹⁷ in April 1947 he hoped for a common defence policy between India and Pakistan, and on 14 July 1947 he 'sincerely' hoped that the relations between Pakistan and India 'will be friendly and cordial', adding:

We have a good deal to do, both States, and I think that we can be of use to each other ... Being neighbours, from our side, I do not think you will find goodwill wanting and I hope and appeal to the press and news agencies to impress this upon Hindustan.¹⁸

And in his message to Hindustan, on the eve of his departure from New Delhi, on 7 August 1947, he pled,

the past must be buried and let us start afresh as two independent sovereign States of Hindustan and Pakistan'. He also wished 'Hindustan prosperity and peace'.¹⁹

¹⁴ 4th January 1944: Khurshid Ahmad Khan Yusufi, Vol.III, p.1827.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.III, p.1837.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.III, p.1877; see also *ibid.*, p.2160.

¹⁷ Cf 'Certainly Pakistan will have neighbourly relations with Hindustan like any other two independent nation states. I have said so several times We will say. 'Hands off India' to all outsiders. Pakistan will not tolerate any outside design or aggression on this subcontinent. We will observe something like Monroe Doctrine.', Yusufi, Vol.III, pp.1953-54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.IV, p.2590.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.IV, p.2598.

Despite the partition holocaust, despite provocative statements and speeches from the other side – e.g., ‘the All India Congress Committee earnestly trusts that ... the false doctrine of two nations will be discredited and discarded by all’; Nehru hoped that ‘ultimately both the dominions will unite into one country’; and Patel was confident that ‘sooner or later we shall be again united in common allegiance to our country’²⁰ – Jinnah untiringly pled for ‘burying the hatchet’ and for resolving that ‘despite all that had happened, we shall remain friends’.²¹ And in his congratulatory message to Rajagopalachari on his appointment as Governor-General, Jinnah hoped, ‘Under your guidance ... will come real friendship between the two Dominions’, adding ‘It is no less essential to India than to Pakistan’.²²

Thus it may be seen, co-existence is not only critical component of our legacy in the subcontinent, but was also a cardinal principle with Pakistan at the time of her birth. And despite occasional rhetoric at India’s generally aggressive posture, successive governments in Pakistan have tried to come to terms with New Delhi. But, alas!, to no avail, with India generally going in for bluff, bluster and bludgeon.

This is not to say that New Delhi had failed to respond positively all the while since 1947. Indeed it did, with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (BJP)’s much publicized visit to Lahore and to the Minar-i-Pakistan in February 1999 being the highest watermark. However, their relations got frozen in the wake of 13 December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament. India blamed Pakistan and responded by resorting to the bludgeon threshold: a year long stand off across the LOC and the international border which Pakistan confronted boldly and successfully. But Indian failure to cow down Pakistan, to sell its line to the western powers hook, line and sinker coupled with New Delhi’s failure to cause abatement in the Kashmir ‘rebellion’ brought the New Delhi high-horse posture down to earth. Its rich yield was Vajpayee’s 18 April 2003 Srinagar speech. Therein he finally recognized that geography cannot be changed and that both countries had somehow to learn to live with each other. He talked of dialogue which was Musharraf’s refrain, at least since Agra (2001). Thus New Delhi and Islamabad launched the Composite Dialogue process in February 2004. But, alas, it was scuttled by his, successor the Congress Premier, Man Mohan Singh, as part of New

²⁰ See Sharif al Mujahid, ‘India-Pakistan Relations’, in *Foreign Policy of Pakistan* (Karachi: Allies Book Corporation, 1962).

²¹ Interview with Reuter’s Correspondent, 25 October 1947; Yusufi, Vol.IV, pp.2631-33.

²² 5 May 1948, Yusufi, Vol.IV, p.2776.

Delhi's knee-jerk riposte to the 2008 Mumbai's siege of the Taj, and the Composite Dialogue process was put on hold. And despite Pakistan's continued and consistent overtures it remains suspended till date (April 2013).

But, given the present global environment and our own geostrategic position, Pakistan cannot simply afford to call off its quest for co-existence. And this is, by no means, a counsel of defeatism, though.