

# PAKISTANI PEOPLE ARE A NATION OR NOT?

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The topic we have before us is the qualification of "nation-hood" in regard to its application on Pakistani people. The question is whether we can class Pakistani people as a monolithic nation or not. The question is indeed demanding and laborious. Let us explore it critiquing all possible facets of the subject. Insofar as my humble opinion, Pakistani masses cannot be considered a single, homogeneous nation. There are a number of factors at work behind this theory. A mass of 170 million cannot be declared a well-knit nation on the sole grounds of political unity and superficial religious shell. There is no doubt that ever since the birth of nation-state, the ideology of a political nation has been gaining a great deal of popularity. There is no other theory that can, presently, challenge this conception of a people's status of being a nation on solely political grounds. For instance, Germans have many nations i.e. races within them. However, they define themselves today as "German" exclusively. Further, the British are, historically, a plethora of many mutually distinct nations, such as Angles, Saxons, and Normans. However, we class them as "English" people today with a great much of respect. This can be a case study of modern state concept with the formula applied and judged against several other

possibilities. The most number of countries falling under this category belong either to Europe or to Americas. When coming to Asia, we have only a few instances, such as China, Korea and Japan, becoming nations through a systematic politico-historical transformation.

Now let us turn to Pakistan. Neither Pakistanis nor Indians are a nation. There is a huge deal of polarization in almost every facet—be it a religious, linguistic or ethnic side of our socio-political life. Historically speaking, the Indian Subcontinent has welcomed and accommodated almost every invader coming from western and southern directions. The layers of invaders beginning from Aryans to end with Europeans all brought with them new cultures and languages. These linguistic-cultural elements were deeply absorbed by the land of India in such a way that, in fact, transfigured the original shape of those cultures. The process of the assimilation of foreign cultures in this region—particularly present Pakistan—developed into a strange social system of heterogeneous—instead dichotomous—characteristics. The best example of the current debate may be sought in the dialect change of Pakistani land taking place once every ten miles. The same is the case of India, for India has hundreds of sub-cultures and sub-castes.

On the eve of partition, Indian Subcontinent was a piece of land where 587 independent principalities existed with local autonomous or semi-autonomous rulers. The example of such principalities being Kashmir, Bahawalpur, Qalat, Sawat, Jonagarh etc. Thus, forming those 587 mutually distinct people into one homogenous people was by no means possible. Whatever formula you apply, whatever education you provide, the millennial culture of Subcontinent cannot change in such a desired rapidity. One of the tragic ultimate of this cultural diversity was seen in 1971, when Bengali speaking minority forced West Pakistan to surrender them their rights solely on the basis of their distinct identity. Identically same is the case with today's remaining Pakistan.

Let us now have a more empirical look into our nation. Major ethnicities of Pakistan are Pathans, Punjabis, Balochis, Sindhis, Hazaras, Gojris, Saraikis, and similar. The case becomes really interesting when we try to compare them in socio-historical framework. None of these races shares respective culture with another. The only common factor among all of them is religion, Islam. Indeed, Islam can be used as a common threshold to save the concept of single identity in Pakistan, but not politics. OF course, we are called Pakistanis wherever we go in the world, but the fact is that being "Pakistani" is only a false, superficial identity having no well-grounded roots whatsoever.

Let me therefore conclude that Pakistanis are but a disorderly crowd by every definition of a crowd and not a nation by any definition of the word 'nation'.