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# Akhand Bharat or Bharat Maata?

In my last week's column titled "Musharraf, a Nobel Laureate?" I suggested that if Vajpayee and Musharraf both stay on the side of peace they could be potential contenders for sharing the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. After all, Mohammad Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin were awarded the 1978 Nobel Peace prize for negotiating peace between Egypt and Israel (arguably a lesser achievement).

My second suggestion was that Vajpayee's visit to Minar-e-Pakistan had finally buried 'Akhand Bharat' into the deepest of graves for good. The same day an Indian reader sent back two messages (does anyone know a Pakistani who reads Indian newspapers?). To my first suggestion he writes, "instead of the Nobel Peace Prize, I suggest the highest prizes of India and Pakistan get exchanged. Musharraf getting Bharat Ratna and Vajpayee Nishan-e-Pakistan."

On my comment on 'Akhand Bharat' my Indian reader had this to say: "Over the past three years, I have read in Pakistani papers about this 'Akhand Bharat' theory and the threat it poses

to Pakistan. Come on, do you really believe that there is/was any such thing as 'Akhand Bharat'? Is it really true that India buried 'Akhand Bharat' for good only as recently as 1999, when Vajpayee visited Minar-e-Pakistan? The truth is: the idea of Akhand Bharat does not and did not have any currency in India. No one sold it, no one bought it. Some RSS ideologues in early years of India did write things along those lines. Those were mainly academic exercises squarely directed at few extremist Indians. Apart from that, India as a whole - its political or cultural class - never ever bothered to get even close to visualizing any re-creation of Akhand Bharat. Even RSS, the new generation, doesn't talk any thing about 'Akhand Bharat'. I have never read BJP ever talk about Akhand Bharat. Akhand Bharat as a term appears only in RSS propaganda leaflets and Pakistani media. It had never been a popular term in Indian media."

My own research into Akhand Bharat did come out with a website titled 'Akhand Bharat Foundation'. It turned out, however, that the Foundation is an "organization comprising of



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students and young professionals from all over the country and abroad working for a strong and resurgent India. The Foundation strives not so much for the physical extension of India's boundaries but rather to widen her intellectual and ideological consciousness ('chetna')."

I also came across a letter written by V.R. Krishna Iyer, President All India Save Education Committee, and addressed to Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee. The letter alleges "The Vidya Bharati network of schools continues to mix up Hindu mythology with history in its textbooks, particularly in its portrayal of Akhand Bharat and heaps venom on Christianity and Islam as being responsible for the division of Akhand Bharat."

In the subcontinent, Hindu communalists may be more in number than Muslim communalists but then the total

number of Hindus in the sub-continent is three times the total number of Muslims. According to my Indian reader's opinion, Akhand Bharat is a delusion, say, "similar to a dream carried by some Muslims who delude themselves into believing that Khilafat is still possible and that one day all Muslims will have only one leader under whom the Ummah will flourish."

Akhand Bharat or a 'unified India' is a myth. The myth is more alive in Pakistan than in India. Archaeological evidence confirms that areas that now form India and Pakistan have always had a dozen different rulers. Pakistan's northwestern region, for instance, has historically never been a part of un-divided India. Then there are significant genetic, cultural as well as linguistic differences. A Pathan, for example, is as different from a Marathi as an Uzbek is from a Sudanese.

The 778,720 sq km of landmass that we now call Pakistan hasn't always been part of India either. Someone who looked into it had concluded that "Out of 5,000 years of the known history of the region of Pakistan it was part of India for only 721 years, out of which

100 years was under the Mauryan Buddhists, 521 years under the Turkic-Afghan-Mogul Muslims, and 100 years under the British. Much of the same is true for the rest of the regions of South Asia."

Now on to Bharat Maata. The more I looked into it the more I discovered that India is a very old country and India to Indians is like a mother. My Indian reader has this comment: "As far as the term Bharat Mata is concerned, it is just a patriotic description of India as a Mother. Bharat, the mother. I don't think it has ever been linked to anti-Pakistani sentiment or Hindutva philosophy. Nothing serious there and absolutely nothing for Pakistan to get worried about!"

India today revolves around 'Vishwa Bharat' and that implies that India "will use brain-power to gain a major role aiming at a global inter-mingling where India's sheer numbers matter. The world has six billion people, of whom one billion are Indians. Since population growth has slowed or halted in China and large parts of the West, by the year 2050 one in five human beings will be an Indian."