

Book Review

The Works of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah Vols. I-IV (1893-1918)

Compiled and Edited by Dr Riaz Ahmad.
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Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating, striking and remarkable personalities of modern age. He possessed excellent qualities of heart, mind and pen and played a very significant role in changing the course of history and destinies of Muslims of South Asia, acquiring towering place among the nation-builders of modern history.

The Quaid's rise to the heights of glory owes much to his continuous heroic struggle in life characterized by inherent qualities and talent such as hard working, determination, perseverance, self-confidence, self-respect, above all, sterling patriotism, honesty of purpose and integrity of character which he fully demonstrated even during his early public life as is quite evident from the study of 4 volumes under review edited by Dr. Riaz Ahmad.

Vol.I (1893-1912)

This volume published in 1996 is, in fact, the first in what is projected to be a multi-volume series, containing all the documents, correspondence and notes relating to the Quaid's life from his early days when he sought admission to the Lincoln's Inn

to 1912 and resumed the leadership of the Indian Muslims is basically a collection of 248 documents, both published and unpublished. This volume widely deal with several aspects of the Quaid's early public career. The fact is that in the records contained therein Quaid appears in diverse roles of student, barrister, magistrate, leader and legislator, while in each role, by continuous diligent efforts, he made distinctive achievement. He had acquired such strength of character that once he took a step or made a decision, he would firmly stand by it and never budge even an inch therefrom. This was a unique and remarkable quality which later proved most precious asset for the Indian Muslims whom the Quaid led unswervingly to the goal of Pakistan, absolutely discarding all sorts of pressures and temptations.

As a matter of fact, the volume under review reveals many new facts about the Quaid's early life. It is generally presumed that the Quaid started his political career by joining the Indian National Congress in 1906, while the relevant documents contained therein clearly show that the Quaid had started to take interest in the country's socio-political problems of the well-known Anjuman-i-Islam, Bombay, immediately after his return to Bombay from England in 1896. He started his political career in 1897.

This volume does not only enlighten us on the Quaid's early public life, it also throws light on the socio-political life, particularly that of Bombay. It does bring to light the social evils such as theft, robbery, gambling, cheating, drinking, kidnapping in Bombay at the turn of the century as is quite evident from press reports of the cases decided by the Quaid as Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, included in this book.

Though this volume contains a lot of information about the Quaid's varied role, yet some aspects deserve mention. For instance document 245 is All-India Muslim League's Secretary Syed Wazir Hasan's letter to the Quaid dated 8 December 1912 coming to lime-light for the first time. It establishes that the Quaid had links with All India Muslim League leaders even earlier. In the same way other documents reflect the Quaid's early career and his comprehensive role in political and legal life of the country.

Volume II: (1913-1916)

This volume published in 1997, contains 144 documents of historical importance, most of which, we think, have never appeared in the works on the Quaid published so far.

From a careful study of this volume, the Quaid again appears in different crucial roles of a lawyer, a legislator, a constitutional reformer and a moderate political leader, overall making brilliant history. One of the country's busiest and topmost lawyers of the time, he fought and won many a battle in the law courts. Elected to the Imperial Legislative Council in 1910, the Quaid, by sheer dint of hard work and intelligence, soon emerged as a great parliamentarian, claiming many constructive achievements in lawmaking. The well-known Mussalman Waqf Validating Bill which he moved in the Council in 1911, had, mainly because of his remarkable performance and strong advocacy, become act in 1913, a unique achievement on the part of a non-official member of the Council, which was duly appreciated even by the non-Muslim leaders and legislators. A staunch advocate of administrative and constitutional reforms in British India, the Quaid repeatedly urged upon the British policy makers to reform the Indian administration in accordance with the aspirations of the Indians. He vehemently stood for basic reforms in the Indian Civil Service, the backbone of the British rule in India. While giving interview, both written and oral, to the Royal Public Services Commission (Islington Commission) in March 1913, the Quaid urged upon the Commissioners to take such steps that might be helpful for Indians to join the civil service more and more. Similarly, he stood for basic reforms in the Secretary of State for India's Council, which enjoyed propotential powers, even more than a Mughal emperor in medieval India – a hard reality which was entirely against the interests of the Indians struggling for self rule. The Quaid was the first Indian leader who seriously felt the strains of such an unpleasant situation. During that critical period, he repeatedly demanded the overhauling of the whole structure of the India Council. He rightly proposed that its role in the Indian administration should be advisory and not administrative; that considerable representation of the Indians in the Council, both by way of election or nomination, should be made sure; that the

Secretary's huge salary, which was a great burden on the Indian treasury, must be placed on the "English Estimates". Mobilising the public opinion, he moved resolutions in this regard at the Congress and the Muslim League forums. Urging upon their British policy-makers to change the Council's structure, he also met them both at "Home" and on the "Spot". Though the Quaid's move in the matter did not receive positive response from the British instantly, it had great impact on their future process of constitutional reforms. By changing the Council's fundamental structure, the Quaid, in fact, wanted to weaken the very power base of the British rule in India — a great suggestive of his political wisdom, far-sightedness and diplomacy.

But the Quaid's political contribution during the critical period was more constructive. He not only joined the Muslim League in October 1913, but was also responsible for bringing about a fundamental change, namely "the attainment of self-government suitable to India" in the League's Constitution. Having fully realised this need, he seriously worked for forging unity particularly among the Hindus and the Muslims. It was mainly because of his sincere and dynamic efforts that the Hindu-Muslim thinking circles were convinced of closing their ranks in order to achieve self-rule for India. So much so that the country's two major political parties, the Congress representing the Hindus, and the Muslim League representing the Muslims, came closer to each other and held their annual sessions at the same place, i.e. Bombay in 1915, which paved the way for conclusion of the well-known Lucknow Pact of 1916, for furthering the cause of self-rule in India. All credit for this goes to the Quaid, who was rightly called the "Messenger of Unity".

Despite all its merits, we are constrained to point out that this volume is not free from some shortcomings. We know it well that the Ottoman Turkey plunged in the First World War (1914-1918), taking the side of the Central Powers. Almost all circles of the Indian Muslims showed sympathies towards the Ottoman Turks. But what was the Quaid's reaction to that episode? The learned editor is quiet in this regard. Secondly, he claims that immediately after the Mussalmans Waqf Validating Bill became the country's law, the Quaid, who was responsible for piloting the bill, had

resigned from his legislative Council seat. But he cites no documentary evidence in this regard.

Despite all these untoward observations, the volume is a very useful rather revealing study. It does not only deal with the Quaid's life and achievements during the years 1913-1916, but also throws ample light on India's contemporary annals.

Volume III: (1917-1918)

Volume III published in 1998 has been compiled and edited on the same pattern as was adopted in case of the first two of this great historical work under review. It contains 84 documents which deal with the Quaid's public life from February 1916 to April 1917. Barring a few of them most of these documents are appearing for the first time.

Volume IV (1917-1918)

This volume comprises of 142 documents of these only 22 documents were already published; rest 132 appearing for the first time. These documents cover the Quaid's public, legal, legislative and other activities from 6 May 1917 to 30 December 1918.

The learned editor seems to have taken great pains in collecting the material, for these four volumes from several places, both within and outside the country, mainly including the India Office Library and Records, British Newspapers Library, Colindale, London, and National Archives of Pakistan, Islamabad.

From the study of these documents collected in these volumes the Quaid appears in different dimensions and roles of his political private, public and legal career. Some of the documents, which were not used by the Quaid's biographers, have been produced in these volumes for the first time, credit for which must go to the learned editor.

The learned editor has made strenuous efforts in presenting these volumes in an appreciable way. He has skilfully arranged his materials in a chronological order, giving it proper sequence. He has scholarly annotated them at places, giving them pith and point. He has possibly cited their original sources, making them quite authentic. Other important aspect of these volumes is that editor

has not plainly reproduced the document. Instead, the editor has taken pains to present a summary of each volume in the Introduction to each volume. In the third and fourth volumes he also took trouble of adding short biographical notes of the important personalities mentioned in the documents with whom the Quaid came into contact. This has facilitated the readers to understand the kind of personalities with whom the Quaid came into contact or had a public dealing.

These volumes do constitute a scientific, comprehensive and informative study. A mine of knowledge, they contain a vast range of subjects mainly including the Quaid's public speeches and statements, legislative debates and discussions, court arguments and criticisms, newspaper, letters and write-ups, press talk and interviews as well as his correspondence with political leaders and statesmen both in India and England, particularly during the Council period from 1910 to 1918. Taken as a whole, these volumes make really a very interesting and useful study. It will surely be advantageous to general readers and researchers alike.

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