

## ***Book Review Article***

### ***Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: A Bunch of Rare Letters***

Edited by Ahmad Saeed. Lahore: Institute  
of Pakistan Historical Society, 2000,  
204pp, Price: Rs. 300/=

Ahmad Saeed, Professor of History at the M.A.O. College, Lahore, has been extremely prolific, having produced some twenty compilations and studies on various aspects of the Pakistan movement, the Quaid-i-Azam and related topics during the past 25 years, but mostly in Urdu. Of these, his *Guftar-i-Quaid-i-Azam* (1976), *Quaid-i-Azam Muslim Press ki Nazar Mein* (1983), *Visitors of Quaid-i-Azam* (1990), *Reflections on Pakistan: Economic Aspect* (1991), *Islamia College, Lahore 1882-1992, Volume I* (1993), and *Muslim India (1857-1947): A Biographical Dictionary* (1997) are extremely valuable, providing new material for the reconstruction of recent Indo-Muslim history and the Pakistan movement. The volume under review, which features some 150 letters written by the Quaid to various persons between 1900 and 1947, falls in the same genre.

In one sense, it is a rather unsystematic compilation since, it seems, Ahmad Saeed has included only those letters that he came by during the course of his research, that he found deposited at the Pakistan Movement Workers Trust, Lahore. Part of its lack of systematisation relates to the editor's failure to include the mandatory 'Preface' (detailing his purpose behind the compilation), 'Contents' and sources of some of the letters included therein.

In a sense, this rather wild-cat compilation calls attention to the prime need for a more systematic attempt to compile Jinnah's early letters, even as Dr Zaidi is doing, initially, for the period

covering the late 1940s. However, Ahmad Saeed's is a solo, personal effort, with little institutional support, goaded by his penchant for research. For that very reason, it calls for high praise for what it is worth. In any case, he has retrieved and brought to the notice of researchers and students a chunk of primary source material on the founding father, for which he should be duly recognized.

The letters in themselves are most revealing in terms of some of the basic characteristics of Jinnah's personality and leadership — for instance, his magnificent obsession with Muslim unity, his constitutional approach, his propriety, his patience, his determination, and his views on the Pakistani constitution.

His obsession with Muslim unity, it may be recalled, dates back to 1915. In one of the earliest letters included in the present volume, Jinnah told Abdul Matin Chaudhry of Assam on 2 March 1932, "The Mussalmans must stand united and I agree that there should be one organisation". Eleven years later, on 3 January 1943, he gave the same message to Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Khan of Mamdot (Punjab): "If the Muslim members will stand united and observe a thorough discipline and work as a team you cannot only play an important part in making and unmaking the ministry but in running the government and the administration of Punjab, notwithstanding all the drawbacks of the present Constitution. Unity among the Muslims is the only prescription that I can think of at present. Let us try earnestly and sincerely to organise and unite our people."

A thorough bred constitutionalist, Jinnah had scrupulously, consistently, and characteristically refused to intervene in the provincial Leagues' affairs, which would in effect, tantamount to compromising their autonomy and abridging their authority. "Your grievance that you were not taken nor Syed Mustafa Gilani was taken on the Working Committee of the Provincial Muslim League this time, is a matter of internal affairs of the Provincial Muslim League and if your are dismissed or if you had any grievance, you could have drawn the attention of the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League. But the discipline of the organisation must be maintained and the constitution and rules must be obeyed", he told Nawabzada Rashid Ali Khan (Lahore), on 4

February 1943, when he complained to Jinnah about the Lahore City Muslim League's affairs. When Maulana Raghīb Ahsan (Calcutta) complained to him about his (Jinnah's) support for a certain candidate in the by-elections, he explained on 17 March 1943, "Position is that I only backed up the candidates nominated by the Working Committee at the express request of a responsible leader of the Assembly Party. Please therefore understand my position, but in future I shall have to be very careful. I have no power to interfere with the decision of your provincial League under the constitution. You can only appeal to the Working Committee if you so desire", he told Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan, Salar-i-A'ala, Muslim League National Guards, on 3 January 1941. He said the same thing to even Maulana Shabir Ahmad Usmani on whose support he depended so much during the critical 1945-46 elections. "You know that according to our Constitution and Rules", he wrote on 1 February 1946, "not only I have no power, but it will be improper on my part to interfere with the Working of the Tribunals set up by the Muslim League Organization and which are vested with the power and authority to make selections on behalf of the All India Muslim League in various Provinces... I think you will appreciate when I say that it will be highly improper on my part to influence our Boards in the matter of selection and I, therefore, regret I cannot interfere in the matter."

On various occasions he counselled the League functionaries and provincial leaders to show utmost patience and to preserve unremittingly in their efforts. "I have read your letter very carefully and I think you are unnecessarily upset and impatient", he told an agitated Hameed Nizami on 21 December 1942. "You cannot give up your place in the Muslim Students' Federation as president-elect, because some people are trying to intrigue against you, so long as you are enjoying the confidence of the solid body of the students, to whom you owe a duty. You should not care for those people who want to get rid of you and if you resign it would be exactly what your opponents want... I can only say that if I were in your place I should not get into temper of huff and throw up the sponge. He told Khuhro on 1 October 1941, "You say, 'The Hindu minority is combined and well organised and by dividing the Muslim majority they are playing the game most successfully'".

Well, that we know, and that is the very reason why I have been urging upon you and other leaders of the Muslim League organisation to organise our people so as to prevent Muslim majority being divided. But you people are so impatient of the result. You want quick results.”

On the future constitution of Pakistan he told the Pir of Manki Sharif on 18 November 1945, “when the preliminary question of Pakistan being established is settled it will not be the Muslim League that will frame the constitution of Pakistan but the inhabitants of Pakistan in which 75% will be Mussalmans and therefore you will understand that it will be a Muslim Government and it will be for the people of Pakistan to frame the constitution under which the Pakistan Government will come into being and function. Therefore there need be no apprehension that the Constitution Making Body which will be composed of overwhelming majority of Muslims can ever establish any constitution for Pakistan other than one based on Islamic ideals, nor can the Government of Pakistan when it comes into being act contrary to Islamic ideals and principles.”

These letters were obviously meant to resolve certain specific issues and problems at the time. Yet they lend themselves to providing, *inter alia* an insight into Jinnah’s thought patterns and leadership style. And for that very reason, both the student and the researcher are bound to find the volume rewarding.

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