

Iqbal and Jinnah: A Study in Contact and Divergence

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In the first half of the 20th Century, two great men, Allama Mohammad Iqbal and Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah filled the political stage of India with their powerful personalities. Both were great leaders and actuated by the highest motives in their political activities. The purpose of this paper is to identify their role in the Pakistan Movement.

There are a number of features, which are common to both Iqbal and Jinnah. They had common Muslim origin. Both went to England for higher studies. Both were called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn and returned to British India. With the brief exception of Iqbal, teaching Philosophy at Government College Lahore and Jinnah working as Magistrate, both were elected to Legislative Assemblies and both became convinced of the indispensability of a separate Muslim sovereignty. Iqbal formulated and Jinnah executed Iqbal's vision about the destiny of Muslim India.

Despite these similarities, Jinnah and Iqbal also differed on various political issues like Simon Commission and Separate Electorate for some time. When under the Delhi Muslim Proposals of March 1927, the Quaid decided to discard separate electorates for the Muslims for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity, Iqbal differed and joined the Shafi Muslim League. Later in the year 1927, when Simon came to British India to meet the Indian political leaders for the sake of preparing draft of next reforms, Jinnah boycotted on the plea that it was an all-white Commission and no Indian was

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included in it. But Iqbal decided to cooperate with Simon for the sake of pleading the cause of separate electorates. This difference in politics came to an end in February 1930, when Jinnah League and Shafi League joined and All India Muslim League (AIML) once again emerged as a united Muslim political party. As a follow up of this, Iqbal and Jinnah again came to adopt common political approach for the future of Muslim India. Thus it was with the approval of Jinnah as President of AIML, that Iqbal presided over its Allahabad session in December 1930.

Iqbal was a reflective, pensive, and introspective personality, sensitive to its social, cultural, economic and political environment. He saw the suffering, degradation and deprivation of his fellow men, internalising the anguish of the humanity he most identified with.¹ Iqbal used the medium of poetry as well as prose to convey his message. His earliest poetry shows deep human concern. On the other hand, Jinnah a reserved, shy and introverted but strong personality, determined to succeed.² As Jinnah himself said failure was a word unknown to him. M.H. Saiyid described Jinnah as a resolute, independent, capable of bearing hardships and confident of his own abilities, a man who would pursue a goal if he himself considered it worthwhile though others might find it farfetched.³

Iqbal's family background was rather humble. Hard work, frugality and the generosity of his elder brother paid for Iqbal's education. But Jinnah belonged to a merchant family rich enough to send young Mohammad Ali to England and to count at least one Englishman as a friend of his father.⁴

Now we will see how splendid it was that Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Iqbal were ardent lovers of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The Quaid-i-Azam once said that he joined the Lincoln's Inn because on the main entrance of that institution the name of the

1. Fazal-ur Rehman, *Iqbal, Jinnah and Pakistan: The Vision and the Reality* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1984), p.12.

2. *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

3. M.H. Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah: A Political Study* (Karachi: Elite Publishers, 1970), p.65.

4. Mohammad Hanif Shahid, *Iqbal: The Great Poet of Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e Meel Publishers, 1986), pp.15-16.

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was included among the names of great law-givers of the world.⁵ Similarly Iqbal also had deep attachment with Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as is reflected from the following verse:

If you go deep into the meaning of my verse,
If you have the eyes of Siddique
The strength of our heart and soul is our Prophet (PBUH)
To us our Prophet (PBUH) is dearer than God.⁶

The greatness of their achievement can be better realized only when the social, economic, political and cultural conditions of the time in which they lived are kept in our mind.

Iqbal had to fight on many fronts — the British, the Hindus and the Nationalist Muslims. Through his poetry, speeches and writings he impressed upon the Muslims of British India that their salvation was not in united India. They must have their own separate homeland. In this, he had to incur the displeasure of many in the beginning.

Both Quaid-i-Azam and Iqbal had their political conviction. They stood like a rock against all odds. They were the true emblems of the qualities of *Mard-i-Mumin* as described by Iqbal in these lines:

In the company of friends (*Mo'min*) is as soft as silk
If there is a fight between truth and falsehood he is as hard as iron.⁷

5. Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah, Creator of Pakistan*, (London: Cowyman, 1960), p.9.

6. Mohammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Farsi), (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali Ltd., 1973), p.101.

7. Mohammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali Ltd., 1973), p.507.

Their love for truth, their fearlessness and devotion to the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) go a long way to make them successful in their fight for Pakistan. In subordinate politics, a political career is neither a matter of choice nor a specified, specialized pursuit. Generally political inputs are restricted and most collective endeavours come under political regulation. Consequently, the politics that is open to the indigenous population is usually agitational since ultimate decision-making and allocation of resources are not related to popular endorsement. Only those who have independent means or are willing to put up with financial or vocational deprivation have the opportunity to play any political role.⁸

Iqbal's participation in politics was, as compared to Jinnah, of a short duration. It was mainly confined to the province of the Punjab. His political career started in 1926 with showing willingness to be a candidate for the Punjab Legislative Council. He successfully contested the provincial election and served for a period of three years. Thereafter and to the end of his life, he was mainly involved with the affairs of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League and extremely concerned with the future of the Muslims India.⁹ It was during this period that he delivered his presidential address at the All India Muslim League Allahabad session in December 1930; participated as a Muslim delegate in the second and third Round Table Conferences, in London (1931-32) and; wrote his famous political letters to Jinnah (1936-37).¹⁰

Jinnah's political career spans almost half a century,¹¹ between 1897, when he first participated in the politics, and 1948 when he died as the Governor-General of Pakistan. From 1897 to the end of the British dominion, he was continuously elected member of the Central Legislative Assembly with the exception of two brief intervals. During this period he occupied a very prominent position on the central stage of Indian politics. His association with the All

8. Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), pp.361-362.

9. Kishwar Sultana, *Iqbal as a Politician (1927-38)* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1997), pp.34-84.

10. *Ibid.*, p.21.

11. Mushtaq Ahmed, *Jinnah and After* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1944), p.1.

India Muslim League started somewhat late but once it had begun it became a lifelong commitment. It is as President of the Muslim League that Jinnah led the movement, which culminated in the creation of Pakistan.¹²

Iqbal also entered politics, not for the lust of power and position, but for establishing the right of self-determination of the Indian Muslims and secure a homeland for them where they could live honourably with their Islamic ways of life, culture and their own heritage.¹³ The basis for demanding Pakistan was not only the fear of Hindus or merely economic emancipation but it was demanded on ideological grounds, on the basis of the two-nation theory. While delivering the historic Presidential Address at the annual session of the All India Muslim League in 1930, Iqbal said:

We are a nation, with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language, literature, art, architecture, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, custom, calendar, history and tradition, aptitudes and emotions; in short we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation.¹⁴

It is interesting to note that in the early part of their lives both Iqbal and Jinnah were champions of Hindu-Muslim unity. But both were disillusioned by the sinister designs of Congress and Hindu Mahasabha in India. In December 1928, when Jinnah as leader of Muslim League, suggested some amendments in the Nehru Report, Congress leaders paid no attention to Jinnah's ideas. Therefore, the Quaid chalked out his fourteen points by which he had reached a point of no return.¹⁵ Jamshed Nausherwaniji has thus reported about the Quaid's feelings:

One may say that Mr. Jinnah had no right to speak on behalf of the Muslims, that he did not represent them. He was humbled and he went back to his hotel. Next morning, Mr. Jinnah left Calcutta by

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12. Riaz Ahmad, *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: The Formative Years 1892-1920* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1988), pp.62-120.
 13. Dr. M. Moizuddin, "Iqbal and Quaid-i-Azam" in *Iqbal Review* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1986), p.986.
 14. Latif Ahmed Sherwani, (ed.) *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1944), pp.3-30.
 15. Jamil-ud Din Ahmed (ed.) *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1970), p.34.

train and I went to see him off at the railway station. He was standing at the door and he took my hand. He had tears in his eyes and said Jamshed, this is the parting of the ways.¹⁶

Iqbal had also visualized the parting of the ways. As early as 1909, in his letter to Ghulam Qadir Farrukh of Amritsar, he rejected the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1927 Mawlana Qarshi wanted Muslims to join hands with Hindus against the British in their own interest. Iqbal wrote to him that Hindus wanted only internal autonomy and they did not want the British to quit India. Iqbal became more vocal for political safeguard of the Muslims of India, in Allahabad address, he strongly advocated the establishment of an autonomous State of North-Western Muslim majority provinces:

I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-Government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West-India.¹⁷

His interest in politics and demand for a separate State were motivated by his inner commitment to his own ideals for the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Musalmans of the subcontinent. By preaching and propagating this ideal, he laid the foundation of Pakistan. He wrote letters to Quaid-i-Azam in which the necessity of Pakistan was explained and persuaded him to fight for the cause of the Muslims of British India. These letters written during May 1936 and November 1937 were published in 1942 with a foreword by the Quaid-i-Azam himself. This shows Iqbal's invaluable commitment towards the making of Pakistan. In his brief foreword the Quaid-i-Azam said:

I think these letters are of very great historical importance, particularly those which explain his views in clear and unambiguous terms on the political future of Muslim India.¹⁸

16. S.A. Vahid (ed.) *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal* (Lahore: Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, 1964), pp.170-173.

17. *Ibid.*, 170-71, and Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, vol.II (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1970), p.159.

18. Riaz Ahmed, *Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah: An Analysis* (Lahore: Friends Educational Service, 1976), pp. i-iv.

At the end, we will sum up that the philosopher urging and encouraging, proposing and suggesting strategies to the politician, the politician with his finger on the pulse of the nation, hesitating, tempering and gradually incorporating the ideas of the philosopher in his plan of action. Iqbal had infused a sense of separate destiny in the Muslims of India and Jinnah actually led them to that destination.

In the words of Professor Rushbrook Williams:

It is true that Iqbal influenced the Quaid-i-Azam, but it is also true that the Quaid-i-Azam and his great nation-building work exercised a profound influence upon Iqbal, and illuminated the last years of his life with a new hope.¹⁹

19. Jamil-ud Din Ahmed, (ed.) *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, vol.I (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1968), pp.89-90.