

Indian Writers on Jinnah

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Where do we place the cause of an historical event? And if we subscribe to the great man theory as everyone from adherent to adversary does in the case of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, do we place an event like the creation of Pakistan somewhere in the consciousness of its founder. If so, do we only mark the impress left by a personality on his followers, or do we also try and plot the reaction of those who viewed him as an enemy. In the background of the Quaid-i-Azam's mission lie also the fears and hopes of those Hindus who were communal minded. It is on this premise that I have undertaken to survey Indian writings on Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Not all Hindus were communal and not all of them viewed him similarly. Some sympathized with him personally but looked askance at partition. To this group belongs Sachchidananda Sinha. Some reconcile to partition, but are critical of Jinnah's personality. To this group belongs Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar. Then, representative of the majority of Indians are those who are critical both of his politics and his personality. The book most representative of this trend is the *Tragedy of Jinnah* by Kailash Chandra. This book was first published in 1941 and then revised in 1943. There are two markers to the book. Firstly, it is occasioned by the Lahore Resolution, which was found abhorrent by the author and secondly it is accompanied by the hope — the second marker — that Pakistan shall never come into existence. It is Kailash Chandra's hopes and fears which need to be made tangible, to be viewed in the background for any political portrait of Mohammad Ali Jinnah to be properly positioned.

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About Kailash Chandra, we must place our inquiry on the following lines. Firstly, if he did not expect Pakistan to come into existence, why did he feel the need to write a full length study of Jinnah. Secondly, does he base his study on the proper premises, that is, how do they stand up to later events or later research. To answer the first question let us see the reasons he addresses as to why Pakistan cannot come into being. The first reason is that no Muslim country has ever become a first rate power (p.223). Secondly, he doubts whether Jinnah has the backing of Muslims (p.230). Third, Mr. Jinnah is old and infirm, "He fainted while travelling to Madras." (p.270).

As to why Pakistan should not come into being; i) Pakistan is not economically viable (p.224), ii) Pakistan is close to the Russian border (p.224) and iii) Muslim League demagogues say that Pakistan shall be an Islamic Theocratic State (p.227). Kailash Chandra does not specify which demagogue, and does not venture to quote Jinnah on this point. Again, after decrying theocracy he decries Jinnah's fondness for ties by saying that ties are a reformed emblem of Christianity! (p.227)

A glimpse into these observations that do not stand up to later events: On p.18, Kailash Chandra recounts the pan-Islamic (or Khilafat Movement) and then says: "It was under those circumstances that we got the Lucknow Pact of 1916". Kailash Chandra forgets that the Lucknow Pact preceded the Khilafat Movement, and that Gandhi was in its favour while Jinnah was not. He gives Jinnah the credit for boycotting the Simon Commission but alters the sequence by saying that Jinnah began to fall foul of the Nehru Report. The Nehru Committee had been formed as a challenge to the Simon Commission.

A question which Kailash Chandra ignores is what was Mahatma Gandhi doing at the time of Simon boycott. Another Indian writer, in time would answer this question.

Kailash Chandra says that a handful of Muslim Leaguers were elected in Hindu majority provinces, not because of their own party influence, but because of the influence of the Ulema (p.135) whereas all the Ulema were on the side of the Congress, not the Muslim League. The Ulema of Deoband in particular, had ruled

that it was possible to cooperate with the Congress but not the Muslim League.

Again where Kailash Chandra calls Muslim complaints of discrimination under 1937 to 1939 Congress ministries “concoctions of damnable falsehood” (p.232), he forgets that people like N.B. Khare, a Mahasabhaite Chief Minister of CP, attested to discriminatory treatment awarded to Muslims.¹ Even Netaji said that the Congress had failed the Muslims. Of Kailash Chandra’s misconception which have been refuted by research, we only need cite, is his over estimation of Abul Kalam Azad’s power and position in the Congress. He writes: “It is an open secret that in matters of Congress discipline he is rather harsh and autocratic and even leaders like Mahatma Gandhi dare not interfere with him.” (p.233).

Quite apart from the scene recounted by Sudhir Ghosh about Azad lying to Gandhi in the face of documentary evidence, we have Mahatma Gandhi’s own letter to Pandit Nehru regarding Azad: “I do not understand him, nor does he understand me. We are drifting apart on the Hindu-Muslim question as well as on other questions. Therefore, I suggest that the Maulana should relinquish Presidentship.”²

Kailash Chandra’s arguments are indicative, not only of rancour but also confusion. Contrary and disparate considerations colour the attitude of a party, this is a common phenomenon. But when such contradictions are reduced to cold print, we begin to wonder whether contradictions are apparent to [those] who find such arguments palatable. Perhaps Kailash Chandra’s diatribe is an indication of why the Congress never evolved a long term policy to deal with the Muslim League believing that it did not matter. How deep Kailash Chandra’s presentation sank in, is of course a matter of speculation, but it is quite noteworthy that Ms. Jethi T. Sipahimalini, Deputy Speaker, Sindh Assembly, does point out in the Foreword — which is traditionally only for commendation, that: “The author’s criticism at certain places is rather strong and I wish

1. K.K. Aziz, *Muslims Under Congress Rule* (Islamabad: NCHCR, 1979), Vol.1, pp.734-35.

2. Stanley Wolpert, *Gandhi’s Passion* (New York: OUP, 2001), p.203.

he had rather left it out” (p.v). In fact she has penned her Foreword in such vague terms that nowhere can she be accused of endorsing Kailash Chandra’s views. Perhaps those who read them closely had begun to realize the magnitude, if not the gravity of what Jinnah represented to them. Kailash Chandra’s arguments have internal contradictions but are typical of a prevailing attitude, being critical both of Jinnah’s personality and his politics. Far more difficult to place is Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who endorsed Jinnah’s policy but criticized his personality.

B.R. Ambedkar’s concurrence with M.A. Jinnah’s political demand is contained in *Thoughts on Pakistan* (Bombay: Thacker, 1941) and his denunciation is contained in *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah* (Bombay: Thacker, 1943). Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) had favoured the idea of the Marhatta kingdom becoming the precursor of modern independent India. What attracted him to Ambedkar was Ranade’s giving precedence to social reform over political reform. Ambedkar knew that without social emancipation, the Harijans or scheduled castes would never benefit from political emancipation.

The key word in Ranade’s thought was “sanction” (p.54) meaning the ability to fulfil a political will. Both Gandhi and Jinnah possessed “sanction”. Paradoxically, Ambedkar decried this trait in Gandhi and Jinnah, calling them both egoists. How Ambedkar differentiated between the sanction of Gandhi and the sanction of Jinnah needs just a word of explanation. Ambedkar wrote that “the absence of sanctions in Ranade’s political philosophy need not detract much from its worth” (p.55). Now, Ambedkar is confusing sanctions as a component of Ranade’s thought and sanctions as a means of enforcing Ranade’s philosophy.

It is within the colonial hierarchy that Ranade’s dictum was formulated. “It is not often realized that the knot which binds the servient nation to the dominant nation is more necessary to the servient than the dominant nation” (p.68). Only a leader of the scheduled caste could focus on the necessity of British colonialism. Gandhi was backed by a majority and Jinnah was backed by a minority, and it is this factor which created an ambience about Jinnah in Ambedkar’s mind. About Gandhi, Ambedkar expressed

himself clearly in his *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (Bombay: Thacker, 1945).

All that Jinnah had done was to hail the Gandhi-Ambedkar Pact whereby Ambedkar was forced to forego Separate Electorates for Scheduled Caste members. Jinnah himself did not accept a corresponding concession for the Muslims. Jinnah as a champion for Muslim rights is to be admired; Jinnah for being able to obtain a sanction for his people is to be envied. In *Thoughts on Pakistan* Ambedkar had this to say about Jinnah's personality, he called Jinnah: "An egoist without the mask and has perhaps a degree of arrogance which is not compensated by any extra-ordinary intellect or equipment. It may be on that account he is unable to reconcile himself to a second place."³

Such remarks usually precede a finding that a leader is sincere but misled, but instead we find Ambedkar not sympathizing or asking his readers to afford due consideration to M.A. Jinnah's demands, but rather identifying completely with Jinnah's solution to the communal problem. Ambedkar said: "Integral India is incompatible with an independent India." (p.56). Even if India remained one integral whole it will never remain an organic whole (p.57). The Muslims will be freed from the nightmare of Hindu Raj and Hindus will save themselves from the hazard of a Muslim Raj (p.58). The mischief is caused not so much by the existence of mutual antagonism as by the existence of a common theatre for its display.⁴ (p.58).

Ambedkar was a contemporary politician not, a personal friend of M.A. Jinnah. Ambedkar's reaction is not that of an individual but a politician with a cause and that is what shapes his judgement. We now come to a small account by Sachchidananda Sinha, called *Jinnah As I Know Him*.⁵ This small book proceeds from one of the oldest friends of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He knew Jinnah when he was studying for the Bar. He personally witnessed

3. B.R. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Pakistan* (Bombay: Thacker, 1941), reprinted in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Inventing Boundaries* (New Delhi: OUP, 2000), pp.47-62.

4. Mushirul Hasan, *op.cit.*, pp.56-58.

5. Reprinted in Urdu translation by Ahmed Yusuf as *Woh Jinnah Jineh Main Janta Tha* (Patna: Khuda Buksh Oriental Public Library, 1996), pp.287-310.

Jinnah's role during the Lord Salisbury and Sir Dadabhai Naorji election contest for the Finsbury constituency. Sinha tells us that Naoraji's victory was especially indebted to Jinnah. He speaks of Jinnah's part in the 1906 Calcutta session of the Congress. He recalls to reader the speech Jinnah made against Separate Electorates. Sachchidanda Sinha gives us a close look at the young Bombay barrister. "I and Jinnah became friends, and in Bombay we met in the chambers of Sir Feroz Shah Mehta. All of us, Jinnah included, conducted ourselves with the utmost politeness.... This assembly was Plato's academy on a small scale." (p.295). Sinha recounts that he expected Jinnah to preside over the 1911 Congress "but fate had decreed, otherwise." (*Ibid*).

As to why Jinnah changed his stance, Sinha puts it down to Jinnah's ambition and vanity. He differs with Jawaharlal Nehru's opinion that Jinnah left Congress because he did not relish the dust and grime of mass politics. Sinha makes a psychological distinction. He says Jinnah left Congress because he could never play second fiddle to Gandhi. For a close friend, he is most curiously ignorant about what went behind the scenes in Nagpur during that fateful 1920 session. Also, while imputing the emergence of Pakistan to Jinnah's vanity, he is intriguingly silent about the whole Cabinet Mission episode. Sinha returns to the view that had Jinnah not been insulted at Nagpur, Pakistan would never have come into being. (p.309)

What really happened at Nagpur has been revealed by Kanji Dwarkadas, but before we come to his writings we must review V.N. Naik's *Mr. Jinnah: A Political Study* (Bombay: Sadbhakti, 1947). This is perhaps the last book about Quaid-i-Azam written in his lifetime. His book is not a eulogy; it begins and ends with hope that India and Pakistan shall reunite (pp.1 and 84). His general portrayal of Jinnah is that of a wrecker of Indian independence saying that he co-operated with Winston Churchill in checkmating Congress. He is critical of Gandhi as are most of Jinnah's admirers. He says that: "The mystic and saint in India has spiritualized politics and landed Indians in a quandary." (p.33); but when he discusses post-partition riots, he praises Gandhi and criticizes Jinnah.

There is one scene recorded by V.N. Naik dating to 1922 or 1923 which he personally witnessed. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was presiding over a meeting in Bombay to promote the candidature of R.P. Paranjypte. Jinnah dealt firmly and deftly with tough hecklers and their political patron (pp.38-41). This is a rare personal anecdote which belies the common notion that Jinnah was only a drawing room politician, unused to the rough and tumble of a political life.

On balance, but only on balance, Naik blames Congress and not Jinnah for the partition. Naik refers to the 1937 Congress refusal to accommodate the Muslim League in coalitions: "Mr. Jinnah as a bitter communalist is the creation of the Indian National Congress. It is events that make the fortune of slogans, not slogans that make the fortune of events." (p.18)

On two points Naik's interpretation is odd and unusual, that is on Jinnah's role during the Cabinet Mission plan and secondly on Quaid-i-Azam's speech of 11 August 1947. Throughout his book, he decries the division of India, but he disregards Jinnah's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, rather he says that Jinnah did not act as a statesman, but only in a manner that would shift the blame of the Plan's failure to Congress. Naik says Jinnah played with Lord Wavell as a cat with a mouse. He does not know how Jinnah could manipulate the reactions of Gandhi and Nehru. This runs counter to most accounts notably Azad's account that Congress was responsible for the Plan's failure, not Jinnah.

About the 11 August 1947 speech, Naik says that Jinnah spoke of the minorities with condescension and generously because he was pleased with himself for having achieved Pakistan (p.78). It is remarkable that having plotted the Congress's career of Jinnah so meticulously, Naik fails to see in the Jinnah of 1947, the Jinnah of 1917. V.N. Naik has made the same mistake which many Pakistanis have since then consistently made, that is, reading Jinnah's 1 August speech in isolation. It should be read in conjunction with Jinnah's interview with H.V. Hodson.⁶

This book was a genuine attempt at reconciliation, but the author was unable to cope adequately with the horrendous events following Independence.

6. Waheed Ahmed (ed.), *The Nation's Voice*, Vol.IV (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 2000), pp.831-43.