Aspects of the *Quaid-i-Azam's Political Ethic*

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Much has been written about the Quaid-i-Azam over the years and one might think that as a result we were well enough acqainted with him. But when we consider a political career that spanned some four decades, including periods of intense struggle, and culminated in the founding of a new state, the student's work is never entirely done. There is always more to discover, understand, and know. A grand international congress met in Islamabad in December 1976 to carry forward the enterprise of knowing the Quaid-i-Azam more fully. Participants looked at him, once again, as a man, as a politician, as a legislator, and as a lawyer. They discussed the development of his attachments, ideas, and commitments. They examined the various aspects and stages of his role as a leader. Putting together the characterizations they offered, we get the following portrayal of his public personality. He was:

> handsome, elegant, eloquent, successful, wealthy, shrewd, prudent, frugal; hard-working and persevering; tough, grave, disciplined, orderly; competent organizer, skilful negotiator, able tactician, master of detail; unafraid, proud, assertive, wilful; unselfish, honest, incorruptible; rational, logical, modernist, constitutionalist; tolerant of

honest criticism, democratic, covenant-keeper; dedicated to his people's welfare.[1]

The people of Pakistan think of him as an exemplary leader, above and beyond serious criticism.

My purpose here is to spell out the primacy of the public realm as he stressed it in his speeches and statements after the establishment of Pakistan.[2] He did not write or speak on the subject in a sustained manner, probably because a commitment to the public interest was a habit of the mind with him, and its primacy over the personal interest was something he had learned to take for granted. We may, then, have to read between the lines and ponder his words in the context of values and concepts that were well understood in his day to reach his thinking.

We begin with the Quaid-i-Azam's view of the ends of public power and authority. The function of the state is not merely to maintain order, and thus to provide a safe environment in which individuals make their choices and pursue their goals. The state, he believed, exists to organize and maintain the good life. Goodness refers not only to the individual's private experience but to his interaction with others. There is thus the good person, and then there is the good society. The individual person and the society become good inasmuch as they accept and fulfil certain mutual obligations. There is also the good state, which is the society's political expression, and the good government, which is the state's vehicle for expressing and implementing its will.

Society may be viewed as a "partnership in virtue," as Edmund Burke had posited it, but it may also be seen

in a purely utilitarian sense of being a vast network of relationships of interdependence conducted on terms settled in impersonal and business-like contracts. In thinking of the Pakistanis as a collectivity, the Quaid-i-Azam spoke of them, more often, as a nation and as a community–entities whose structure is based upon bonds of mutual affection and sentiment.

The communities of the Quaid-i-Azam's concern may be placed within concentric circles. There is the world community, or mankind, at the outer rim. Next comes the worldwide Muslim community called the *Umma*. Then there is the national community, that is Pakistan, including both Muslims and non-Muslims, who identify with the country and give it their loyalty. Pakistani Muslims occupy the core of these circles, and they must bear the primary responsibility for sustaining the national community. The cement that holds persons together as a community is the sense of brotherhood among them. Muslims are brothers unto one another because of their common faith. But the Quaid-i-Azam's understanding of Islam had taught him that all men, regardless of faith, were brothers. On several occasions in his speeches he referred to brotherhood of man as one of the values we had received from Islam. Non-Muslim Pakistanis were, thus, brothers of Pakistani Muslims within the national community.

The Quaid-i-Azam does not see the Pakistani community merely as an aggregation of the persons who compose it at any given time. He regards it, instead, as a historical entity to whose current form and character the Muslim experience of the last fourteen hundred years has contributed. He refers repeatedly to the "glorious" record of Muslim accomplishments through history. He also looks to the future and calls upon the generation of his own time to make Pakistan into a great nation to which the coming generations can be proud to belong. The community of his conception cannot say that it will live for itself only, and that it owes nothing to those who are

still unborn. His community connects the past and the present with the future. It is, like Burke's society, a partnership between those who, having done their work, are gone, those who are living, and those who are still to come. It is an organic community whose parts are linked together in their health and well-being, and whose togetherness is enlivened by the warmth of solidarity and brotherhood.

What does brotherhood mean in functional terms? Is there, for instance, brotherhood between the rich and the poor, and if so, what does it involve? This is an exceedingly troublesome question, and the Quaid-i-Azam's answer to it partakes of a degree of complexity. He urged equality, social justice, and fair play as Islamic values. Twice he spoke of "Islamic socialism," which he interpreted as equality. But we should hasten to add that it is the equality of opportunity, and that before the law, which he had in mind. He was not about to abolish all class distinctions and institute an equality of condition, an equality of possessions and incomes, among all Pakistanis. He said the state must be just to both the rich and the poor, and help the latter improve their condition, without disrupting the equilibrium of society in the process.[3] He asked his audiences to fulfil their "sacred duty" to eradicate poverty. In his celebrated address of 11 August 1947, he called upon the Assembly members to devote themselves "wholly and solely" to the welfare of the people, especially that of the poor masses. The government, he said, could have no purpose other than that of serving the people by devising ways of improving the quality of their lives.

It is probable that the Quaid-i-Azam was asking the Assembly to eradicate the kind of poverty in which persons go without basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. After these have been assured, additional means of well-being, which make living more comfortable, may become the object of public policy. The poor and rich are, thus, flexible categories. In the absence

of an enforced equality of condition, the distinction between them remains.

It is clear that in the Quaid-i-Azam's thinking brotherhood between the rich and the poor is not only possible but essential. Since brotherhood necessarily implies caring, the rich cannot say that they owe the poor nothing. What is the nature of their obligation? I suggest that the Quaid-i-Azam understood brotherhood to mean that as one member of the community advances to a higher level of learning, competence, or prosperity, he helps others travel with him on the same road. As he enhances his own capacities, those journeying with him do the same. They may not all advance to the same extent, but the sharing of a profitable experience has nevertheless taken place. An enterprise has been undertaken which all participants value because they have all benefited from it. Recall, in this connection, the Quaid-i-Azam's speech as he laid the foundation stone of the Valika Textile Mill in Karachi on 26 September 1947. He said he hoped that, in planning their factory, the Valikas had provided for proper housing and other amenities for their workers, adding that industry could not thrive without contented labour.

The Quaid-i-Azam was a communitarian, not an individualist. His repeated emphasis on unity, fraternity, solidarity, and brotherhood would support my interpretation. He did not exclude competition for excellence, but he relied more on co-operation as a guiding principle for organizing societal interaction. In the course of his speeches in Dacca and Chittagong, Quetta and Sibi, and Peshawar he asked his listeners to subordinate their personal, sectional, sectarian, and regional interests to the larger national interest. They must work to galvanize the people as one great nation. Local attachments need not be abandoned, but what is the value of a part, he asked, except within the whole? He would have them transcend their province, limited nationalism, and ethnic distinctions. But it would be

wrong to think that he was issuing a call for the effacement of the individual and his love for his locality or region. Each man's individuality, and his sense of a distinct cultural identity, were valuable and might be preserved, but they should be harmonized with his national identity.

This harmonization was not to be a one-way transaction in which the individual or the region did all the giving. The national community owed them obligations. The parts may not have value except within the whole, but the health of the whole depends upon the health of the parts. Moreover, why should the parts unite and make sacrifices to glorify the whole? The parts must have their due, and feel that justice reigns, before they will honour the whole and subordinate themselves to it. The Quaid-i-Azam was fully alive to these requisites of preserving a community. He told the people of Baluchistan–whose welfare he considered to be his special responsibility as the Governor General–that he wanted their area to move to the status of a province as quickly as possible. In the meantime, he would associate their representatives or notables with his administration of their affairs and his plans for their social and economic development. He expressed great solicitude for their aspirations and interests.

Addressing a group of civil servants in Peshawar, he assured them that his government did not want to stop the "sons" of that province from going forward. It was their province, and if they had men qualified to hold high-ranking posts, they would be appointed to the same. "We will see that such men prosper and flourish in the province and also get their due place in Pakistan."[4] Similarly, he maintained that East Pakistan must have its share of the advantages generated by public policies. The country, he insisted, must be made prosperous and happy for all.

A good society, deemed worthy of being preserved, must strive to be just. Justice means living according to

law, but it includes avoidance of exploitation of the weak by the strong. Graft and "jobbery," which the Quaid-i-Azam regarded as great curses, indeed as a "poison," are wrong not only because they are against the law, but because they involve taking something to which one is not entitled and, by the same token, depriving another of that to which he may have a right. Black marketing, especially in food and other essentials in time of shortages, he called a monstrosity, a colossal crime against society, and a most grievous wrong. It was wicked because it caused deprivation, even starvation and death.

Speaking to groups of public officials in Chittagong and Peshawar, the Quaid-i-Azam observed that the attainment of independence amounted to a revolutionary change that called for a new outlook and a new mentality. Following the classical–and also the Islamic--tradition, he argued that freedom did not entitle men and women simply to follow the heart's desire. It meant freedom to do that which was right, fair, and just. He went on to say that civil servants must not think of themselves as rulers, for they were under an obligation to serve the people. They must not be arrogant; they should be warm and kind and befriending. In performing their duties they must be just and let people see that justice was being done. They ought to give their junior colleagues and subordinates the feeling that they were all engaged in an enterprise that merited their dedication and hard work.

The Quaid-i-Azam noted that it had been customary for ministers and politicians to bring pressure to bear upon civil servants for obtaining advantages outside the law or even against it. Public officials must resist such pressure. They were not to be the partisans of any particular politician or party; they must do their duty honestly and fearlessly. Governments, he said, were formed and they were defeated; prime ministers came and went away. But civil servants stayed on, and thus they carried a heavy responsibility for safeguarding the public interest. Working toward that end, they would also

preserve their high reputation, integrity, and honour as an institution. Political interference in their work led to the "horrible disease" of corruption and nepotism. He hoped the politicians would realize what a "terrible evil" they were raising and what harm to the country they were doing. If the civil servants resisted subversive pressures and did their lawful duty, they would contribute to the building of Pakistan into a state of "our dreams." This might involve some hazard to their careers, but if they took his "humble advice," they must resist the pressure. If sacrifices had to be made in the process, they should be willing to make them. At the same time, he assured them of his support and promised to come to their rescue if they were penalized for doing their duty.

The Quaid-i-Azam asserted that, with the coming of independence, the people of Pakistan must have a say in their governance, and that the government must be responsive to their needs and aspirations. The people could put a party in power, and they could remove it. But the sovereign people must also learn to act within the law and not as a violent mob. They must understand the machinery of government and the democratic process. They were entitled to a government of their choice, but they must get it by constitutional means. They did not have the right to impose their will upon an elected government by illegal means; no government worthy of its name could tolerate gangsterism and mob rule. The Quaid-i-Azam argued that the division of India and the creation of Pakistan were accomplishments of the highest order which had been brought about peacefully, by the power of the pen and the intellect. Political action in Pakistan must continue to be civil and lawful.

The Quaid-i-Azam asked his people to introduce elements of moderation and balance in their lives and in their politics. They were free to criticise their government and leaders when the latter acted wrongly. But the people, and not only the rulers, had the obligation to be just and fair. They should be honest in their criticism, and in voicing it they should proceed from an understanding of the government's limitations. Justice

demanded also that they offer words of appreciation and praise when their government and public officials did good work. The people had their rights, but the government had its rights also, and the rights of neither should be usurped or violated. All must have justice. In the same vein he emphasized that the minorities in Pakistan must have their equal rights. The majority must be tolerant, even respectful, of their religions, cultures, and systems of thought.

The people of Pakistan have ingnored the Quaid-i-Azam's advice in each one of the above particulars. They have virtually expelled the public realm, the interest of the whole, the common good from their thoughts and calculations. They have elevated the personal interest of each individual–be he a minister, legislator, civil servant, banker, industrialist, trader, or even a teacher–to a position of supremacy. They ruined themselves as a country and as a polity in 1971. Twenty years after that traumatic event, they are oblivious of the fact that a mere aggregation of self-seeking persons does not make, and cannot preserve, a state.

References

1. See the contributions in Ahmad Hasan Dani, ed., *World Scholars on Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah,* Islamabad, 1979.
2. Quaid-e-Azam Mahmomed Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor General of Pakistan 1947-1948,* Karachi, Pakistan Publications, 1962.
3. Speech at the Karachi Club on August 9, 1947 in *ibid.*, p.5.
4. Informal Talk at Government House, Peshawar on April 4, 1948 in *ibid.*, p.123.