

ASPECTS OF QAUID-I-AZAM JINNAH'S LIFE DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS: 1892 – 1920

Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah emerged on the South Asian political scene when the environment was passing from the nineteenth century into the dawn of the twentieth. In England the liberal ideas had come to play a leading role in the political field.¹ Their influence was no less felt by the politically conscious intellectuals in the subcontinent – a mental build among them that had been nurtured in the nationalistic conceptual frame of Europe, which had already created a particular type of intellectual circle towards the later half of the nineteenth century.² The Quaid belonged to this circle. However, the meaning of nationalism was to be understood in the historical context of South Asia where several religions and cultural communities had played independent political roles in the past. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was an exponent of the Muslim national role.³ On the other hand certain British officers were determined to create a new political environment, in which their system of Government would perpetuate in the subcontinent under their hegemony.⁴ In the background of this new environment the Indian National Congress came into existence in 1885 with the tacit blessings of the then Viceroy, Lord Dufferin. The real efforts were, however, made by Allan Octavian Hume.⁵ The creation of such an organisation was received with a mixed reaction. While Sir Syed Ahmad stuck to his earlier role and kept not only himself but also most other Muslims away from it,⁶ it was only a handful of Muslims like Badruddin Tyabji who joined the organisation.⁷ There were of course groups of non-Muslim intellectuals who not only actively participated but dominated the organisation.⁸ Later, Jinnah came under the influence of Tyabji, and with his brilliant start as a lawyer in Bombay, he quickly shot to prominence in the Bombay political circles. His active participation in the political activity of Bombay was deeply marked with liberal ideas.⁹ He had already established himself as a well-known figure in political circles when he attended the All-India National Congress session at Calcutta in 1906.¹⁰

At the beginning of the twentieth century when the British administrative system was re-aligned and reformed in the time of Lord Curzon, the new arrangement affected different sections of the population differently.¹¹ The Muslims of Eastern India suddenly discovered the benefits of the partition of Bengal that took place in 1905.¹² The partition on the other hand seriously affected the vested interests of all those who were settled and well-entrenched in the capital city of Calcutta – a commercial port city of Hindu Banias, commission agents and their hanger-on Babus, that had the whole of Eastern India as its hinterland.¹³ Discovering in the partition the ruin of their future prosperity,¹⁴ they launched an agitation against it from the plat-form of the only political organisation then in existence, that is the All-India National Congress.¹⁵ This agitation created a chain of reactions including boycott of English goods, *swadeshi* movement, etc. and finally a terrorist movement.¹⁶

It was against this background that constitutional rights of the Muslims began to be discussed and it was in order to give expression to their historical role in political terms that the All-India Muslim League came into existence in 1906.¹⁷ Although it came to serve the interests of the Muslim community, it would be wrong to call it a communal organisation in the sense in which the word "communal" was used in later years. The Muslims sought to define their political status in the new terminology of the British frame, in which the Muslims came to be regarded as a minority community, which had been left behind in the march of new political and economic participation within the British empire. In the eyes of the British they were a "backward community" and hence stood in need of special constitutional safeguards for their own self-preservation and future progress.¹⁸ Jinnah, being a Muslim, could not have been unaffected by these ideas. Although he was deeply interested in the welfare and cultural freedom of the Muslims, as is clear from his attendance of the meetings of the *Anjuman-i-Islam* at Bombay,¹⁹ yet his political alignment swerved towards the liberal intellectuals of Bombay.²⁰ The result was his increasing association with the Congress activities, leading to his participation at the Calcutta Congress of 1906.²¹ It is in this Congress that we clearly perceive the political framework within which his mind operated. He refused to believe in the notion of "backward community" and advocated equality for the Muslims.²² He pleaded for equal status for the Muslims from the platform of the Congress because he believed that it was only from a feeling of equality that a closer cooperation and harmony could be created among the different sections of the population. Hence Jinnah's future action moved in two directions: firstly, to carry out the sense of equality to its full realisation, and secondly, to seek cooperation among the different communities.

When Jinnah entered the political field cooperation among the different communities was lacking. The Muslims had gone ahead to lay the foundation of their own organisation and hence their outlook was different from that of the Congress. However, Jinnah got the opportunity to serve the cause of the Muslims even when he remained a member of the Congress. The issue of *Waqf ala'l Aulad* bill was a God sent opportunity to Jinnah who clenched it to its finale and thus won the gratitude of the Muslims from all over the country.²³ He thus became an all-India figure among the Muslim community as well as in the Congress circles.²⁴ This also resulted in creation of harmonious relations between members of two major political organisations.

Having attained this position, the disunity within the Congress circles, between the Moderates and the Extremists, was also resolved by the hectic efforts of Jinnah. His arduous task of unity was to culminate in the birth of united India by the end of 1915 when the two main political organisations came to hold their sessions in Bombay in the same month of December.

Although Jinnah was elected from the Muslim seat, he was equally vocal on the bills which exclusively affected the Hindus such as the adoption of Hindu Marriages Validity Bill in September 1918.²⁵ Other matters like education, police, civil services, etc., equally affecting all the communities also received full attention from Jinnah in his legislative career.²⁶

By the entry of Jinnah in the All-India Muslim League in 1913 the organisation

gained in stature. He could now play a role in both the organisations to adopt a policy of common goal. For the purpose of initiating common deliberations on the issue of the India Council Reform, Jinnah moved his resolution in the 1913 sessions of the All-India Muslim League and Indian National Congress.²⁷ Henceforth, other matters of common interest equally affecting the Hindus and Muslims were debated both in the Congress and Muslim League meetings. Such endeavours, in which Jinnah played a key role, finally resulted in the adoption of Lucknow Pact as the joint scheme of reforms in December 1916. This joint agreement determined the essentials of the Self-Government (Swaraj) and constitutional relationship between the Muslims and the Hindus.²⁸

Jinnah was the man who brought about this unity for the first and the last time in the history of the subcontinent. Never before or after such a unity had prevailed in the political circles for a common demand.

The way in which he manipulated the passage of the resolution by both the organisations reflected a complete sense of cordiality not only between the Hindus and the Muslims, but also other communities inhabiting the South Asian subcontinent. All the major political forces of the country thus joined hands for the attainment of Swaraj or Home Rule within shortest possible time. For carrying on the propaganda activities at the mass level two Home Rule Leagues as subsidiary parties of the Indian National Congress and All-India Muslim League came to be established and Jinnah emerged as a central figure in all these activities.

It, however, remained to convince the British to accede to this united demand of the people. It was by no means an easy task because the British had their own interests to protect. The matter became more complicated because of the First World War and its aftermath. One issue which followed the termination of hostilities was that of the Khilafat. It directly affected the Muslims. It was not only a religious issue but also a political cause. While the Muslims were united on the issue of Khilafat, the line of action to achieve the goal of Khilafat was not very clear.

After the War there were other developments too in the country like the Rowlatt Bill and the Jallianwala Bagh incident. The atmosphere was charged with great emotion as the Indian grievances had not been redressed. Despite all this, the Indians expected substantial concession from the British. As a consequence when the majority Hunter Committee Report was announced in April 1920, it caused widespread resentment,²⁹ which was further heightened when the fate of Ottoman Empire was sealed in the Treaty of Sevres.³⁰ Thus both the Muslims and the Hindus felt hurt and frustrated.

It was at this time that the British announced the Reforms Act of 1919 which hardly met the aspirations of the leaders who were expecting Self-Government after the close of the War.³¹ The way in which the British proceeded to carry forward their scheme of reforms and to implement it in the country, was received with mixed political reaction. The British desired to have their own way so that their hegemony remained unchallenged. The emotions of most of the people on the other hand were such that a piecemeal reform could hardly assuage their feelings.

At this time Gandhi came forward to represent the hurt feelings of the people.³² Taking advantage of the popular feelings he introduced his programme of non-coope-

ration which he had successfully experimented earlier in South Africa.³³ In this programme he had the support of the Congressites as well as of the Khilafatists.³⁴

Jinnah stood calm though in no way unconcerned or unmoved by the events. He understood the gravity of the situation but did not allow himself to be swayed by emotions. While he was in favour of advocating the cause of freedom and worked for the Khilafat, he was eager to take advantage of the Reforms given by the British and also to create a constitutional situation that would compel the British to concede Self-Government. That could be achieved only if political unity was preserved in the country. For this purpose he desired the Indians to send their best representatives to the Councils. To facilitate this, Jinnah had succeeded in persuading the Amritsar Congress as well as the Muslim League sessions (1919) to contest the elections due to be held in the following year. The electorate of five million, so far the largest in the constitutional history of India, was desired to be mobilised. This spirit of political unity against the British Government was required to strengthen the legislatures with strong men. Jinnah was planning to resort to agitation after strengthening the Councils. This he considered necessary for maintaining the unity both amongst the masses and the politicians of the country. He appears to have believed that any other course to start agitation would lead to creation of differences and eventual chaos.³⁵ That was the reason which made him stand alone on the platform of the Nagpur Congress and predict the failure of the movement initiated by Gandhi and Ali brothers without strengthening the Councils.

Gandhi's programme which won support of a large majority was carried out. It did create mass consciousness but ultimately it failed. The mass agitation without legislative leadership created mass problems and could not maintain the unity which Jinnah had worked in building during the last several years. With the end of *Satyagraha* the unity was shattered for ever.

Towards the end of Non-cooperation movement the country entered into a new political environment. The British had succeeded in destroying the unity of political thought in the subcontinent.³⁶ The mass agitation had left its own wounds. Jinnah, the harbinger of unity, had been left only with the All-India Muslim League. Gandhi's role had a great appeal for the Hindus and his programme of *Satyagraha* soon became a world attraction.³⁷

When Jinnah entered the political arena, there was disunity all around. It was due to his efforts that he, with hard work and constant care, was able to bring about the much needed inter-communal unity. Thus at the time of Gandhi's phenomenal rise to a position of influence there was complete unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. He succeeded in mobilising the mass sentiments and galvanising them towards the goal of Swaraj. But he failed to maintain unity created by Jinnah and his allies. Gandhi emerged as a saint of India but his movement led to disunity and division of the subcontinent. Jinnah remained a lone furrower to pick up the broken threads of unity and try once again to build up the string of cordiality from the platform of the League. What steps he took to find a new constitutional solution to the whole problem belongs to a second phase of the life of Jinnah that must be understood in the new developments that took place after 1920.

NOTES

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2. John R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress*, Princeton, 1977, pp. 29-49.
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4. Stanley A. Wolpert, *A New History of India*, New York, 1977, pp. 263-268.
5. W. Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume*, London, 1913, pp. 47-60; S. R. Mehrotra, *Towards India's Freedom and Partition*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 44-65; and M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, II, Wiesbaden, 1966, p. 1596.
6. Khalid bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: the Formative Phase 1857-1948*, Karachi, 1960, pp. 17-18.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
8. *Ibid.*
9. M. H. Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah (A Political Study)*, Lahore, 1962, p. 306.
10. *Report of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Indian National Congress held at Calcutta on the 26th, 27th, and 29th of December 1906*, pp. 113, 120; *Bombay Gazette*, 1 January 1907; and *Statesman* (Calcutta), 1 January 1907.
11. McLane, *op. cit.*, pp. 362-364; and S. Razi Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905-1910*, Lahore, 1964, pp. 1-3.
12. Mohammad Noman, *Muslim India*, Allahabad, 1942, pp. 69-78.
13. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, Madras, 1935.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. H. H. Dodwell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, VI, Delhi, 1958, pp. 551-552; and Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India*, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1978, pp. 314-316.
17. Noman, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-78.
18. Sayeed, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30.
19. *Bombay Gazette*, 9 July, 31 Dec. 1897, 6, 16 April 1898.
20. *Jinnah's Evidence before the Islington Commission: Minutes of Evidences, India Office Records, Parliamentary Papers 1914*, vol. 22, col. 7294.
21. *Bombay Gazette*, 15 Nov. 1904.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Government of India Acts, Bills, etc.*, India Office Records, L/P&J/6.
24. *Ibid.*
25. For instance see Jinnah's legislative speech, 5 Sept. 1918, in *Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, from April 1918 to March 1919*, LVII, Calcutta, pp. 69-70.
26. For instance see Jinnah's legislative speeches, in *Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, from April 1909 to March 1910*, XLVIII, Calcutta, pp. 591-593; *Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, from April 1910 to March 1911*, XLIX, Calcutta, pp. 462-463, 572; *Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, from April 1911 to March 1912*, L, Calcutta, pp. 599-603; *Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, from April 1912 to March 1913*, LI, Delhi, pp. 313-317; *Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, from April 1916 to March 1917*, LV, Calcutta, pp. 402, 456-458; *Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, from April 1917 to March 1918*, LVI, Calcutta, pp. 214-215, 341-342, 358, 384-385.

27. *Bombay Chronicle*, 26-31 Dec. 1913.
28. *Bombay Chronicle*, 27-31 Dec. 1916, 1 Jan. 1917.
29. *Bombay Chronicle*, 30 April 1920.
30. *Bombay Chronicle*, 26-28 May 1920.
31. The reforms were announced in the middle of December 1919. It was towards the end of 1920 that the Council elections were held under these reforms.
32. Gandhi's circular letter to all the members of the All-India Home Rule League, in *Bombay Chronicle*, 30 April 1920.
33. *Bombay Chronicle*, 27 May 1920.
34. *Bombay Chronicle*, 27 May, 1-4 June 1920.
35. *Bombay Chronicle*, 28-31 Dec. 1919, 26 Jan. 1920, 20 Oct., 30-31 Dec. 1920.
36. Ronaldshay to Montagu, 18 May, 16 July, 25 August, 20 Sept. 1921, India Office Library (London), Eur. MSS. D. 523/32; Lloyd to Montagu, 19 May, 1 July, 23 Sept., 5 Nov., 3 Dec., 1921, *Montagu Papers*, D. 523/26. At this time Ronaldshay was Governor of Bengal and Lloyd was Governor of Bombay Presidency; Montagu functioned as the Secretary of State for India.
37. Stanley A. Wolpert, "Congress Leadership in Transition: Jinnah to Gandhi, 1914-1920", in B. N. Panday (ed.), *Leadership in South Asia*, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 653-665.