

Review Article

Jinnah as Governor General: An Evaluation*

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I heartily welcome the publication of Qayyum Nizami's *Quaid-i-Azam Bahaysiat Governor General*, especially because it represents a major breakthrough in the literature on the Quaid in Urdu. In essence, it argues for a secular Jinnah, and, impliedly, for a secular Pakistan.

First a word about the author. Qayyum Nizami was a Minister of State during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime and PPP Central Information Secretary, and Chairman, Evacuee Trust Property Board. He is also an advocate and a columnist, and has authored some six books on ZAB, Benazir Bhutto, generals in politics, and American neo-imperialism, and has edited *Khufia Papers* 'Secret Papers'. The present work is his first one on Jinnah, and it is sub-titled *Nai Riyasat ki Tashkeel: Faislay aur Aqdamat* (Formation of the New State: Decisions and [Administrative] Measures). The author claims his work to be the first authentic work on Pakistan's first Governor General, and describes 'Return to Quaid-i-Azam's Pakistan' as his mission.

For one thing, *Quaid-i-Azam Bahaysiat Governor General* is carefully researched and copiously documented. For another, it is thoroughly analytical and persuasively argued. Few books in Urdu can match it in terms of its scholarship, analytical rigour, and lucidity of exposition. It also raises some critical issues and seeks to resolve them on the basis of authentic sources, both primary and secondary. Thus the author has scanned a good deal of literature on the topic and the period, even largely untapped cabinet records, and literature contra to his own viewpoint such as Saleena Karim's *Secular Jinnah* (2005).¹ This extensive scanning is amply reflected in his wide-ranging and well-argued discussion on whether Pakistan was conceived as an Islamic or a

* Qayyum Nizami, *Quaid-i-Azam Bahaysiat Governor General* (Urdu) (Lahore: Jehangir Books, 2010), pages 226, price Rs. 425.

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¹ Saleena Karim, *Secular Jinnah: Munir's Big Hoax* (Cornwall: Exposure Publishing, 2005).

secular state. This debate up-grades the present work to a top-notch place in the literature. Throughout the work, he demonstrates a passionate commitment to the pristine ideals and overarching values Jinnah had stood and worked for. In tandem, he presents his viewpoint on the basis of not only excerpts from his pronouncements, but, more importantly, of his public posture and activities and of the series of administrative measures he had undertaken in laying down the structure of the fledgling state on sound and sure foundations. Obviously, the author argues for secular Jinnah and eloquently presents his case. One may well differ with Nizami's viewpoint, but cannot possibly ignore it.

While I respect Nizami's viewpoint and laud him for its eloquent presentation, I would yet like to point out that Jinnah is much too complex and too multi-layered a personality to get himself readily pigeon-holed in a binary water tight compartment. Especially when he had not only never used the word, 'secular', in any of his pronouncements, but also debunked a correspondent at his 14 July 1947 press conference, who had asked him, 'Will Pakistan be a secular or theocratic state', by remarking: 'You are asking a question that is absurd.... Then it seems to me that what I have already said is like throwing water on a duck's back. When you talk of democracy, I am afraid you have not studied Islam. We have learned democracy thirteen centuries ago'.²

And as is well known, he considered democracy, equality, freedom, fraternity, integrity, social justice and fairplay among the core values of Islam, and these he wished to get incorporated in the future constitution of Pakistan. At the same time, he ruled out theocracy outright and envisioned no role for the sacerdotal class:

The constitution of Pakistan has yet to be framed by the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. I do not know what the ultimate shape of this constitution is going to be, but I am sure that it will be of a democratic type, embodying the essential principles of Islam. Today, they are as applicable in actual life as they were 1,300 years ago. Islam and its idealism have taught us democracy. It has taught equality of men, justice and fairplay to everybody. We are the inheritors of these glorious traditions and are fully alive to our responsibilities and obligations as framers of the future constitution of Pakistan. In any case Pakistan is not going to

² Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches and Statements As Governor General of Pakistan 1947* (Islamabad: Directorate of Films & Publications, 1989), p.28.

be a theocratic State – to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims – Hindus, Christians, and Parsis – but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.³

Hence, even as Nizami points out, he didn't set up a Ministry of Religious Affairs while he appointed five out of seven members of the Minorities Sub-Committee from the minorities. Nor did he consider elevating Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, a great asset to the Muslim League during the critical 1945-46 elections, in the context of the Congress-aligned Jamiatul Ulema-i-Hind, to any position. He even attended the service at the Holy Trinity Church in Karachi on Sunday, 17 August 1947, a gesture never repeated by any head of the. All this was to match his performance with his core pronouncements and buttress his categorical call for tolerance, co-existence and an indivisible nationhood on the eve of Pakistan's emergence in his epochal 11 August address.⁴ And in all this, Jinnah was remarkably and fortuitously on the same page as Iqbal, as the latter had explicated himself in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*,⁵ and as he had ruled out 'religious rule' in the consolidated North-Western Province he had so eloquently adumbrated in his Allahabad address (1930).⁶

More important, it is seldom recognized and referred to that Jinnah's 11 August address resonates the spirit of the *Misaq-i-Medina*. This *Misaq* was crafted by the Prophet (PBUH) for the governance of multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-lingual Yatrib (Medina) and has been hailed as *the First Written Constitution in the World* (1968),⁷ By Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah. Article 25 of the *Misaq* categorically lays down, 'And verily the Jews of the Banu 'Awf shall be considered as a community (*ummah*) alongwith the Believers, for the Jews being their religion and for the Muslims their religion...' (The next ten Articles [26-35] extend the same privilege to the other friendly Jewish tribes.) Articles 39 and 45/B lay down that 'the valley of Yathrib

³ *Ibid.*, p.157.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.42-47.

⁵ Lahore: Ashraf, 1931.

⁶ Mohammad Iqbal, *Presidential Address: Allahabad Session* (Delhi: All India Muslim League, 1945), p.14.

⁷ Mohammad Hamidullah, *The First Written-Constitution in the World* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1968). See also A Translation of Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah: A Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.231-33.

[Medina] shall constitute an inviolable territory for the parties to this document (*sahifah*)', and that 'on every group shall rest the responsibility [of defence] for the part [of the city?] which faces them'.⁸ Thus the *Mishaq* took out of consideration the religious affiliation of the constituent units when it came to crafting a political community (*ummah*) out of the diverse people inhabiting Medina. Not only were all of them conceded equal rights, equal privileges and equal obligations, they were described as constituting the *ummah* as well.

If the core principle underpinning the *Misqaq* be applied to Pakistan, would it not be but what Jinnah had laid down in his 11 August address,

'...no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations,...'.

And also:

'...in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State'⁹

After all, in the *Misqaq*, the Muslims, comprising the *Muhajireen* and the *Ansars*, ceased to be Muslims and the various Jewish tribes ceased to be Jews, not in the religious sense but in the political sense as citizens of the Medinite Islamic state. And that's how an integrated political community, designated as *ummah* in the *Misqaq*, came into being during the classical Islamic period. Could it be otherwise in Pakistan which professed itself to be Islamic. Moreover, there should be no problem in his assertion that religion is 'the personal faith of each individual' since Jinnah had held this view throughout his political career. For instance, see his speech dated 4-7 February 1935 in the Indian Legislative Assembly, and his address to the Ismail College, Bombay, on 1 February 1943.

Looked at against the *Misqaq* background, Jinnah's 11 August address could as well be termed Islamic on grounds no less solid as to consider it secular. And his 14 August reply to Mountbatten¹⁰ wherein he invoked the Medinite model lists overarching values which can be termed both secular and Islamic. Thus in assigning Jinnah a place on the ideological landscape one cannot simply depend on his 11 August

⁸ Hamidullah, pp.48-54.

⁹ Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, pp.45-6, 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.54.

address. Refreshingly though, Nizami goes beyond this address to buttress his viewpoint.

Since the argument of Nizami's work largely revolves around this long debated, but acerbic secular vs Islamic issue, I have especially sought to have it highlighted, if only to initiate a new discourse on the dual nature of Jinnah's two important addresses – those of 11 August and 14 August. However, I would like to barely mention that it's high time that we got two popular myths about Jinnah consigned to oblivion where they belong and where they should rest – for all time to come. One, Sarojini Naidu's 'solemn preliminary covenant' myth. Naidu asserts that when he agreed to join the Muslim League, while in London in 1913, his two sponsors – viz. Mahomed Ali and Sir Wazir Hasan, League's General Secretary – were required 'to make a solemn preliminary covenant that loyalty to the Muslim League and Muslim interest would in no way and at no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to the larger national cause to which his life was dedicated'. My research indicates that this was, at its best, a plausible figment of her poetic imagination which she had concocted, perhaps deliberately, to buttress her hero's nationalist credentials. In any case, I had nailed it to the counter in my paper entitled, 'Jinnah's Entry into Mainstream Muslim Politics'.¹¹

Two, Zamir Niazi's conspiracy theory which would have us believe that the Prime Minister designate and his cohorts were out to censor Jinnah's 11 August speech. Who – except the most gullible person on earth, indeed gullible to the nth degree – could imagine that anyone could censor Jinnah at the height of his glory: as President of the Constituent Assembly, Governor General designate, and, above all, as the Quaid-i-Azam? Some erroneous statement about the dowry Rutten Bai had reportedly brought along when she married Jinnah in April 1918, published in *The Hindu*, in far off Madras, earned his ire and a missive to the paper which was published on 27 August 1944. When such be his sensitiveness about a report which didn't really affect him or his cause at the moment, how sensitive could have been a censored version of his policy speech when he was sitting in the Governor General House right in Karachi? And, pray, who could dare do it? Jinnah was also known as a newspaper addict. Consider the following evidence:

- (i) Jinnah bought a whole set of Shakespeare, Shelly and Keats for K. H. Khurshid to read while staying at Sir Cowasjee Jehangir's country house at Matheran in 1945. 'But he read only newspapers. The ever

¹¹ Riaz Ahamd (ed.), *Pakistani Scholars on Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali* (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam Chair [NIPS] 1999), pp.38-39.

abundant stream of newspapers; he gave all his time to them', Khurshid tells Hector Bolitho, Jinnah's official biographer, in London in August 1952.¹²

- (ii) Ata Rabbani, former Air ADC to Jinnah, who accompanied Jinnah from Delhi to Karachi on 7 August 1947 tells Bolitho, on 6 April 1952, 'He had an immense bundle of newspapers which he read immediately and during the entire flight. Only once, he spoke. He handed me some of the newspapers and said, 'Would you like to read these?'

'This was his only remark during a journey of 4 hours...' – so preoccupied was Jinnah with the bundle of newspapers.¹³

- (iii) On the basis of what he heard from dozens of his interviewers, Bolitho remarks, '...briefs and newspapers occupied him most. He ordered more newspapers, from New York and London, and he marked and cut them. The selected articles were pasted into books, with his comments written beside them'.¹⁴ And he read out excerpts from his contemporaries' pronouncements and editorials from these books at the Muslim League sessions which he usually addressed extempore.

And on the basis of the evidence presented above, it's high time that Zamir Niazi's sensational conspiracy myth was laid to rest for now and all time to come. In perspective, I feel, it was crafted and concocted to buttress the claim that Jinnah stood for a secular Pakistan as against his chief lieutenants.

Nizami's work also features several appendices including a brief chronology of Jinnah's life, the results of the 1945 elections to the Central Assembly, the document concerning the accession of Kalat, important quotes from the Quaid, Liaquat Ali Khan's letter of resignation dated 27 December 1947, Jinnah's application to get his name changed, Jagannath Azad's 'tarana' and a host of photographs. Several of the appendices have no bearing on the theme of the work, nor does the author mention the guiding principle behind their inclusion. More surprising, he calls Jagannath Azad's 'tarana' as 'the first national anthem'. He also asserts that at Jinnah's instance, Azad who was Lahore based and on the staff of *Jai Hind*, a rabidly Congress oriented daily, had met Jinnah around 9 August and completed the 'tarana' before 14 August. Furthermore, that this 'tarana' was broadcast by Radio Pakistan

¹² Sharif al Mujahid (ed.), *In Quest of Jinnah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.86.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.213.

on 14 August. So far as the present reviewer's research goes, there is scant evidence for these bold assertions. Moreover, the popular columnist, Safdar Mahmood, has dissected this claim in some detail in his column in *Jang* (Lahore)¹⁵ After a good deal of research into the record of Radio Pakistan and of visitors to the Quaid-i-Azam during the period, so painstakingly compiled by Ahmad Saeed,¹⁶ Safdar Mahmood conclusively shows that the claim has no legs to stand upon, and I tend to concur with him. My own research indicates that no anthem was played from Radio Pakistan, Lahore, the only Radio Station Pakistan had inherited at the time of her birth, on 15 August, and that it went on air at midnight, 14-15 August 1947, and not 14 August. After the announcement and Jinnah's message, a national song by Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi, then script writer, Radio Lahore, was broadcast. Its first verse read: '*Pakistan bananay walo, Pakistan Mubarak ho*'.¹⁷ As I have indicated in my recent article, entitled 'The real Pakistan Day',¹⁸ the two Dominions – India and Pakistan – became independent on 15 August 1947, not 14 August, and that the Independence Day used to be celebrated in Pakistan on 15 August for several years, beginning with 1947. It was shifted to 14 August in 1954, and Hafeez Jallundhari's national anthem was broadcast from Radio Pakistan, Lahore, on 13 August evening.¹⁹ In any case, Jagannath Azad's 'tarana' is again a myth, pure and simple, which needs to be scotched here and now.

Despite these lapses, Nizami makes a significant contribution to the extant body of literature on Jinnah, and students and scholars on Jinnah are bound to find *Quaid-i-Azam Bahaisiat Governor General* as a book that provides a good many clues and insights. Two other recent publications on this Islamic vs Secular issue may be consulted for further clarification: (i) Saleena Karim's *Secular Jinnah & Pakistan*²⁰ and Liaquat H. Merchant's 'Jinnah – Two Perspectives: Secular or Islamic and Protector General of Minorities'.²¹ Finally I wish Qayyum Nizami are success and a long productive career, and to author more such works as the present one.

¹⁵ Safdar Mahmood, '*Subh-i-Bakhair*', *Jung* (Lahore), 5 & 8 June 2010.

¹⁶ Ahmad Saeed, *Visitors of Quaid-i-Azam* (Lahore: Bazm-e-Iqbal, 1988).

¹⁷ Safdar Mahmood, *op.cit.*

¹⁸ *Dawn*, 23 November 2010.

¹⁹ *Pakistan Chronology, 1947-1997* (Islamabad: Directorate General of Films & Publications, 1998), p.84

²⁰ Saleena Karim, *Secular Jinnah and Pakistan: What The Nation Doesn't Know* (Karachi: Paramount Publications, 2010).

²¹ Liaquat H. Merchant & Sharif al Mujahid (eds.), *The Jinnah Anthology* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.84-91.