

Book Reviews

***M.A. Jinnah: The Outside View* by Dr M. Reza Kazimi, published by Department of History, University of Karachi, 2017, pages 229, price Pak rupees 1200**

Keeping track with the growing literature on Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his role in the modern Indian politics, may be an interesting and stimulating undertaking for the students of history. One thing is quite obvious that with the passage of time both in Pakistan and India—more so in the latter than in the former—the official historiography is being surpassed by historians aspiring to look into the partition afresh. The official historiographies in India and Pakistan had remained in vogue, in both countries, particularly during the initial two decades. This may be attributed to the momentum of respective Muslim and the Indian nationalist movements, which dominated the intellectual horizon in the two countries after independence. The postcolonial states in the two countries also relied heavily on their respective pre-partition nationalist assertions to construct their ideological edifices while aspiring to legitimize the state authorities. It was during the 1970s, that historians amassed courage to question some of the logical inconsistencies enwrapped in the official nationalist historical claims. With this there arose the urge to look into the historical roles of some of the most prominent political figures of pre-partition era. Thus while on the one hand Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Ambedkar, etc., came under new searchlights, on the other, Jinnah's role was revisited with fresh and objective outlook. The new versions were also subjected to questions and historians have since been involved in responding to points raised by each other. The very fact that official historiographies are paving way for other multiple historiographies is a welcome development. Needless to say that it is the cross-examination of positions taken by historians, which result in cross-fertilization of ideas and interpretations making our understanding of the past more profound.

M.R. Kazimi, a historian in his own right, is a curious reader of literature. Given his good opportunities to attend institutions and work in organisations which provided him environment where history was discussed, debated and was put in writing. The book under review comprises his long and brief write-ups about different books written about Jinnah. The book sub-titles itself as ‘The Outside View’, signifying that the author believes that he has been able to comment on all the books he has before him from a succinct position. He is justified in saying so for at least a couple of things are quite obvious in his critiquing of different works. He does not employ loaded ideological notions like many other local historians do. He also does not take the Muslim nationalist claim in a primordial framework. While looking into different works he does not lose sight of the fact that history evolves along a process of causes and effects, thus there is no room in his understating of history for claims such as “Pakistan was created on the day when the first Muslim stepped on Indian soil”. Kazimi clearly understands the difference between the political language and the logic of history. He is also not moved by the great heroes’ mesmerism which has continued to occupy, and in many cases paralyzed the minds of scores of our traditional historians. Kazimi collects his data from the real world of politics and shows a commendable capacity to interpret it. One may disagree with his interpretations; he may also be found laying emphasis on events of lesser significance or attributing more to those which in fact are not of that importance, yet he remains in the world of real politik.

While analyzing the works of writers hailing from Pakistan, India and the western world, he designates most of the new works as ‘revisionist’. He does not deny the weight of some of such works. However, he quite enthusiastically comes in defense of Jinnah wherever he judges that the great leader needs a historian’s defense. In principles, even this may be taken as the right of a commentator, but if it becomes a general attitude, then perhaps one would have to tell oneself that a leaders no matter how big and sagacious he is, also operates in an environment that is not entirely made by him, and that many of his responses are result of the circumstances.

Kazimi’s own position on partition as reflected in his analyses of others’ works suggests that he gives due importance to the Muslim minority provinces and does not agree with those who try to shift the thrust for partition elsewhere. This is all the more discernible in his reading of the Indian high politics in the first half of the 20th century and the happenings in the regional political theaters.

Another important dimension of the book is the author's ability to decipher the paradoxical situations and the contradictions in viewpoints taken on different occasions. *Jinnah: The Outside View*, while reviewing the Jinnah literature has managed a place for itself in the same literature.

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Syed Jaffar Ahmed

***From Stasis to Mobility Arab Muslim Feminists and Travelling Theory* by Saiyma Aslam, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2017, pages 342, price not printed.**

Muslim women have been a topic of research by a number of scholars due to many reasons. The Arab women have provided more such reasons, though less has been written on them due to the strict norms of confinements and the traditions of slavery, harems, hijab and also polygamy, followed more strictly in Arabs than most of the other Muslim societies. Yet these women share a unique connection with Muslim sisters elsewhere. So, any research on Arab women becomes relevant to Muslim and Pakistani women, so to speak, in the context of universal issues of Muslims about patriarchal controls, hegemony and an unthinking attitude about the changing world, wherein the currents of social transformation have been intensifying day by day, and the forces adamant to perpetuate old-fashioned patriarchy are still hesitant to adapt to them. This issue needs to be addressed as a stumbling block in the way of national progress all over the world, particularly in the Muslim societies. The book under review is an attempt in this direction, by a scholar who has tried to sift the facts from fiction. And, in doing so, she has removed misconceptions through genuine appreciation of Muslim women's reality.

The author Saiyma Aslam, completed this postdoctoral study at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (USA). The first chapter of the book deals with demythologizing the politics of gender and mobility about the Arab women, whom she finds as a 'victim of Arab societies' backwardness, but facing new challenges of modernization and nation-building with a sense of pride. The ills of oppression, seclusion and marginalization, when came face to face with modern competing ideologies, have become more complicated. Now rather the men have also been put under oppression at the hands of modern economic policies. In the same context, the author adds that the domain of 'public patriarchy' needs to be emphasized as well which penetrates in the form of global capitalism. Thus she emphasizes the eternal link between the

private property, maximization of profit and patriarchy, which, of course, is older than the ideologies of capitalism or feudalism.

The highlights of the book include differentiating between Islamic, Islamist and Muslim feminisms. The last being seeking and asserting gender egalitarianism, embedded in Islamic teaching as such. It is an effort to balance extremism, human rights and feminist approaches, while being responsive and open to modern philosophy and ideas, thus having potential to absorb pressures of the modernizing world. This book is also written with Muslim feminist approach. She has also successfully expanded the meaningfulness of studying a ‘close quarter Arab woman’ spatially and temporally, as if an Arab woman is defined in a particular equation of time and space, a similar or near similar conditions may be prevalent somewhere else. Moreover, it also implies that the woman inside Arabia can benefit by understanding foreign cultures.

Two basic concepts around which author’s arguments is woven, are ‘stasis’ and ‘mobility’; stasis being a state of inertia, no change, or no movement back or fro, and ‘mobility’ as its antithesis. Here the author uses ‘stasis’ as a condition of no participation in modern sphere of economy, politics, education and social activities, and just being confined to domesticity engaged in fulfilling the biologically determined role of procreating and nurturing. She explains that immobility not necessarily means lack of power, prestige or a state of mere oppression. Men, so to say, are also restricted in many aspects in an Arab society’s ‘pyramid of hierarchy’. So women dependents in their family and society are definitely bound to be more ‘restricted’ or in a state of ‘stasis’ due to this overarching patriarchal domination.

The book starts with giving an overview of historical background and prevalent sociopolitical conditions of the Arab society. It helps in clarifying the confusion that has arisen there due to the orientalist discourse about the historical conditions and impact of globalization processes going on in Arab society, which has a deep impact on feminism in the Arab world. Here the author also mentions Fatima Mernissi and Nawal El Saadawi, two renowned feminist with Arab background.

The chapter on ‘stasis’ explains the myth the women how have been living under oppressive and discriminatory conditions since long. The chapter on their ‘mobility’ explains how the global forces are pushing more and more Arab women out into the job market and public domain. They are now exposed to multiplex effects of global processes and flows. The next chapter shows how feminism has made inroads into the Arab world. Here writings and ideas of Edward Said, Mernissi and El Saadawi are focused on. The highlight of this chapter is the perception of two female writers that travelling of new ideas is crucial to change from

stasis to mobility, whether it is through networking with local, regional and global active elements, or by using modern media technologies. To prove her point Saiyma Aslam has also used writings of Leila Ahmed, Asma Barlas, Deniz Kandiyoti, and Fareeda Shaheed, among others.

The study has based its argument and drawn conclusions through extensive reference to Arab writers, which gives the author more credibility, as it is a fashion in the Muslim world that they outright reject observations and analyses of non-Muslim or western writers. One of the dilemmas of the Arab society, she believes, is that the Arab people, who have either suffered at the hands of democracy and modern capitalist economy, are now inclined more towards religious movements. Hence she argues, that that version and concept of democracy needs to be propagated which was introduced by Islam. If democracy and justice do not enter the domain of family, then how can *adl* (justice) be ensured. The *ijtihad* thus needed finds its clue in Mernissi's writing, as the author quotes. It highlights that the Muslim women must be proud of their entry into the modern world, because they must know that "quest for dignity, democracy and human rights, for full participation in the political and social affairs of our country, stems from no imported Western values, but is a true part of the Muslim tradition" (p. 272). It is imperative that with availability of such glorious writings of legendary feminists, the Muslim world now needs carrying forward their mission and implement what is needed nowadays.

The conclusion is in fact a marvelous effort by the author to wrap up the whole debate to pin-point how, under given similar conditions and external pressures, gender operates discriminately, thus men and women are affected differently. She has clearly mentioned men's superiority drawn from their capacity to maintain dependents which nowadays has been undermined, especially when women are sole breadwinners, and men are, in a number of cases, not capable of performing maintenance obligation, yet they think polygamy and inflicting violence on women as their birthright. As Islamic literature and feminists have pointed out many times that equality among wives is the first condition for polygamy, which is thoroughly ignored. Since "Quran has not been read in just and ethical manner", anomaly in *fiqh* is observed. She argues that due to changing social conditions *ijtihad* is essential regarding gender issues. She justifies this due to the marked quality of the present day world, i.e., "travelling persons, influences and ideologies", having their "economic, social, technological and cultural" impacts, jeopardizing the national autonomy, patriarchal authority and effectiveness of traditional ideologies. The mainstay of her argument is that men and women are equally exposed to the influences of changing social conditions, so this demands "an evaluation of traditional

ideologies affecting the status and role of Muslim women in view of the current situation” (p. 306).

Realizing the importance of religion and religious guidance in the Muslims societies of today, the author’s concrete recommendation in her own words is: “there is need to develop *ijtihad* regarding the issue of adaptability to ensure real, lasting improvements in the status [of women] as this can help Muslim cultures to overcome the impasse and move forward along a path of prosperity” (p. 64).

An important strategy of change proposed is in the domain of media. The drawbacks, rather crimes of media, are listed as: condemnation and trivialization of women and gender framing that endorses traditional gender roles. The mechanism of using media industry has been justified by Mernissi, giving examples of “injustice of representation” for females in Morocco. In order to remove such distortions, the author again uses the suggestions given by Mernissi: more women in media industry producing women’s programs, films, videos, and translating that in vernacular languages. To overcome the ‘digital divide’, recommendation is “to enhance women’s access to information and empowerment”, to create an “attitudinal shift”. She endorses what Mernissi has suggested earlier—training of women in media production, propagating *Nisa’ist* (feminist) ideas through publishing initiatives, then translating such material in different languages. Such measures would be helpful in creating a world more compatible with the newly cultivated perceptions and aspirations of the Muslim women of this century.

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Anwar Shaheen

***Cinema and Society, Film and Social Change in Pakistan*, edited by Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmed, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2016, pages 563, price Pak rupees: 4500.**

Pakistan is changing in almost all its dimensions: demographic, cultural, technological, philosophical; therefore, its worldview is under transformation steadily. A noticeable change is happening in a crucial aspect of its culture and people’s recreation—cinema. The whole range of themes, approaches, technologies and ideologies, depicted through films, are going through new experimentation. The cinema has not changed the society so much as changing society has caused the film industry to change. However, the taste and preferences of cinema-goers

have been indicating the psyche of different socio-economic groups across the society and ethnic spectrum. In the book under review, the theme of evolution of cinema industry in Pakistan, its external links with Bollywood industry, and the contents, quality and messages of Punjabi and Pashto cinema are discussed in the context of socio-political realities of the country. Though it is a collection of essays but diverse topics, put together, make it a wonderful academic volume on the study of cinema and society. Comparative approach has given it an added value. The introduction and concluding chapters adroitly guide what has been said in 398 offset pages of the book. Pictures, inevitable for the theme of book, are carefully selected to support the argument.

The editors, having extensive competence in the field of film studies and anthropology, have skillfully compiled the book comprising 17 chapters, arranged in two sections, titled: cinematic pasts, and transitions, thus justifying the title of the book. The editors have explained why there is a serious need to analyze on important aspects of society—national cinema and cinema-going—with reference to the evolving chaotic socio-political realities of Pakistan, which seems no one's business in the electronic media channels.

In beginning of the book, Hamid Dabashi gives the approach and purpose behind this volume, which is to present an alternative picture of the past of Pakistan, through presenting its culture, literature and art as well as “to understand Pakistani visual culture in relation to social issues”. Among the section one articles, Mushtaq Gazdar explains the half a century history (1947-1997) of cinema in Pakistan. It is followed by a chapter on Pakistani cinema in Dhaka till 1969; then another piece is on Ayub period cinema. There are two photo essays revealing unique and strange or interesting aspects of the cinematic world. For instance, there were Punjabi speaking actors in Lahore acting in Pashto films after film making was threatened in Peshawar, and to save the money, men were used as tripod to support the cameramen on their shoulder, etc. A scholar, Ziauddin Sardar in his essay on Indian cinema mentions five films *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Devdas*, *Ganga Jamuna*, *Kaghaz ke Phool*, and *Pyaasa*, all of the Dilip Kumar, an actor of Pakistani origin. The glamour and magic of Indian films is of course, unabated. An article about film posters reveals how colours and lines were added in the poster picture to attract more viewers. The evolution of film posters from early 20th century to the 1990s show a change in social history as well. The posters, according to Ali Khan, are analyzed under the titles: “power of the portrait” in the 1950s; “growing diversity” in the 1960s; “emerging contradictions” in the 1970s; and a clear cut decline in the 1980s. Posters and cinema have grown together and none of these will return to its original form, yet the

posters have their appeal, and it will stay, Ali Khan predicts. An article about women's bodies and honour presents this popular theme of films, and the action of slapping has been taken as a sign of violence against women by Sadaf Khan. She asserts that the films depict the gender ideology which is popular and widely observed in the society at large.

Violence has been an underlying theme in the book discussed with reference to horror in national cinema and separately in Pashto and Punjabi films, along with violence on women. Chapter 16 talks about *goonda raj* (rule of gangster), that is to highlight the intrinsic link between one's caste and honour associated with it. Many Punjabi films have used the caste names in their titles. Apparently the hyper-style of dialogues, enmity, fighting and bloodshed shown in Punjabi films, makes one think that it cannot be true, but after symbolic *Maula Jatt*, the second most hit Punjabi film '*Wehshi Gujjar*' has been based on true life story of a gangster. So the spirit of the viewers, film makers and the whole film business runs in resonance. The exaggerated portrayal, of course, is preferred to create maximum thrill, sensation and impact in least possible time. The facts and fiction about the real story of Jagga of Chauburji, Lahore is discussed in the same chapter. The story enlists many historical events of the 1960s. The trend of making films on gangsters was reinforced by the entry of gangsters themselves in film-making, as the chapter explains. It also mentions that after losing East Pakistan's market, *Maula Jatt* brand bloodshed films in Punjabi language were very much popularized because there was left half the audience, and above all the Islamist posture of the General Zia regime left no other creativity possible, so the goonda theme films were popularized. The political culture and film themes were thus nurturing each other from 1960 onward. The Punjabi and Urdu typology of heroes also had stark difference; for the former gangster was acceptable, but for the latter only that man was popular who could be loved by both boys and girls. This assertion is not baseless as, the "Punjabi films of 1980s used [real] goonda stories of 1960s and those of 2000s used goondas of 1990s"; this is a short history of Punjabi films, explained by an insider of the industry. Later this formula dwindled, indicating a need to experiment with new themes.

Nobil Ahmad writing on the extinction of cinema halls in protest marches, and targeted destruction in Karachi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or elsewhere, tries to explain how this trend, which is apparently anti-culture activism, shows growth of social conservatism. But the actual event of burning cinemas on 21 September 2012 indicates much more. He suggests that a deeper analysis of this phenomenon would identify political, economic and social factors behind such carnage of movie-theaters—place for common people to enjoy spectatorship. He finds the

trend of “fascist violence”, as a “carefully nurtured cancerous outgrowth” that is product of hatred for the film actors, American and Indian films, Hindu culture, sinfulness of watching films, etc. This phenomenon hints at the movie theatres, being perceived as threats as per common moral standards. Moreover, a weak state system which cannot protect property, allows its police to remain inactive while attackers are busy in their skillfully planned mission. Anyhow fall in number of cinemas from 1585 in the 1970s to 385 in 2010, shows that the new cineplexes which make movie watching affordable only for the middle and upper classes are encouraged and these theaters were left unscathed during attacks on the 20th century traditional cinemas, providing entertainment to the low-income folk as well. The cinemas’ turning into shopping malls is the real social crisis, the author points out to be noted. He mentions the culprits—real estate business, secular-liberals, right-wing religious zealots, consumerists, in short the fascists and the capitalists—all allied and bent upon taking cinema-going out of working class experience in Pakistan.

In the closing chapter Ali Nobil Ahmed analyzes the role of various factors which are shaping the “new cinema” in Pakistan. Firstly he emphasizes the new machines and film-making methods, ideological orientations of prominent film-makers, and other interest factors involved as key determinants of cinema’s future in Pakistan. He finds “the Pakistani social formation, political-economic framework and physical environment” as crucial factors in changing the Pakistani media-landscape. Now when the old manual slow methods are gone, and highly advanced digitalization technology has provided new techniques and practices, the films like *Majajan*, *Khuda ke Liye* and *Bol* have ushered in a new phase of revival of the Pakistani cinema. In conjunction with a rising corporate and consumerist culture, the people living in gated communities can afford enjoying cinema without having poor folk sitting next to them in air-conditioned atmosphere. Such trends are being strengthened which conform to the changing political ideologies of the regimes and objective political realities. The role of a film, *Waar* (2013) is declared by Ahmad as introducing “a new range of spectacular possibility” as it has started injecting “technological steroids” in the audience, to ensure commercial success. Moreover, new films have also introduced subaltern messages, negating the nationalist chauvinism and using political activism in an ingenious manner. Now the new film-making techniques displayed in new cineplexes give a very different and exciting experience to the viewers. Since 2006, the transition of Pakistani cinema has been labeled by Ahmad as ‘tectonic shift’, along with prophecy of death of celluloid film. He is skeptic about the chances of

survival of old technology productions unless they are combined with new technology outputs. He also points out the Pakistani cinema's passion with objectification of women might lead to more hypocrisy, triviality and the trend of not portraying women in powerful and diverse characters. Moreover, he recommends focusing on the marginalized classes, original stories, more thoughtful treatment and also presenting more authentic Pakistani-ness, to retort the dominating effect of Bollywood. Such assertions are put forward with a strong conviction that cinema, as a social institution, can promote national harmony, preserve diversity and cultivate an atmosphere of tolerance and dialogue among variable political positions and perspectives.

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***Governing the Ungovernable Institutional Reforms for Democratic Governance* by Ishrat Hussain, published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2018, pages 550, paperback, price Pak Rupee, 895.**

Pakistan has taken a full circle recently regarding expectations of its economic performance, as it had an enviable record in first four decades of its life. Then the 1990s saw a fall in economic indicators, and later in the first fifteen years of this century—a period of terrorism and combat and combing operations within the country—the economy was not showing any noticeable improvement. However, after the year 2015, an escalation is observed. The book under review is an attempt to compare, contrast and explain why Pakistan has been on opposite poles of development during 1947-1990 and 1990-2015. The author, a senior, reputed economist, Dr Ishrat Hussain, has tried to evaluate various hypotheses, including security deficit hypothesis, put forward to explain their validity in the case of multiple indices and data available for Pakistan. Viewing the nature of available evidence, he has tried to use mix methods with a multidisciplinary approach. Moreover, interviews, focus groups, conversations, consultations with influential individuals as well as official documents are extensively used.

The book aims at 'institutional reforms' and for this purpose a wide range of institutions are included, as they all join hands to shape the destiny of the society and state. Similarly development here is not confined to economic terms only, but also encompasses social aspects, sustainability, gender and regional inequalities. The argument that the author presents is that in countries where natural resources have been

consumed to benefit a small minority at the top of the government, development process gradually becomes unsustainable. He finds ethnocentric bindings obstructing the governance by state institutions, thus thwarting nationalism. Devolution and decentralization has not taken firm roots due to flawed introduction of local government systems to popularize the military dictators, whether it was BD system of General Ayub, insipid system by General Zia or empowered system by General Musharraf. Similarly commenting upon the impact of judicial performance on economic growth, the author recommends that those at the helm of affairs must realize that through their effecting appropriate judicial reforms, they can deliver economic prosperity widely (p. 263).

The book has 18 chapters. First two include introduction and historical background respectively. The next 11 chapters focus individually on: the economy, polity, society, federal and provincial governments, local governments, civil services, judiciary, legislature, military, religious edifice, and private sector. This is followed by analyzing the administration of justice and role of external actors in two chapters. Turning towards his proposed key challenge—the restructuring of institutions—the author has given examples from three neighbouring countries in the region, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, to learn from their experience. He points out that overall performance of India had remained much lower than that of Bangladesh, despite serious governance debacles and political turmoil; however, India has continued grow to be recognized as an emerging economy. Bangladesh performed better because of “greater private sector participation, trade liberalization, bank credit growth, lax labour standards, and facilitation ... by the government” (p. 483). The regional countries’ better growth has been realized mainly by continuity and predictability of economic policies.

In the concluding chapter Hussain points out that in Pakistan market has been rigged by the elite which has control over the state as well. Resultantly economy performed inefficiently and income was distributed inequitably. Political instability, lack of good governance, and unsteady economic policies are prominent internal factors for creating growth deficit. Among the external factors are included perpetual perceived hostility from India, aftermath of the Afghan war in the form of guns, drugs, crimes, and religious fundamentalism, all these have resulted in social fragmentation (pp. 488-90). Internationally Pakistan seeks help from ‘friends’ to bail it out hence no political thrust on taking effective measures for structural reforms in the economy and governance (p. 491.) So, the habit of dependence is consolidated.

The solution suggested after in-depth analysis is an agenda of economic revival and social transformation, aimed at making the

presently ‘ungovernable’ country a ‘governable’ one. The author assures the agenda’s success if it is implemented ‘properly’ by the government over a long period, i.e., to continue its policies with political will. If Pakistan achieves an annual growth rate of 6 per cent annually, it will get to the ranks of middle-income country by 2035. This target demands revival of institutions now crumbling, to enable them deliver the outcome of suggested policies. The essential changes suggested include an end to the politics of patronage, giving free chance to the private sector, equal access of citizens to basic services. Perhaps two very crucial recommendations focus upon empowering the civil society which has been suffering at the moment under various pressures, and reopening the space for the local governments. By improving the governance approaches, as suggested above, the author assures increase in per capita income. An enabling environment for the democratic civilian structures to grow and gain supremacy over affairs of the state is highlight of this set of recommendations. He feels the military must excel in its professional qualities and let democracy grow. Ishrat Hussain lauds the devolution scheme of General Musharraf, but explains that persistent weakening of bureaucratic structures had come to the stage where even the bureaucracy cannot implement policies of military generals, to improve the governance of the country.

For institutional better output, Hussain suggests a high degree of coordination, collaboration, mutual respect, and ending blame-game among them. Furthermore, he calls for enhancing the capacity of the institutions, to enable them adapt to the changing needs and aspirations of the nation. Since no simple diagnosis is possible, no simplistic solutions are suggested. The malaise is chronic, so the treatment has to be long-term and uninterrupted.

What the author has expressed after his life-time understanding of the working of the Pakistani system, in the preface of the book, is also an important recommendation. He says a debate must be generated on the issues and recommended path of action, for the betterment of institutional performance and the society at large. Written with all sincerity for national uplift and great scholarly diligence, the book is a must read for all the students of political economy of Pakistan, development studies and social sciences. It is also recommended for those readers who want a thorough analysis of Pakistan’s existing dilemmas in a compact form.