

Review Article

M.A. Jinnah: The First Research Dissertation

Muhammad Reza Kazimi

The Political Career of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the first research dissertation of Pakistan's founder, by William Stafford Metz was submitted to the University of Pennsylvania in 1952. This was two years before the official biography, Hector Bolitho's *Jinnah: the Creator of Pakistan* was published. It had been preceded by Matloobul Hasan Saiyid's *Muhammad Ali Jinnah: A Political Study* (Lahore: 1945) but this book reads more like an ideological chronology, than a coherent depiction of Jinnah's political life. Considering that it had to seek the approval of a person as reticent as Jinnah, this is not surprising. Metz did not travel to South Asia in preparation of his thesis to interview people who knew Jinnah personally. He submitted his treatise before there was any hope of official documents being declassified. His bibliography is short, yet it is not outmoded even 55 years after its submission. It is seeing the light of day a full 60 years after Jinnah's demise. Despite steadily growing body of Jinnah studies, its authenticity and relevance are retained. This dissertation yield new material and new interpretation. Both because of its primacy and its intrinsic worth, this treatise is deserving not only of recognition, but of tribute.

Metz had only one advantage: he did not view the nationalist phase of Jinnah wistfully and he did not regard partition as a tragedy. This gave him an insight denied to those who had approached Jinnah's historic role earlier. Metz was himself confident that the course of Jinnah's career that he had charted was valid and integrated: 'Although some of the minor threads of his political motivation are still obscure, the major causes of his transformation are clear'. (p.3)

Thus the transition of Jinnah from being the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity to becoming the champion of the two-nation theory is shown to be a stage wise reaction to the vagaries of India politics. With Metz personal ambition is not a sufficient motive for his actions and attitudes.

Both early and late in his career, Jinnah had avidly sought personal power; yet there was always in his mind some definite beneficiary of that power apart from himself. (p.26)

Moreover, Metz shows clearly that the first steps taken by Jinnah were firm and could not have been guided by self interest. He quotes Jinnah as saying:

I learnt my first lessons in politics at the feet of Sir Surinder Nath Bannerjee. I was associated with him as one of his followers, and I looked up to him as a leader. (p.21)

Till now, only the influence of Sir Dadabhoy Nauroji and Mahatma Gopal Krishna Gokhale had been recognized. Both of whom were moderates. Jinnah was associated also with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, but did not look up to him as a leader, but as a compatriot, specially when they opposed British war efforts together. Jinnah's tutelage under Surinder Nath Bannerji was different, who, despite his knighthood, was a radical leader, not a moderate politician.

Charting the course of Jinnah's career becomes simpler from this point on. It spelt serious ideological commitment to liberal ideas, which in the first place had enabled him to bridge the communal divide. Metz also counters the accusation that Jinnah was temperamentally incapable of playing a populist role, and does not deem worthy of analysis the suggestion that the marital and nationalist frustrations of Jinnah had coincided.

Metz shows that Jinnah's action were not guided solely by his preferences, and that he espoused causes to which he did not subscribe. Jinnah had spoken earlier against separate electorates, and had discouraged the taking up of the Khilafat causes, but in both cases he had to relent upon gauging the depth of Muslim sentiment. Even then Jinnah fought a rearguard action by trying to dissuade Gandhi from rousing the religious fervor of the masses. Later historians have highlighted the 1920 Nagpur Congress incident when Mahatma Gandhi had pushed Jinnah aside from center stage, but they have not noted that it was over a Muslim cause, and achieved by means of contriving at a Muslim majority in that session.

William S. Metz instead of searching for deep seated causes, points to the skill and ability of Jinnah in taking advantage of opportunities. Opportunities are rarely clear cut and need vision to be grasped. This became evident during both culminating phases of Jinnah's endeavors, the Lucknow Pact of 1916 and the Lahore Resolution of 1940. As a background to the Lucknow Pact, Metz recounts that Indian nationalists threw themselves wholeheartedly in the 1914-1918 war

effort in the expectation that their political aspirations would be fulfilled. They also realized that this would entail a unified stand.

Metz's depiction of the imperatives guiding the Lucknow Pact is a fair sample of his analysis of complex and significant developments. He essentially describes communal unity at this stage as 'artificial' because of extremists on both sides (p.24). In order to achieve unity, Muslims on their part would have to embrace the ideal of self-government, which only the Young Party managed by overcoming the conservative faction led by Fateh Ali Qizilbash. The Muslim League's adoption of self-government as a creed was duly appreciated by Bhupendra Nath Basu, President of the 1913 Karachi Congress. On their part, the Congress would have to ratify separate electorates already granted to Muslims under the 1909 Morely-Minto Reforms. Metz reduces this situation to the equation that while the Muslim League had already secured its demand of separate electorates, the Congress had not secured its demand of self government, therefore the Muslim League was in a better bargaining position.

Here Metz seems to miss the point that though separate electorates had been conceded, it had been conceded after a protracted wrangle; and separate electorates, without Congress' endorsement, could yet go the way of the Bengal partition. The fact that the scales were more evenly balanced than what he had computed, enhances, and does not reduce Metz's estimate of Jinnah's role:

These conditions, however, made unity a possibility. They provided an opportunity, which in order to be taken advantage of, required the sustained effort of a very able man. (p.32)

The effort of this very able man could not be sustained, and the opportunity itself soon dissipated, due to the reservations of a politician sitting only on the side lines in Lucknow who in the short span of four years would occupy the dominating position. If Mahatma Gandhi himself was one of the 'extremist' who rendered the Lucknow Pact artificial, then separation indeed become the natural course to adopt. Metz does not look for complicated or surreal causes for the change in Jinnah's creed. His explanation is that Jinnah was slow in accepting the idea of Pakistan, because he just thought it would not work (p.167). Metz further clarifies that Jinnah had entertained doubts about the viability of the proposed state, and not the difficulty in putting this idea across. Metz rather briefly, considers a sentimental factor: Jinnah having struggled hard and long for a united India, would be hesitant in putting his back to his ideal. Metz is justified in giving this factor only passing consideration, nevertheless, there is evidence that sentiment lingered longer than the public stand of Jinnah warranted. Consider how abhorrent Jinnah found

the prospects of India fragmentation in 1942, and further down Metz aptly observes that:

Jinnah could conceive that if he could bring Hindus and Muslim to agree to partition, that would itself be a kind of Hindu-Muslim unity. (p.219)

The premise though new, is not unsupported. Because of the Cold War, the word 'curtain' acquired an impermeability that was not lexically justified. Similarly though the word 'partition' denotes a device for separation, or maybe even a device for disengagement, it does not structurally alter an edifice. Jinnah had visualized Hindustan and Pakistan together constituting India. Thus, for over twelve years, India in Pakistani journals would be 'Bharat'.

Metz had not painted a full rounded portrait of Jinnah, for though it contains all the necessary strokes, the portrait hangs alone. We learn nothing about, for instance, Jinnah's relations with Motilal Nehru or Liaquat Ali Khan. The pre-occupation of Metz with the discrete side of Jinnah was, perhaps, deliberate. In his ultimate analysis, forces and not individuals would prove to be the crucial factor. Regarding the Lahore Resolution, Metz makes this astute comment:

In this situation, unable to retrace his steps, Jinnah was also unable to stand where he was. It was obvious also that the Muslims could not go on indefinitely with a purely negative role. (p.168)

William S. Metz thus become the first scholar to recognize that the idea of Pakistan had acquired a momentum of its own. This constricted the options that Jinnah would have liked to weigh. It also advanced the pace of events faster than he would have preferred. Metz is justified, even prescient in depicting the Cabinet Mission Plan as deliberately 'novel', cumbersome, ambiguous, designed to promote dissension and not resolution (p.194). Here was the only deviation from the clear aim of partition. Here he sketches in thick black, the limitations suffered by Jinnah as an individual. Metz points out that the concept of constituting a separate nation had so consolidated the Muslims that:

To such a people, the difference between being independent and being almost independent was not a matter of degree which could be bargained over. (pp.188–89)

Is it idle to speculate what course Pakistan Studies would have taken, had Metz published his dissertation shortly after submission, or shortly before the publication of Jinnah's official biography? I have written elsewhere on Hector Bolitho's *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, and its unofficial version, *In Quest of Jinnah*, that while Hector Bolitho felt frustrated because he could not obtain material, or if he had obtained

material that he could not publish, this was partly because he had before himself as example the numerous royal biographies he had written. In contrast, Metz suffered no frustration because he was trained to make the most of the material at hand.

Metz was neither disappointed, nor does he disappoint. In his university, the only American university then offering a course on South Asia Regional Studies, he had to be the student of W. Norman Brown who regarded partition as the 'greatest disaster to strike the region',¹ and whose estimate of its protagonist was unflattering. 'Jinnah was a man of quick and biting repartee, egotistic, and sensitive to insult'.² It was in this background that Metz produced, and defended this cohesive study of Jinnah. A study so original and important to give him a place of honour in the annals of Pakistan. It shall be fitting that the citizens of Pakistan, on the occasion of the Sixtieth death anniversary of their founder, shall place a wreath on the grave of this unknown American, who has contributed so substantially to bringing Mohammad Ali Jinnah back to life.

¹ W. Norman Brown, *The United States and India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (Third Edition) (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p.129.

² *Ibid.*, p.150.

