
**WAS JINNAH SECULAR, NATIONALIST OR ISLAMIST?
AN ASSESSMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Ever since the creation of Pakistan, its founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah has been debated regarding proclivities of his ideology of a nation state. His personality has been interpreted very differently by different scholars, politicians and literati. Likewise, the issue, that whether a state can have ideology on the pattern of 'ideology of Pakistan' or not, has been deliberated upon. Intellectuals with liberal leanings argue that Jinnah was a liberal and progressive constitutionalist in his demeanor and he wanted a liberal democratic and progressive country in which all citizens could live life in accordance with their faith without highhandedness from an individual, organizations or state it-self. On the other hand, the Islamists argue that Jinnah was a staunch Muslim and he established Pakistan to be a laboratory of Islam in the world so that international community could witness principles of Islam in practice. They stress that Pakistan was created as an Islamic country, meant for Muslims only and livable with implementation of Sharia alone. The former group holds that Jinnah was a nationalist and he did not want partition of India on communal lines. This is corroborated by Jinnah's acceptance of Cabinet Mission Plan in which Jinnah acceded to an undivided India and that Jinnah only wanted maximum constitutional securities for the Muslims of India. It was circumstances and Congress doggedness that caused creation of Pakistan eventually. The latter group, however, claims that Jinnah wanted a country to be a 'citadel of Islam' and he wanted religion to be strictly implemented and practiced in it. This is an interesting debate but unfortunately it has produced serious consequences for the country too. The present militant struggle for Sharia is derived and exploited on the basis of the aforementioned debate about the demeanor of Jinnah and the nature of Pakistan he wanted to establish.

Keywords: Islamic Ideology, Militant Islam, Sharia, Liberalism, Secularism, Constitutionalist, Politics of Identity, Muhammad Ali Jinnah

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Jinnah's death in 1948, shortly after the birth of the new state, there has been a tug of war over his legacy. Perhaps the most contentious issue in Pakistan since its very inception in 1947 is the nature of the state. Islamists in Pakistan assert that he wanted an Islamic state. Islamic modernists say that he wanted a modern Islamic democratic state; some people from the left opine that he was a communalist who was not a secular because he voiced for Muslim separatism. But contrarily there are strong arguments that Jinnah was secular and wanted a secular, progressive Pakistan in which the state had no mandate to interfere in the personal lives of its citizens.

Jinnah in his early years of politics Jinnah was prominent nationalist and was very active member of Congress and Home Rule League. Time and again he battled with communal and anti-secular tendencies among the Indians and spoke only about one enemy, the foreign oppressor. Jinnah was elected in 1910, by the Muslims of the Bombay presidency as a member of Viceroy's Legislative Council, defeating Maulvi Rafiuddin who was the president of Bombay Muslim League (Jaswat Singh, 2011:69). Jinnah joined Muslim League in 1913 and according to Sarojini Naidu, he was assured by Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Syed Wazir Hassan, that he will advocate the Muslim interests but not at the cost of united national cause of India to which his life was dedicated (Waheed-uz-Zaman, 2001:5). He was titled as a "best ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity" and brought both, Indian National Congress and Muslim League on one platform on the eve of Lucknow Pact in 1916 (Waheed-uz-Zaman, 2001:5). Jinnah's popularity as a democrat went to heights when Willington's (Governor of Bombay) tenure ended in November, 1918. Due to Willington's biases against the representation of Indians: "Jinnah could hardly wait for that governor to leave" (Stanley Wolpert, 1984:60). Some Parsi friends of governor had planned a public function to honour him but Jinnah launched a mass opposition movement. It was Jinnah's "first and most vigorous public demonstration against a British official" (Stanley Wolpert, 1984:60). More than three hundred youthful followers of Jinnah staged toughest stand in front of Bombay Town Hall. The commissioner of Police ordered hall to be cleared and Jinnah as well as Ruttie and their friends were forced out of hall. He, however, emerged from the town hall "a uniquely popular Bombay hero" (Stanley Wolpert, 1984:60).

Jinnah told the thumping audience that night “Gentlemen, you are the citizens of Bombay. Your triumph today has made it clear that even the combined forces of *bureaucracy and autocracy* [emphasis added] could not overcome you. December the 11th is a Red Letter Day in the history of Bombay. Gentlemen, go and rejoice over the day that has secured us the triumph of *democracy* [emphasis added]” (M.H.Saiyid, 1945:342). On the same night a huge demonstration was held in which “no fewer than 65000 rupees were raised” to build “People’s Jinnah Memorial Hall”² that stands in the compound of Bombay’s Indian National Congress Building commemorating the triumph of people of Bombay in the leadership of Jinnah (M.H.Saiyid, 1945:342). Jinnah believed in strength of democracy and he strived for it throughout his life. Moreover, he spared no time and energies to denounce authoritarianism and autocracy in every form.

Jinnah left Congress in 1920 and Nehru in his autobiography is of the view that temperamentally he did not fit in at all with the new Congress. He was not comfortable with *khadi* clad crowd debating in Hindustani language (M.H.Saiyid, 1945:342). The following decade was dominated by Khilafat movement and Muslim league’s activities were very much confined. Jinnah reacted to Khilafat movement and said that “I will have nothing to do with this pseudo-religious approach to politics. I part company with the Congress and Gandhi. I do not believe in working up mob hysteria. Politics is a gentleman’s game” (Aitzaz Ahsan, 2003:58). Gail Minault (1999) describes this situation and crisis of leadership of Indian Muslims in these words:

“Efforts to achieve political cooperation between Hindus and Muslims had always been a part of the Indian nationalist movement. Prominent Muslims had taken part in the Congress from its inception, and there were periodic attempts to bring members of the two communities together politically. The Allahabad conference of Hindu and Muslim leaders in 1910, the endorsement of ‘suitable’ self-government by the Muslim League in 1913, and the Lucknow Pact

²After Jinnah left Congress and led Muslim League for saving exclusively the rights of Muslims of India and especially after the establishment of Pakistan that hall is anonymously referred to only by its initials P. J. Hall. Presently few Indians know that it was built to pay tribute to a great Indian leader, Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

are all cases in point. These efforts at *rapprochement* were undertaken on the Muslim side by a *small group of barristers* [emphasis added] whose cooperation with nationalism was based on devotion to the principle of self-determination, and whose specialty was constitutional negotiation to safeguard Muslim rights. The barristers were now being overshadowed by a group of Muslim leaders who had been alienated from British rule and whose political style featured religious appeals in emotional oratory and journalism, rather than constitutional debates. The barrister-leadership of the Congress was similarly confronted at this time with a new type of political leader 'Gandhi' (Gail Minault, 1999:67).

So it was not so much a change in Jinnah's attitude that forced him to take decision of leaving Congress or for that matter politics altogether; rather a qualitative and radical transformation in Indian politics after the end of the First World War. The rise of Gandhi to the supreme leadership of the Congress and his attempts to mobilize the masses heightened the tension in a plural society. As the Congress sought to broaden its support base it naturally used Hindu symbols and slogans to appeal the majority of the Hindus (Gowher Rizvi, 1994:234). Hindu jargons and symbolism was especially encouraged to convey Congress message effectively to the illiterate masses living most of the cases in villages. The period of mass mobilization brought religious revivalism and injected into politics the venom of communalism. Jinnah realized the dangers of mass mobilization in a plural society, but was unable to convince Gandhi of these dangers. Time proved that Jinnah's approach was realistic and had the Congress and Gandhi heeded to it, the future of India would have been different and communalism would not have found path in body-politic of colonial India.

It was clear to Jinnah that in the environment of politics of polarization there was a little room for the politics of accommodation. Jinnah, more than his contemporaries, worked towards a composite Indian nationalism to accommodate the diverse demands of the different religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups. He was essentially a rational, secular constitutionalist who wanted the politics of consensus (Gowher Rizvi, 1994:234). He was not wedded to any particular policy but responded to the circumstances depending on the attitude of the Congress and the policy of the British. The only consistency in Jinnah's policy was his commitment to ensure that

Muslims were treated fairly and that their distinctive cultural and religious identities were not impaired. Whether Muslim interests could be best safeguarded within a united India or in separate Muslim homeland was a matter of tactics. Had he been adamant in creating a separate country for Muslims, he would not have accepted Cabinet Mission plan that outlined a United India with federal political system.

After the second round table conference Jinnah settled in London. While he was in self- exile in England, his political thinking and strategy fundamentally transformed. There are various opinions about the return of Jinnah from England. It is argued by psychoanalysts that Jinnah was a man of vanity and ego, and he felt each rejection as an utter humiliation (Stanley Wolpert, 1984:235). In *economist* someone wrote that Nehru's arrogant remarks about Jinnah as a 'failed politician' prompted him to return to India (Waheed-uz-Zaman, 2001:20). Another important reason was that there was a large vacuum of Muslim leadership in India after the death of leaders like Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Sir Muhammad Shafi. They had will and capacity to lead Muslims but after them Muslim leadership generally comprised of discredited individuals who did not have trust of the lead. Jinnah felt that it was right time to fill this gap (Waheed-uz-Zaman, 2001:20). According to Sikandar Hayat, "the traditional Muslim leadership, as a whole, failed to produce any far-sighted leader who could understand the difficulties confronting the Muslims, rise above sectional concerns, and show them a real way out" (Sikandar Hayat, 2008:166).

When Jinnah came back to India he changed his strategy. Here if we look into theory, a politician to qualify as a secular broadly needs to fulfill certain criteria: not use religion as a tool to appeal the masses, cater to the interest of the people not because they belonged to a certain religious community, and resolve communal, religious issues in a democratic manner. By this criterion, Jinnah was a staunch secular till 1937. He had opposed the Khilafat movement and was blamed as an anti-Muslim. The right of separate electorates given to the Muslim community under the 1909 reforms was characterized by him as a virus introduced into the body politic of India with evil design. Since 1937, Jinnah became the leader and sole spokesperson for the Muslims in India. Jinnah violated the first criterion of a secular politician and used religion as a tool to appeal the masses to counter

the mass base of Congress. Ironically this violation trapped him in such a manner that his image as well as his plan for a democratic and secular environment for the Muslims of India became controversial (Ajeet Jawed, 2009:23).

Here are some explanations to the questions that what caused him to change his secular and Indian nationalist stance and how he became a mass politician. It is argued that Jinnah realized that there was no future for him as a leader of the Muslim party if the party did not improve its standing among the Muslim masses. Muslim League from its very birth was almost occupied by titled gentry, *nawabs*, *zamindars* and its activities mostly had remained in-door (Jaswat Singh, 2011:177). Jinnah realized that Muslim League must not confine to the upper class: to gain success its popularity in Muslim masses was necessary. He could no longer afford to ignore popular politics. After the Muslim League's defeat in 1936-37 elections Jinnah completely realized that the politics of compromise and consensus was no longer in vogue, and he must speak from a position of strength. He reorganized the Muslim League and encouraged the publication of a series of reports into the discriminations of the Congress ministries against the Muslims (Gowher Rizvi, 1994:237). *Pirpur Report* and *Sharif Report* are particularly important to be mentioned here.

At that time the message of nationalism was not effective as a tool for Jinnah because Gandhi and Nehru had already mobilized the masses by using the slogan of nationalism. Jinnah decided to tap religious instead of national sentiment and he did so by raising the cry of danger at the prospect of Hindu rule under Congress (Gowher Rizvi, 1994:237). The dangers that Muslims felt in case of Congress domination were real in nature and Jinnah pressed Congress to concede genuine safeguards for Muslim community. He wanted a constitution of India with autonomous and strong provinces. On the other hand, Congress wanted strong center because Nehru wished implementation of his socialist ideals. Gradually convinced about the stubbornness of Congress leadership, Jinnah changed the League into a well-organized political party of the Muslim masses. If the league was to become 'the sole representative body of Muslim India,' it was necessary that "his charisma was 'routinized' in the League," although "Jinnah's charisma went beyond the institutional apparatus of the League," Hayat writes (Sikandar Hayat, 2008:225). That is

why, “in addition to securing the support of various groups and interests to the League, Jinnah also planned a mass-mobilization campaign to give the Muslims at large a cause to identify with and influence their attitudes and behaviors as both individuals and collectivity, as a community” (Sikandar Hayat, 2008:225).

The start of Second World War and the course it took changed the political scene of India massively. British attitude towards Muslim League also changed because Muslims made up for nearly 40 percent of the Indian armed forces. The Lahore Resolution, which electrified the Indian Muslims and provided a powerful ideology for a separate Muslim homeland, was a tactical move in response to peculiar circumstances of Indian politics following the outbreak of World War (Gowher Rizvi, 1994:242). After March 1940, Jinnah took a clear stance. All his efforts after that day, his speeches, his negotiations, and his strategic moves were inspired by the idea of a separate homeland. Towards the end (1940-47) Jinnah became the actual leader of almost the entire Muslim community of India. He had started his political career as a champion of Hindu Muslim unity but ended as a leader of separate Muslim homeland (Jaswat Singh, 2011:414).

It is true that Jinnah did believe in two-nation theory and he struggled for the creation of an independent homeland of Muslims on the very basis of this theory. But Jinnah's two-nation theory lacked clarity; he did not base his theory on the religion alone but also on the basis of territorial majority. If we examine his statements that only the Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces of India constituted a separate nation while the rest of the Muslims in India were not part of that nation, we can find out the problem in sustaining that theory. That's why, Jinnah said goodbye to the two-nation theory at the first opportunity that is on August 11, 1947. Jinnah clearly in his address to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947 expressed his desire that Pakistan ought not to be a theocratic state. He stated:

“.....in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community, because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on, and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khatris, also Bengalis, Madrasis and so on, will vanish. Indeed if you ask me, this has been the biggest hindrance in the way of India to attain the freedom and independence and but

for this we would have been free people long ago. No power can hold another nation and especially a nation of 400 million souls in subjection; nobody could have conquered you, and even if it had happened, nobody could have continued its hold on you for any length of time, but for this. Therefore, we must learn a lesson from this. You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that, has nothing to do with the business of the State” (Quaid-i-Azam’s Speech, 1950:4).

A careful study of the above words of Jinnah suggest that he believed in pluralism and he wished equal rights for all citizens of Pakistan irrespective of their religious or regional affiliations. Moreover, he used the word ‘nation’ retrospectively for all citizens of India.

In the same speech, Jinnah tried to make his message clear in different words and stated that: “.....every one of you, 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.... Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that 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 citizen of the State” (Quaid-i-Azam’s Speech, 1950:4).

Jinnah was a perfect secularist as far as his private life was concerned, he used to drink wine openly before 1937 and later he continued this privately. He was not a practicing Muslim and there is an opinion that he probably read only one book about Islam and that was Muhammadan Law. He supported the special marriage amendment bill, which sought to provide mixed religions marriages a legal protection. He also married to a Parsi woman. He could hardly speak Urdu and often use English in his public speeches. Jinnah was a secular in his outlook, but at the same time was very much concerned about the rights of the Muslims. Jinnah accepted separate electorate as a ‘necessary evil’, a protection of Muslim interests as long as the Muslim community was backward. As Jinnah summoned up the Lucknow session of the Muslim League he said “sentimental

nonsense and emotion have no place in politics” and he is ‘no lover of sectarian cries’.

Jinnah signed his last will and testament on May 30, 1939 appointing Fatima, Liaquat Ali Khan and his Bombay solicitor Mahomed Alli Chaiwalla joint executors and trustees of his estates. “All shares stocks and securities and current accounts now standing in the name of my sister Fatima Jinnah are her absolute property. I have given them all to her by way of gifts during my life time and I confirm the same and she can dispose them of in any manner she pleases as her absolute property” (Quaid’s speech, May 30, 1939:2). He also left her his houses and their contents, his cars, and a life time income of 2000 rupees a month to be paid from his other properties. To his three other Sisters Jinnah left a living of 100 rupees a month for each as he did to his brother Ahmed Ali. For his daughter, Jinnah set apart 200,000 rupees to be invested in order to provide her with a living “which will at 6% bring in income of 1000/-,” proving that financially he was most unorthodox in never adopting Islamic strict prohibition against charging or accepting any interest (Quaid’s Speech, May 30, 1939:2). It throws light on the fact that Jinnah was a liberal person in economic matters too besides his personal dealings and practices.

Jinnah used religion for his political ends. The major slogan during the struggle for Pakistan was to establish a distinct identity of Muslims as a nation and Jinnah used Islam as a motivating force to rally the Muslims to the cause of Pakistan politically. But the state he aimed to create was to be secular, not a theocracy. It is true that Jinnah used religion to mobilize Muslim masses but it is also a fact that religion was not exclusively used by him for political ends in the sub-continent. Indian National Congress also generously used the religious symbols of Hindu India. According to Nehru “Gandhi was essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the inner-most depths of being” (Waheed-uz-Zaman, 2001:11). It was his religion and not his politics which influenced his Hindu followers (Waheed-uz-Zaman, 2001:11). In that environment of religious frenzy, it was not possible for any community to detach politics from religion. Jinnah and his associates were forced to use religion as a tactic to mobilize the people because religion was obvious mean to counter the Congress stance. The notion of religion was used to create the Muslim nationhood and to legitimize the demand for separate Muslim state.

After independence Jinnah realized that the phase of the Pakistan Movement was over and the tools used in this movement required modification. The two-nation theory was only relevant in British India, and now the new state of Pakistan needed the vigor of the idea of one nation to strengthen its structure (Muhammad Aslam Syed, 1995:3). Jinnah did not see any dichotomy between Islam and a modern democratic state (Muhammad Aslam Syed, 1995:3). Both Iqbal and Jinnah had stressed the egalitarian features of Islam (Muhammad Aslam Syed, 1995:12). According to Wali Khan, Jinnah wanted a secular state and that his push for Pakistan was the result of British manipulation and divide and rule which made him utilize Islamist rhetoric for the creation of Pakistan (Wali Khan, 2006:173). Jinnah wanted a secular democratic state, and a theocracy was not in his mind. However groups such as Jama‘t-i-Islami, under the leadership of Abul A‘la Maududi, wanted some form of Islamic government which had no room for modern democracy.

So, Jinnah’s policy did not change much, but the objective conditions did sometimes change. The young Jinnah of 1905 and the ambassador of Hindu Muslim Unity of 1916 was very much the same as the Quaid-i-Azam in 1947. After independence, he hoped for unity between the communities within Pakistan. Jinnah’s above-mentioned speech of August 11, 1947 is sufficient to prove that Jinnah recaptured the vision of a state that he had been thinking about throughout his life. An ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity had not died in him. He strongly believed in tolerance and coexistence between various religious communities. But Jinnah’s apprehensions were to be confirmed in near future when the “common people, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the subcontinent whose freedom it actually was” had to suffer ignominiously from the pandemonium created by religious frenzy and communal divide exacerbated by the poor planning and implementation of partition plan by the British government (Rabia Umar Ali, 2012:141). While responding to a question about the nature of state Jinnah wanted to establish in Pakistan, Syed Jafar Ahmad stated that: “For that matter not only his [Jinnah’s] words suffice but his personality, life style, and ways of politics should also be consulted. He studied in the west and he favored parliamentary style of government. The rights of Muslims that he demanded were based upon modern concept of right of self-determination. He did not see Muslims as a tribe but as a modern

community” (Daily *Express*, May 21, 2015:16). For Ahmad, “Jinnah used the concept of two-nation as a political strategy and his 14 August speech explains his philosophy. He gave the example of Catholics and Protestants becoming one in Britain due to non-discrimination of the political system there. He stressed that the State should deal with citizens on equal grounds. Whether he said it in words or not, he had in his mind the concept of a *modern secular state* [emphasis added]” (Daily *Express*, May 21, 2015:16).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Jinnah was a secularist who viewed Islam as an instrument of identity formation and political mobilization for the Muslims of South Asia. He was a liberal and progressive Muslim who could not ignore the Muslim rights and interests in British India. An insightful constitutionalist as he was, Jinnah could imagine a perilous future of Indian Muslims in a free India with domination of Congress and Hindus. He made this point repeatedly to Congress as well as the British government that Muslims were in a very special situation in India and they, accordingly, need some effective constitutional safeguards. These safeguards could only be ensured in the shape of autonomous provincial units so that in Muslim majority provinces they could secure their political and economic interests in a better manner. The Congress, especially during and in the wake of developments of WWII, was in a reactionary mood because throughout the war period, the government had put all Congress leadership in jails while it conciliated with the Muslims and Jinnah. Jinnah showed rare quality of a statesman when he accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan. It was the best available mechanism for India in a crisis situation but Congress, having once accepted, backed out. Resultantly, India had to be partitioned and two independent countries emerged with the withdrawal of British Empire. It is ironical, that after partition, India moved gradually towards giving provincial autonomy while Pakistan increasingly drifted towards more and more centralization. Both countries adopted opposite way from their pre-partition vision. Had Congress accepted the same vision of decentralization before, India could have been saved from partition and its consequences? Jinnah gave a secular road map for the future constitution in his 11th August speech. Whenever he talked of Islam, he also talked about the modern notion of the state, constitutionalism,

civil and political rights and equal citizenship irrespective of religion or any other consideration. This means that he was neither a supporter of religious or orthodox Islamic state nor for a secular system in the classical Marxist terms. His vision was that Pakistan would be a modern, democratic state which derives its ethical formation from basic principles of Islam like justice, equality, honesty and tolerance.

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