

Quaid-i-Azam's Vision of Pakistan

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Quaid-i-Azam's vision of Pakistan is very clear it was to be a secular, modern, democratic and tolerant state. Being a historian I would venture to say that this vision is in full conformity with the age old religio-political temperament of the Indus region, Pakistan's political boundaries in 1947, were carved more or less along the boundaries of this region. Indus Valley Civilization the ancient most predecessor of present day Pakistan was a peaceful civilization; absence of weapons at the site of Moenjodaro bears witness to this fact. Few axes, spears, hammers and daggers showcased at the site Museum are rightly labeled as agricultural and hunting tools. On the eve of Islam's arrival it was a Buddhist region, Hindu Brahmins were limited to the ruling elite. Lower Sindh now bordering India had a large Jain population that far surpassed Buddhist in non-violence. Islam had reached this region in its early years it was a pure Islam free of Turko-Persian pomp. Arabs followed a pragmatic policy, people converted voluntarily after witnessing social justice and equality prevalent in Muslims. The blend between Indus people and Muslim Arabs had been beautiful, Sufi Islam was the result. It was natural that under this face of Islam Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Buddhists should co-exist peacefully, in rural areas they even revered common shrines. Quaid-i-Azam being product of such a society was bound to inherit the same temperament coming to the geo-political factor.

Coming to the geo-political factor, Pakistan is a Muslim country carved in South Asia, it is bound to inherit the tolerant aspect of a pluralistic society. It is natural for it to be unlike homogenous Arab society. The British legacy of Pakistan also makes it different from West Asian Muslim countries – Iran and Iraq, Akbar S. Ahmad in his well-observed way comments that

Pakistanis are a cricket playing nation whereas Afghans and Iranians are not. Pakistan has also inherited British education and legal system which cultivates a westernized outlook amongst the recipients of these systems. Quaid-i-Azam too had inherited this outlook. However, since constitution was not drafted during Quaid's life time, confusion about his views followed. Gordon Johnson, the historian feels that Quaid-i-Azam did not maintain a diary and did not write his memoirs hence the confusion. It is also said that whatever Quaid wrote, he wrote with a lawyer's precision and did not articulate on it with the skills of a scholar hence there is no satisfactory explanation as to his concept of Pakistan. One way to compensate these drawbacks is to refer to his speeches and statements and also to the relevant statements of his close associates. It will also be helpful to consider Quaid's lifestyle, his western educated mannerisms, his personal tastes and attitude and see if it matches the idea of what is being propagated about Pakistan. The scholars who blame Quaid's silence on the matter should also refer to Quaid's answer to the question:

“Will Pakistan be a secular or theocratic state”?

Quaid's answer: “You are asking me a question that is absurd. I do not know what theocratic state means. A correspondent suggested that a theocratic state meant a state where only people of a particular religion for example Muslims could be full citizens and non- Muslims would not be full citizens. 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 learned democracy thirteen centuries ago”.

[Ref: Millenium Series: Jinnah speeches and Statements 1947-48]

From the above answer it is clear that Quaid-i-Azam found Islamic concept of equality harmonious with the modern principles of democracy. He made no distinction between the two. After Quaid's death some of his close associates were asked the same question and they were surprised to hear it, amongst them were

Liaquat Ali Khan, Raja Sahib of Mahmoodabad and Quaid's sister Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah.

Despite these clear answers, why so much confusion. How did it all start? The idea that Pakistan will be a theoretic state was first propagated by Congress Party before and after Partition. It was meant to give a regressive image to a fresh born Muslim country. Thankfully Congress failed with its' propaganda because Pakistan through time proved to be more secular in attitude than India. It goes without saying that it is the tolerant side of Islam that Pakistan did not indulge in communal violence such as the one that erupts in India. On this front we have lived up to Quaid's vision.

However, it was after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan that Pakistan drifted from Quaid's vision. Creation of the Mujahideen forces to combat communism lead to the Islamization process. Pakistan was not ready to adopt a militant and savage 'Islam' as wrongly preached in the Madrassas. The brunt of this resistance is being severely felt now.

It will be relevant to refer to Quaid's speech of August 11, 1948 which has caused some confusion in the academic world. Shahid Javed Burki in his revised history of Pakistan wonders if Quaid-i-Azam wanted us to throw away the Two Nation Theory soon after Partition. Many others felt that way. It is true that Quaid-i-Azam battled for Pakistan on the grounds of Two Nation Theory, that Muslims were a nation distinct from Hindus due to their historical background, religious beliefs, lifestyles and socio-cultural values. So the canvas of Two Nation Theory is vast where religion is an important part, but it is not the only ingredient. It was a Two Nation Theory not a Two Religion Theory. In this case even if it was, Islam is the religion which has no concept of clergy or Jewish rabbi state. Two Nation Theory, it can be said, has been narrowed down to the religious aspect, by some, out of naivety and by others to exploit it for their agendas hence the image of Pakistan that is being promoted now is very close to a theocratic state run

by a coalition of Mullas and Military. Pakistan's images flashed in the western media – beards, guns, veiled women, madrasas – are very different from actual Pakistan.

At this juncture it is important to emphasize that a proper understanding of Quaid's vision of Pakistan has never been as crucial as it is today. That is because Pakistan after the tragic event of 9/11 has become one of the major characters on international stage and is being watched by a global audience. We are being watched as a frontline ally in the war against terrorism but we are also being perceived as a country of religious fanatics. Pakistan is being labeled, by some, as world's most dangerous country. It is time to wake up and present our proper image, the image of Quaid-i-Azam that of a civilized Pakistan.

“Clash of Fundamentalists” is Tariq Ali's antithesis to Samuel Huntington's theory. Ali highlights secular Islam. It is our responsibility to highlight tolerant Islam which is our heritage.