

SOME REMINISCENCES OF QUAID-I-AZAM

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The centenary of the Quaid-i-Azam is being celebrated this year and some of the intellectuals are fully engrossed in describing their association with him on Radio, TV and Press so that the same be recorded in his biography. The undersigned was also prompted and encouraged by this general trend to state some of his reminiscences of that unique personality.

Before I pen down anything on this subject, it would be quite appropriate to acquaint the readers with my antecedents very briefly. Having been born in Quetta (Baluchistan), I received my primary education in Iran, then at Quetta, thereafter at Aligarh and Lahore, and acquired business education in Banking Secretariat training, Business Organisation, etc., in London. I joined Ali Brothers during Khilafat Movement in A 1921 which at that time was linked with the Indian National Congress for the common cause. My father made me join Afghan Service. To begin with I was posted as Tarjuman (Translator) in Afghan Consulate at Bombay. After appreciating my qualifications, they designated me Commercial and Press Attache. Having an urge for independence from early days and also influenced by association with Muslim and Hindu leaders of that time, I wanted to keep in touch with some of them. The Afghan Government as their set

policy were very careful to have anything to do with Indian leaders, so I had to stick to that policy, lest the British rulers of India may make it a big issue. Thus I have served Afghanistan in various capacities for nearly thirty-six years.

It was round about 1939 that Mr. . Jinnah (not known as Quaid-i-Azam at that time) came into prominence. With the permission of my Consul, I issued him an invitation card on our Independence Day, least expecting that it would even be acknowledged. Much to our surprise and that of the invitees present on the occasion and shock to our Parsi friends, Mr. . Jinnah came along with his venerable sister. Many present could not believe their eyes that it could be Mr. . Jinnah. They questioned me whether that was really Mr. . Jinnah.

In the Consulate, we occasionally used to have selected standing luncheons. We often used to invite Mr. Jinnah on short notice on telephone. He always came. Mr. Jinnah was known to be curt, unbending and not prepared to listen to anyone against his independent views. I was surprised while dealing with him that he was quite different from what the people thought of him. He was courteous, listening smilingly even to nonsense talk. He weighed all advice given to him in his own logical trend and did not feel shy in adopting it if it were correct. I had the natural tendency of putting odd questions to my elders for which very often I was admonished by my father. On one occasion, in these selected parties, I put a straight question to Mr. Jinnah taking the risk of his being offended. "Is Pakistan a reality or a political

stunt?” Mr. Jinnah put his plate on a side table and addressed me thus: “Shaukat, it is a reality. We are just like two birds of different species locked in a cage. Our aim at present is to get out of the cage. The moment we succeed—just as birds of same feather flock together, we never meet outside. Our aim is Pakistan; God willing, we will succeed.” As Mr. Jinnah was speaking these words, I could feel that they were the true reflection of his heart and he had full faith in them, and there was nothing camouflaged.

To quote an important incident, I must first mention the background connected with it, to make matter more lucid. I had a friend, now deceased, Zikria Maniar by name. In Bombay, due to lack of space in masjids, the Eid prayers were conducted in many masjids and even then they had to spread carpets on roadsides to accommodate namazis. Mr. Zikria Maniar with a few (llama started arranging Eid prayers in Azad Maidan. In the beginning, only a few people gathered, but as the Azad Maidan had a central position being at the terminus of two rail-ways and was well connected with bus and tram services, the multitude increased every year by leaps and bounds, so such so that it reached fifty thousand. There was another unique thing about this gathering. Muslims of every school of thought attended the prayer, Sunnis, Shiahs, Wahabis, etc. His Holiness the Mulla Sahib of Bohris used to send his ten representatives. Some used to pray with folded arms and some with open arms, but behind one Pesh Imam. Maulana Khujandi, a well-known theologian, poet, writer and khatib, the Afghan Consul with his staff and Persian Consul with his staff were always present there. Undoubtedly, it was a great

achievement of the late Zikria Maniar to get together Muslims of various schools of thought. May Almighty God bless him and may his soul rest in eternal peace. Amin! Now, reverting to the main issue, I must state that Mr. Jinnah was I very much interested in the Muslim world. He used to question me about Afghanistan. Iran and the Tribal Areas and I used to tell whatever I knew. Emboldened by my talks with Mr. Jinnah I once told him: “Mr. Jinnah, the masses do not know you. Your meetings are conducted tables occupied by Nawabs, Knights and aristocrats. Your voice does not reach the ears of the common man who is the real strength of the nation.” He asked me then what should he do. I said, “I have a plan.” “What is your plan?” he questioned me. “My plan is simple. After a week or so, Eid prayer will be offered in Azad Maidan, which is a gathering of almost all sects of Muslims. You should offer your prayer there.” Quick came the query: “Who is going to invite me.” I replied: “A deputation will call on you for this purpose.”

I got in touch with Mr. Zikria Maniar and suggested to him that he along with Maulana Khujandi and a few others should call on Mr. Jinnah and invite him for Eid prayer. Mr. Zikria Maniar was reluctant. He said: “Mr. Jinnah will not meet them.” I informed him about the background. He consented. The deputation called on Mr. Jinnah and was well received by him and he agreed to attend the prayer.

On the Eid gathering at Azad Maidan, exactly at 9 a.m. Mr. Jinnah’s car appeared. He was received by Mr. Zikria Maniar and a

few others and, as previously arranged, he was conducted to the first row and seated at my right. The majority of people could see that some big personality had been received and conducted to the first row. They had no knowledge who that important personality could be. After some time the prayer started. All stood up Mr. Jinnah asked me: "Shaukat, now tell me what to do." I replied: "Mr. Jinnah, while praying I cannot talk. You should copy me. When I raise my hands, you too raise your hands, when I bow down, you also bow down. When I kneel, you do the same and when I go down for Sijdah you also do the same." When the prayer was over, it was announced from the pulpit that Mr. Jinnah will address the gathering. Majority of people did not bother, they knew not who Mr. Jinnah was. Mr. Jinnah asked me what he should say. I said he knew better—the Muslims of India. But I told him he should start addressing in Urdu. He replied: "But I do not know Urdu." I said he knew Urdu very well; what he spoke with his sister, khansama, bearer, driver and others is real Urdu—Urdu means language of soldiers, spoken in streets and bazars and understood by all. Urdu spoken by Nawabs and big folks in their household is not the real Urdu; it is a dialect restricted in their limited circles. Mr. Jinnah started addressing them in Urdu, then after some time he asked their permission to continue his address in English as there were some foreign correspondents who did not know Urdu. The crowd smilingly shouted that he was at liberty to do so. He continued his address in English for some time. When Mr. Jinnah departed, his car was encircled by a huge crowd all shouting, "Jinnah Zindabad".

Thereafter, Mr. Jinnah started a tour of Surat and Ahmedabad and addressed huge gatherings in Urdu. Masses gave large sums as donations, even women joined them and offered their valuable ornaments as their humble contribution.