

IQBAL AND THE QUAID-I AZAM*

The Seer and the Realist

Dr M. Moizuddin

We hardly find examples in history of such a curious combination of two great personalities having different psyches, diametrically opposite in views and unlike in approach to life, coming so close to achieve a common goal that their ideas and ideals become absolutely identical.

The sincerity of their purpose, political acumen and national feeling bring them together to the same objective. One was the visionary, and the other a realist. Faithful vision and practical wisdom brought forth a unique and concrete result in the shape of Pakistan.

In the historic Presidential Address delivered at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad in December 1930, Iqbal stressed that “religion is a power of the utmost importance in the life of individuals as well as states,”³⁷⁹ and stated further: “that Islam is itself a destiny and will not suffer a destiny”. This approach to vindicate the Muslim's mind in the subcontinent was the key point to see a “distinct cultural unit in India” which formed the basis of demand for a separate home-land for Muslims. He said in the same address: “I entertain the highest respect for the customs, laws, religious and social institutions of other communities.... Yet I love the communal group which is the source of my life and behaviour, and which has formed me what I am by giving me its religion, its literature, its thought, its culture, and thereby recreating its whole past as a living operative factor, in my present consciousness.”³⁸⁰ He justified the Muslim demand for the creation of Muslim India within India.³⁸¹

He put forth the demand embodied in the resolution, He said: “I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Pro. vince, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire,

* Presented at the Quaid-i Azam International Congress at Islamabad, 19.25 December 1976.

³⁷⁹ "Shamloo," *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore, 1944), Is. 7.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 12.

or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.”³⁸² He further said: “The life of Islam as a cultural force in this country very largely depends on its centralisation in a specified territory.”³⁸³

This demand was based on a “comparatively homogeneous communities possessing linguistic, racial, cultural and religious unity.”³⁸⁴

In that very address he described the quality of a leader. “By leaders I mean men who, by Divine gift or experience, possess a keen perception of the spiritual destiny of Islam, along with an equally keen perception of the trend of modern history. Such men are really the driving force of a people, but they are God's gift and cannot be made to order.”³⁸⁵ He definitely found in the Quaid-i Azam the divine quality of a great leader. When he retorted and silenced a questioner who wanted to know the intrinsic quality of Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah saying that “he is incorruptible and unpurchasable.”³⁸⁶

The complete faith of Iqbal in the leadership of Mr Jinnah to guide the Muslims of the subcontinent resulted in his perseverance and persuasion to Mr Jinnah. In 1930, while Iqbal was placing his demand for a separate State, Jinnah was still hoping for Hindu-Muslim unity. It took Iqbal quite a long time to convince him. After ten long years the demand culminated in Lahore Re-resolution. “It was in fact the spirit of Iqbal that showed itself through Mohammad Ali Jinnah,” writes M.H. Saiyid: “'Iqbal is no more amongst us,' said Mr. Jinnah to the author once, ‘but had he been alive he would have been happy to know that we did exactly what he wanted us to do?’”³⁸⁷ While writing to Mr Jinnah a private and confidential letter on 21 June 1937, ‘Allamah Iqbal wrote to him: “As you are the only Muslim in India today to whom the community has a right to look up for safe guidance through the storm which is coming to North-West India, and perhaps to the whole of

³⁸² *ibid.*,

³⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 13

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 12. 16

³⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁸⁶ Ghulam Dastagir Rashid, *Asrar-i Iqbal* (Hyderabad Deccan, 1944), p. 41.

³⁸⁷ M.H. Syed, Mohammad Ali Jinnah : *A Political Study* (Lahore : Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1945), pp. 698-99.

India.”³⁸⁸ In that letter he suggested a “separate federation of Muslim provinces” and included Bengal also in the scheme of his separate State. He wrote: “Why should not the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal be considered as nations entitled to self-determination just as other nations in India and outside India are?”

The Quaid-i Azam reciprocated his feelings paying high tributes to Iqbal in these words:

“It was a great achievement for Muslim League that its lead came to be acknowledged by both the majority and minority provinces. Sir Muhammad Iqbal played a very conspicuous part, though at the time not revealed to public, in bringing about this consummation. He had his own doubts about Sikandar-Jinnah Pact being carried out and he was anxious to see it translated into some tangible results without delay so as to dispel popular misapprehension about it, but unfortunately he has not lived to see that the Punjab has all round made a remarkable progress and now it is beyond doubt that the Muslims stand solidly behind the Muslim League Organisation.”³⁸⁹

This reflects Jinnah's complete faith in Iqbal's genuine feeling for emancipation and well-being of the distressed Indian Muslims. While Iqbal was long ago disillusioned and had forsaken the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity, Jinnah clung till the last moment to bring the two communities together.

There were differences between Hindus and Muslims on the issue of joint electorate for which Mr Jinnah advocated with certain reservations, but Iqbal was the champion of separate electorate. Mr Jinnah was satisfied with Lucknow Pact and considered it a step forward towards Hindu-Muslim unity, but Iqbal was not happy over this decision. Mr Jinnah considered that half the battle had been won, but Iqbal could foresee the disillusionment, because Muslims were confronted with two opponent groups, i.e. Hindus and the British.

As early as 1909, while writing to Munshi Ghulam Qadir Farrukh of Amritsar, Iqbal in unequivocal terms denounced the idea of Hindu-Muslim

³⁸⁸ *Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah* (Lahore ; Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), pp. 20-21.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Foreword, pp. 5-6.

unity. He considered it in the best interest of Hindus and Muslims to maintain their national distinction and individuality. In December 1927, when the Muslim League accepted joint electorate, Iqbal differed. The “Muslim League was divided into two camps. Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali were with Mr Jinnah on this issue. Mr Tinnah was the President and Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew was the Secretary of one League, while Sir Muhammad Shafi’ was the President and Dr Muhammad Iqbal the Secretary of the other group of Muslim League which reiterated its demand for separate electorate. Mr Jinnah had a point. He wanted to maintain a political equipoise. He said:

“It is to maintain this balance that Mussalmans have taken a simple and juster method with the reciprocity clause. If this main proposition was accepted by Hindus, then I feel that it will lead to a hopeful atmosphere and settlement is within reach. I am personally not wedded to separate electorates, although I must say that the overwhelming majority of Mussalmans firmly and honestly believe that that is the only method by which they can be secured.”³⁹⁰

Mr Jinnah boycotted the Simon Commission, but Iqbal, under the impelling circumstances, accepted the Commission. This is possibly the only political issue on which they differed with each other. Soon after the famous “Nehru Report,” Muslims, though disillusioned, were divided amongst themselves. Some opposed it, some wanted some amendments in this Report and there was a group who accepted it. This Report did not accept the separate entity of Mussalmans in India. Therefore, an All-Parties Muslim Conference was convened at Delhi in January 1929. Iqbal was one of the initiators of this Conference. Muslim leaders from different groups attended the Conference. Sir Agha Khan presided at this Conference. A resolution was passed with regard to the political demands of Muslims in India and later on Mr Jinnah came with his famous Fourteen Points and thus the two factions of Muslim League came together. This brought Iqbal into more limelight as a sagacious political leader; he was invited to preside over the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930. His historic Presidential Address, as mentioned earlier, proved to be the milestone of

³⁹⁰ 12. M. Rafique Afzal, Ed., *Selected Speeches and Statements of Quaid-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah* (Lahore, 1966), p. 252.

Pakistan movement. Iqbal was not invited to the First Round Table Conference, but he was invited to the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. Sir Agha Khan was the leader of the Muslim delegates. Iqbal was a vocal member. He spoke on the problems of Indian Muslims and reiterated his demands for a separate State for them. This, however, was not fully appreciated and so Iqbal was disappointed and soon left for Italy. Iqbal participated in the Third Round Table Conference in November 1932. It is said that he did not participate much in its deliberations since he was opposed to the formation of any Central Government or Federation and advocated for autonomy of the provinces. During this very Conference in 1932 he exchanged privately his views with different persons in London regarding a separate Muslim State. Amongst them Chowdhry Rahmat Ali of Cambridge University was notable who, on the basis of Iqbal's idea, coined the word "Pakistan" and published a pamphlet, *Now or Never*, and popularised the demand of Pakistan. Jinnah met Sir Muhammad Iqbal many times in London, and they were good friends. But, despite his disillusionment, Jinnah did not yield to Iqbal's arguments. Almost a decade was to pass before he admitted that he had "finally been led to Iqbal's conclusions, as a result of careful examination and study of the constitutional problems facing India."³⁹¹ Allamah Iqbal mentioned this in a letter to the Quaid-i Azam in these words: "I remember Lord Lothian told me before I left England that my scheme was the only possible solution of the troubles of India, but that it would take 25 years to come."³⁹²

In the "Joint Select Committee," Mr Jinnah was not included. The Congress boycotted this and thus the Committee ended without any fruitful result. From 1931 to 1934 Mr Jinnah lived mostly in London. This was almost the period of his self-exile and aloofness from Indian politics, but he was not unconcerned totally with the interests and political future of Indian Muslims. His friends were constantly in touch with him. Nawabzadah Liaqat Ali Khan requested him to come back to India to guide the Muslims. He subsequently decided to come to India in April 1934 and, while presiding over the All-India Muslim League, he appealed to Indian Muslims to sink their differences and join the Muslim League to strengthen his hands to fight for Muslim cause. He was elected unopposed to the Central Legislative

³⁹¹ G. Allana, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, The Story of a Nation*.

³⁹² *Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah*, p. 23.

Assembly from Bombay under the India Act of 1935.

Mr Jinnah now mustered his strength to unite Muslims together since they were divided and every province had its own leader and party. Iqbal gave his full support when he came to Lahore in 1935 to form the Parliamentary Board for election. A Conference of Punjab League Council was convened under the chairmanship of Iqbal. Sir Fazle Hussain was a very strong leader of the Unionist Party, but Iqbal extended his full co-operation to Mr Jinnah, the reference to which has already been made earlier. The Quaid-i Azam paid high tributes to him for his unflinching support. Iqbal wholeheartedly supported Quaid's mission and was not prepared to listen to a word against him.

Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah contains only thirteen letters written to the Quaid-i Azam during the period 13 May 1936 to 10 November 1937. The book was published in 1942 by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf of Lahore with a Foreword by the Quaid-i Azam, which shows the regard and respect the Quaid-i Azad had for Iqbal. These letters are of great historical importance written during the crucial days for Muslims in India dealing with many important issues of the time. Unfortunately, the Quaid-i Azam's letters to Iqbal have remained untraceable so far. It is said that they were destroyed by Iqbal himself before his death. The Quaid-i Azam, paying attributes to Iqbal, writes:

“... I think these letters are of very great historical importance, particularly those which explain his views in clear and unambiguous terms on the political future of Muslim India. His views were substantially in consonance with my own and had finally led me to the same conclusions as a result of careful examination and study of the constitutional problems facing India, and found expression in due course in the united will of Muslim India as adumbrated in the Lahore Resolution of the All-India Muslim League, popularly known as the ‘Pakistan Resolution,’ passed on 23rd March, 1940.”³⁹³

I would now conclude by quoting the high tributes the Quaid-I Azam paid to Iqbal on different occasions to show the deep love, and regard they had for each other:

³⁹³ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

“The Muslim League has already deplored the loss of Dr Sir Mohammad Iqbal. His death, too, is an irreparable loss to Muslim India. He was a personal friend of mine and composer of the finest poetry in the world. He will live as long as Islam will live. His noble poetry interprets the true aspirations of the Muslims of India. It will remain an inspiration for us and for generations after us.”

While presiding over the Annual Session of the Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930, Iqbal advocated in clear terms the establishment of an autonomous State of Muslim majority provinces. An eminent scholar today, despite Iqbal's unambiguous demand for a Muslim State, makes such a statement as the following: “It must be remembered that Iqbal did not argue for a Muslim State, but only for a Muslim bloc in an Indian Federation. Moreover, Bengal and Assam (the present East Pakistan) did not enter into his calculations. It is grossly misleading to call him the originator of the idea of Pakistan or the poet who dreamed of Pakistan. He never talked of Partition and his ideal was that of a getting together of the Muslim Provinces in the North-West so as to bargain more advantages with the projected Hindu Centre.”³⁹⁴ If we accept this interpretation, the very basic conception of the demand of Pakistan as a separate homeland is totally shattered. “Iqbal advocated partition: he even demanded and defined the frontiers of a proposed 'consolidated Muslim State,' which, he believed, would be ‘in the best interests of India and Islam,’” writes Hector Bolitho, the biographer of Jinnah.³⁹⁵

It is true that Iqbal did not include Bengal and Assam in his scheme of one State in the Allahabad Address, but in his letter to the Quaid-i Azam he explicitly mentioned Bengal to be included in “a separate Federation of Muslim Provinces.”³⁹⁶ He further elaborates his views suggesting to the Quaid-i Azam that “why should not the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal be considered as a nation entitled to self-determination just as other nations in India and outside India are?” In the light of these words it is obvious that Iqbal later on included Bengal also in his demand for a separate State which is further corroborated by the Quaid-i Azam's own statement

³⁹⁴ K. K. Azle, *The Making of Pakistan* (London : Chatto & Windus, 1967), p. 54.

³⁹⁵ Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah : Creator of Pakistan* (Karachi : Oxford University Press), p. 99.

³⁹⁶ *Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah*, p. 24.

referred to above wherein he says that “his views were substantially in consonance with my own”.

Late Mr Mumtaz Hasan has given us a very clear picture of what Iqbal actually visualised at the time he made his celebrated Allahabad Address:

“Speaking of the 1930 address, I am reminded of a personal anecdote. When Iqbal returned to Lahore from Allahabad, I went to see him. I was still a student at college and felt greatly perturbed at his reference to self-government for the new Muslim state, ‘within the British Empire’. ‘Why did you say that, Sir?’ said I: ‘Why must our Muslim State remain within the British Empire?’ His first response was a smile. ‘You will notice,’ said he, ‘that I said, “self-government within or without the British Empire”. You are worried about “within,” but there are so many others who told me they are worried about “without”.’ ‘But why did you have to say that at all, Sir?’ I insisted. ‘Because,’ said he, ‘while I see the establishment of a Muslim State as inevitable in the process of history, I cannot see clearly, at least at present, whether it will be within or without the British Empire.’ I had to keep quiet. Here was a man who was utterly loyal to his vision, who told you what he saw clearly and what he did not.”³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ Mumtaz Hasan, "Iqbal As A Seer," *Iqbal Review*, Karachi, April 1966.

Notes and References

OFFPRINTS

Contributors of articles to the Iqbal Review are supplied five offprints of their articles by the Academy. if more than five offprints are required, this may please be stated, in red ink, on the first page of the article, even if a request has been made in the letter accompanying the article. These will be printed and the cost will be adjusted against their remuneration.

—Editor, Iqbal Review