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Islamic Pakistan: Illusion and Reality

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Saleem Kidwai*

*Dr. Saleem Kidwai is Director, International Centre for Peace Studies and Visiting Faculty in School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Politics in Pakistan has always revolved around religion. The demand for Pakistan was made in the name of religion. The cry of "Islam in danger" was a powerful factor in the Pakistan movement. Right from the start of the Pakistan struggle, Muslims of the subcontinent were given to understand that the centre of their aspirations, Pakistan, would be an Islamic state, in which Islamic law would be enforced and Islamic culture would be revived. During the mass contact programme of Muslim League, wild promises were made of restoring the glory of Islam in the future Islamic state. As a consequence, many religious divines and *Ulemas* were won over.

The spectacular victory of Muslim League in 1946 elections cannot be understood only in terms of Jinnah's charisma. One cannot ignore the use that was made of the religious emotions by the *Ulemas*, the *Sajjada nashins* and their followers. The thrust of their message was simple: those who vote for the Muslim League are Muslims, they will go to heavens for this good act: those who vote against the Muslim League are *Kafirs*, they will go to hell after their death. They have to be refused burial in a Muslim country. And Qaid-e-Azam, M.A. Jinnah was not unaware of the exploitation of religion in this manner by the Muslim League, although on principle he was opposed to the idea of using religion in politics. In fact, it was Jinnah himself who requested the *Ulemas* to help the Muslim League in the referendum campaign in Sylhet and NWFP.

The never-ending phenomenon of Islam, which should have been resolved with the establishment of the Muslim state, keeps surfacing as the process of Islamization spawns further fundamentalism. After the creation of Pakistan, it was argued by the *Ulemas* that Pakistan was created to establish on Islamic state based on *shariah* laws. Immediately after Jinnah's death, the controversy regarding the implementation of Islam developed into a storm, though its first rumbling could be heard even during his lifetime.

Each succeeding government in Pakistan thought it suitable to continue with the established agencies to find out methods for Islamization of the laws and the social structure. Islam has been used as an important political factor right from its inception leading to strengthening of obscurantism, weakening of secular lobby and fomenting sectarianism. Islam, which could have been served to unite the people of Pakistan, has been and is being misused to divide them into mutually hostile sectarian groups and to divert their attention from basic social and economic problems.

Every ruler and ruling elite in Pakistan used and interpreted Islam arbitrarily in accordance with his own whims and fancies. Ironically it was the socialist and secular Z.A. Bhutto who started the process of Islamic fundamentalism. His 1973 constitution contained several clauses, which later paved the way for the Islamization of laws. He was responsible for declaring Ahmadiyyas 'non-Muslims' constitutionally. To Islamize the society, he declared Friday as a holiday instead of Sunday and introduced the subject of *Islamiyyat* as compulsory for students. It is quite another thing that even such populist measures could not save him from the doom and ultimately he become a victim of his own acts when almost all religious parties joined hands in launching a campaign against him. Bhutto's successor, General Zia-ul-Haq, utilized the process of Islamization to advance his political objectives and sought legitimacy by implementing Islam as an ideology of Pakistan. Wrong interpretation of Islam resulted in the rise of fundamentalism, terrorism and fanaticism. The so-called Islamization of Pakistan during Zia regime imbued the fanatics with a spirit of self-righteousness which can only be regarded as alarming in any civilized society.

The book under review is a timely publication, which seeks to examine the religious factor in country's politics. The thrust of the study is that the dubious ruling regimes and opposition movements to dislodge them, both exploited Islam to the utmost. Religion has come to be accepted as the ideology of today's Pakistan with attempts to give Islam tyrannical interpretations. After half a century of independence, Pakistan does not have the appearance of a country that was envisaged by its creators, Jinnah and Iqbal. The million-dollar question is what was the vision of Pakistan founders? To put Iqbal in the category of Jinnah is unfair. Iqbal was essentially a poet. Moreover, he died even before the passing of Pakistan resolution. Iqbal was never for a separate Muslim state but talked about more than one autonomous Muslim majority states within the Indian federation.

So far as Jinnah's vision is concerned, the reviewer finds it hard to agree with the author who portrays Jinnah as a secular liberal like Gandhi and Nehru. He conveniently forgets Jinnah's championship of two-nation theory and his role in fomenting communal trouble, which ultimately led to the partitioning of the subcontinent. His political philosophy was antithesis of secularism. Jinnah gave to Muslim communalism an aggressive form after he discarded his nationalist past and mobilized the Muslims to fight the Hindus. He used every device, including the two-nation theory, to keep the

two communities apart. He frustrated every move towards fraternization in the last stages, and even called upon the Muslim to fight it out in the streets by his so-called Direct Action call in 1946. He asked for blood.

Jinnah's sole aim appears to be to grab the highest political office in a new state. He was involved in the crisis of identity and wanted to be taller than Gandhi and Nehru. He succeeded in exploiting the feelings of devout Muslims for his narrow political ends, and used Islam for consolidating his political position. In Jinnah's vocabulary, the words Islam and Muslim were synonymous, indeed interchangeable. Thus, his speeches on Pakistan tend to yield forth the concept of an Islamic state. To cite Jinnah's address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan as a proof of his secular credentials, as the author does is misleading. In fact, by making such a speech Jinnah made it clear that he was not sincere in his efforts regarding formation of Pakistan. This implied that he wanted power, and nothing else. There appears to be a contradiction in his views. On the one hand he was insisting that in Pakistan theocratic state will not be allowed to flourish, on the other he was keen to introduce Islamic ideology in the Constitution of Pakistan. Thus, all confusion about the role of religion in today's Pakistan can be attributed to the double speak and hypocrisy of Jinnah himself. He cannot be absolved of the responsibility in this regard, to call Jinnah democrat is again debatable.

All India Muslim League led by Jinnah was never known to be a democratic party. Its working committee and the council invariably used to ratify Jinnah's decisions, once he had firmly taken a decision. Unlike the Congress, there was no collective leadership in the Muslim League. Jinnah's associates who accompanied Jinnah in negotiations always looked up to him to articulate negotiating strategy as well as tactics. It is difficult to predict if he would have preferred the presidential or parliamentary system. In fact, The failure of democracy in Pakistan can be traced back to the early days of Jinnah's Governor Generalship and his perpetuation of viceregal system inherited from the Raj. Jinnah's assumption of the office constituted a departure from the dominion practice that the Governor General should be non-political. By assuming the position Jinnah created a tradition in which the holder of this highest office in the land would not merely be a figurehead. A precedent for the dismissal of the elected governments of Frontier and Sind provinces was also established. Significantly, their dismissal was under Jinnah's express orders. Consequently, throughout its half century of independent existence, Pakistan has functioned like an extension of the colonial viceregal state.

Notwithstanding the author's views and interpretation, the book is a welcome addition to the existing literature on Pakistan. It has assumed a great topical value in view of the recent developments. It is well-documented and appendices given at the end add to the worth of the book.