

Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman Jinnah, The Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985

REVIEWED BY

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The partition of the Indian subcontinent into two separate states in 1947 fundamentally altered the subsequent course of history in this region. The historical factors which contributed to the making of this fateful event have since been a subject of debate and inquiry generating conflicting opinions regarding them. The more and more evidence has surfaced in the process leading to better understanding of the complex issues involved. "The sole spokesman" by Ayesha Jalal is a valuable addition in this regard. The book is based on doctoral dissertation submitted to the Cambridge University in 1982 and was published in 1985 by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

Dr. Ayesha Jalal, presently a Professor of History at Tufts University Boston, has earned a remarkable repete as a prolific writer on South Asian themes. Her other books include "The State of Martial Rule", Democracy authoritarianism in Asia - a comparative and historical perspective, and the Self and Sovereignty. Her all books has been well received among the intellectuals and those having interest in South Asian history.

The author has divided the book "The Sole Spokesman" into seven chapters tracing the significant phases of struggle and strategy of Jinnah and Muslim League.

These chapters are:

1. Jinnah between the wars
2. Jinnah and League's search for survival
3. Jinnah and Muslim Majority Provinces

4. Centre and Province: Simla and the election of 1945-46.
5. Jinnah's Pakistan and the Cabinet Mission Plan.
6. The interim government: Jinnah in retreat.
7. The end game: Mountbatten and Partition.

Before as well as after 1947, in Pakistan, history has been written with a particular thinking. Sometimes it was arranged on the governmental level to meet the national requirements and to inform the new generations about their country's history. Much of the history has been written by those people who worked with Quaid-e-Azam and had emotions of love for the Quaid and Muslim League. They were not academic or professional historians, they were only followers and devotees of Jinnah, so their writing are full of praises for their beloved leader.

Aysha Jalal's *The Sole Spokesman*-- a book by a professional historian has been well-received and stimulated considerable discussion and rethinking on the subject. It marks a significant departure from earlier works, as the author questions many generally established notions regarding the evolution of the demand for Pakistan and its ultimate birth.

The most significant aspect of the work is that it seeks to explain the emergence of Pakistan as the product of innumerable historical factors shaping and conditioning the attitudes and options of the political forces. Mountbatten, Jinnah and Nehru all the principal actors of this historical drama, seem at times, to be at the mercy of the formidable forces of history, Such as to which Pakistani historiography too often resorts.

In spite of all its utility, there are some points which can be disagreed. The most controversial and conflicting views are about Pakistan Resolution and the partition of India and Jinnah's strategy about it. The author's assumption that in 1940 Jinnah was working for the British needs or her opinion that Jinnah has no love for the partition and he was only using this demand for bargaining and to gain a better share for the

Muslims at the centre, are completely against the historical facts. About Pakistan Resolution author's point of view that it was inspired by the British is completely wrong and it can't be proved by historical facts and Professor Dr. Sikandar Hayat is quite right when he says that, "Ayesha Jalal has based on her interpretations on immediate interests. She does not view the Lahore Resolution in a larger, historical perspective in line with the Muslim separatist political movement which developed steadily at the hands of Syed Ahmed Khan through Maulana Muhammad Ali and Allama Muhammad Iqbal or indeed through the more recent developments of 1937-1939."

If we study the Pakistan Resolution in larger, historical perspective in line with the Muslim separatist political movement, we can say confidently that here author has deliberately ignored the facts. There were so many historical, socio-economic and religio-political factors which brought the Muslims to the conclusion that the only solution to their all problems was that they should have a separate homeland. The main factor among them were that Jinnah's all efforts for Hindu-Muslim unity had been failed and the congress rule of 1937-1939 showed the Muslims that they could not expect any justice or fair play at the hands of Hindus. The fact is that the Lahore resolution was essentially an outcome of Muslim interests, aspirations and ideals.

The central argument of the author is that Muslim League's demand for a separate homeland which Jinnah always kept vague to muster maximum support of the Muslims- was merely a strategy for forcing Congress leadership for and honourable and equitable settlement with the former at the centre. Here author gives reference to Jinnah's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Jinnah's rejection of a truncated Pakistan as proposed in the plan B of the Cabinet Mission and his willingness to consider the three-

tier union (plan A) if congress would do the same, was, in author's opinion, the first open indication that he (Jinnah) might settle for something less than a sovereign Pakistan.

This theme of Ayesha Jalal is against the historical evidence. The course of events from the Nehru Report of 1928 to the Congress rule of 1937-1939 had left no doubt in Jinnah's mind about the fate of Muslims in a polity dominated by the Hindu majority. Jinnah, addressing the All India Muslim League(AIML) Lahore session 1940, declared that he, too, stood "unequivocally for the freedom of India." But he insisted, "it must be freedom for all India and not freedom of one section, or worse still, of the congress caucus and slavery of Musalmans and other minorities." Jinnah therefore, demanded the division of India in the best interest of the two nations. Jinnah had no inwardness or vagueness about the partition as it is claimed by Ayesha Jalal. He was fully clear about it. He demanded that India was inhabited by two nations, Hindus and Muslims, and thus must be divided between them. He was convinced that this was the only way to settle the constitutional problems of India. So it is not justifiable to say that Jinnah did not like the India of partition and he was only using this demand to gain better share for the Muslims in the centre. Historically it is wrong.

An "inwardness" of Jinnah's strategy is a theme at which author has put a special emphasis. This assumption of the author appears to be far-fetched as she herself accepts that "no amount of detective work on what led to the resolution or how it came to be interpreted afterwards can hope to tease out its inwardness."

The mere fact that Jinnah kept his demands open for negotiations or that these demands were not formulated in precise terms did not sufficiently prove that there was an inherent "inwardness" attached to his strategy." On the other hand it can hardly be denied that political demands cannot be spelled out in precise and inflexible terms. Instead they require necessary readjustment in the light of unseen exigencies of

politics. Besides, unnecessary preciseness hinders a leader's capacity for manoeuvring and bargaining. Further, uncalled for details about a political goal are bound to have a divisive effect upon its supporters.

In spite of having difference of opinion with the author about some of her views, in nutshell, it can be said of the book that it is a commendable attempt to analyse the complex political and historical factors that led to partition in a logical and argumentative manner.