

# A compendium on the Quaid

By Sami Saeed

**A** NUMBER of books have been written to chronicle the life, times, and achievements of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Most of these books are either the biographies of the great man or political histories of the era in which he lived. His speeches and statements have also been documented, beginning with Jamiluddin Ahmad's three volumes and more recently, a single volume published by the Oxford University Press, Karachi covers the crucial period of 1947-48.

Most of these works are the outcome of painstaking research and throw light on various aspects of the Quaid's personality and his momentous contribution to the cause of India's freedom from the colonial yoke and the creation of Pakistan, a separate state for Muslims where they

The publisher's note, written by Ameena Saiyid, makes an impassioned plea to study the Quaid with objectivity and disallow "myths to grow up around his life and personality, choking out the truth from the grasp of the younger generation who should be studying him in the light of his life, times, and his principles and not wrapped up in other person's personal ideologies". While one may not disagree with what the learned publisher has to say, her note would serve as a befitting prologue to some outstanding work of historical research and sounds a little pedantic for an anthology of the kind under review.

The introductory articles light up the subject from different standpoints. Professor Stanley Wolpert, author of *Jinnah of Pakistan*, assesses the political achievements of the Quaid. He considers the Quaid as one of the greatest statesmen of the twentieth century. "Only so great a



THE QUAID: Inspecting a guard of honour

could live according to their own likes without fear of exploitation by the brute Hindu majority.

*The Jinnah Anthology* makes a valuable contribution to the corpus of literature available on the Quaid. It weaves together in one volume excerpts from the speeches and statements of the Quaid; historians' perceptions about the man and his achievements; personal recollections of prominent people who came into contact with him; original documents like the Quaid's Will, the Dawn Trust, and Obituary from the *Times*, London.

leader as Jinnah could have won Pakistan in so short a time", writes Wolpert, "... (he) miraculously managed to achieve all he did, hardly breathing a full day without coughing up blood". Wolpert pays a glowing tribute to the Quaid's brilliant strategy, perseverance and commitment to the Muslim cause culminating in an achievement which "has no parallel in recent history".

Liaquat Merchant, the editor of the book, traces the life of the Quaid from his student days in England to becoming the unquestioned leader of India's eighty

# BOOKS & AUTHORS

DAWN

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2 EXCERPTS 3 EXCERPTS 4 AUTHOR 5 REVIEWS (SYNDICATED) 6 REVIEWS (ENGLISH) 7 REVIEWS (ENGLISH) 8 REVIEWS (URDU & REGIONAL)

million Muslims, his multi-dimensional personality as a lawyer, legislator, politician and national hero, his political evolution from an Indian nationalist to an advocate for a separate Muslim state. It is a good background essay for those, particularly foreigners, who have not read much about the founding father of Pakistan.

The article by Akbar S Ahmad, "Jinnah's Gettysburg Address", interprets the two important speeches of 11th and 14th August, 1947 delivered by the Quaid in the Constituent Assembly as containing his vision of the newly created state of Pakistan. It is a thought-provoking piece that clears many cobwebs which people have spun around the Quaid's political philosophy to project their own particular views.

Personal recollections of the Quaid recorded, among others, by Princess Abida Sultan of Bhopal, Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, Shaista Ikramullah, and Sharifuddin Pirzada are deeply moving and provide anecdotal and impressionistic evidence about some traits of the Quaid's personality.

The excerpts from the speeches and statements of the Quaid have been selected with great care and encompass his views and perceptions on important subjects. These include Islam as a complete code of life, the duty of a government and the freedom of its citizens, the nature of future constitution of the country, safeguarding the rights of minorities, and the menace of provincialism and sectionalism. A conspicuous omission perhaps is the speech of 14th April, 1948 at Peshawar in which the Quaid spelt out his view of governance.

The image of the Quaid that emerges from the historians' assessments and personal reminiscences included in the book is that of a man of great intellect and integrity. Sarojini Naidu refers to "the flawless refinement of his subtle mind and spirit" and his "austere and lovely code of private honour and public integrity". Sahabzada Yaqub Khan recollects "a luminous image suffused by integrity. Indeed he gave to that abstract virtue a concrete splendour". Only a man of his intelligence and integrity could stay clear of the murky world of British-Hindu machinations and translate the Muslim dream of a separate homeland into a reality.

Nobody has summed up the historical contribution made by the Quaid better than Professor Stanley Wolpert in his book *Jinnah of Pakistan*: "Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly can anyone be credited with creating a nation-state. Mohammad Ali Jinnah did all three". It is befitting that the book concludes with these lines.

*The Jinnah Anthology* is one of the finest compendiums about the father of the nation. Apart from the profundity of its contents, the layout and printing of the book are immaculate. It also contains a beautiful collection of the Quaid's photographs, which show that the grace, dignity and strength of character that marked his personality were fully manifest in his physical bearing, appearance and the way he carried himself.

To conclude, I would like to draw the readers' attention to the objective with which the compilers of the anthology, The Jinnah Society, have made this effort: "to reemphasize Jinnah's vision and principles, particularly those relating to democracy, equality, justice, fairplay, supremacy of the rule of law, integrity, honesty, and rights of women and minorities. This will hopefully influence and inspire the citizens of Pakistan and constitute a positive factor in building up Pakistan." To this may I add my objective for reviewing the book: to remind fellow Pakistanis that our founding father was an icon of intellect and integrity and that we should search and not sell our souls if we are to survive honourably as a nation in this world. ■

**The Jinnah Anthology**  
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