

A Portable Jinnah

While providing fresh insights, *The Jinnah Anthology's* third edition carries the debate on whether Jinnah had a secular or Islamic vision for Pakistan into the future.

By I.A. Rehman

The *Jinnah Anthology*, a publication of the Jinnah Society, must enjoy a wide and growing relationship. While the second (enlarged) edition (2009) of the publication came out 10 years after the first one (1999), the third (revised) edition (2010) has been issued barely a year after the second.

The material added to the new edition includes an essay by one of its editors, Liaquat H. Merchant, titled 'Jinnah – Two Perspectives: Secular or Islamic and Protector-General of Minorities.' In the second part of the essay, the author recalls the Quaid's enhanced concern for the minorities after independence. He reproduces from Rajmohan Gandhi's *Understanding the Muslim Mind* the account of an interview M.S.M. Sharma had with the Quaid in which Mr Jinnah had said, "I am going to constitute myself as the Protector-General of the Hindu minority in Pakistan." Mr Merchant has done a service to his people by focusing on the Quaid's concern for the minorities at a time when the tide of intolerance is making life increasingly difficult for the country's non-Muslim citizens.

Equally timely is the first part of the essay in which the writer dwells on what secularism and Islam meant to the Quaid. He is quite categorical in his assessment that "Jinnah's personal outlook of life and on life was evidently secular in nature," and according to him "religion had nothing to do with the business of the State and he made this position clear time and again in his public speeches and statements."

Later on, the author argues that "Jinnah obviously saw no serious conflict

between the essential principles of Islam and secular principles as generally understood." Such statements are welcome because other contributors to the volume have not been able to check the tendency to present their own wishes/interests as the Quaid's views. For instance, Akbar S. Ahmad argues (without evidence) that in his final years "Jinnah began to sharpen his concept of Pakistan" and "his speeches emphasised the unequivocal Islamic nature of Pakistan."

More amusing is the final sentence of Sharif Al Mujahid's essay, 'Jinnah: A Portrait.' The composition is entirely devoted to answering the various writers' attempts to find fault with Jinnah's character and little is said about his political beliefs. Yet the writer concludes: "He wished for Pakistan to be modern, progressive, forward-look-

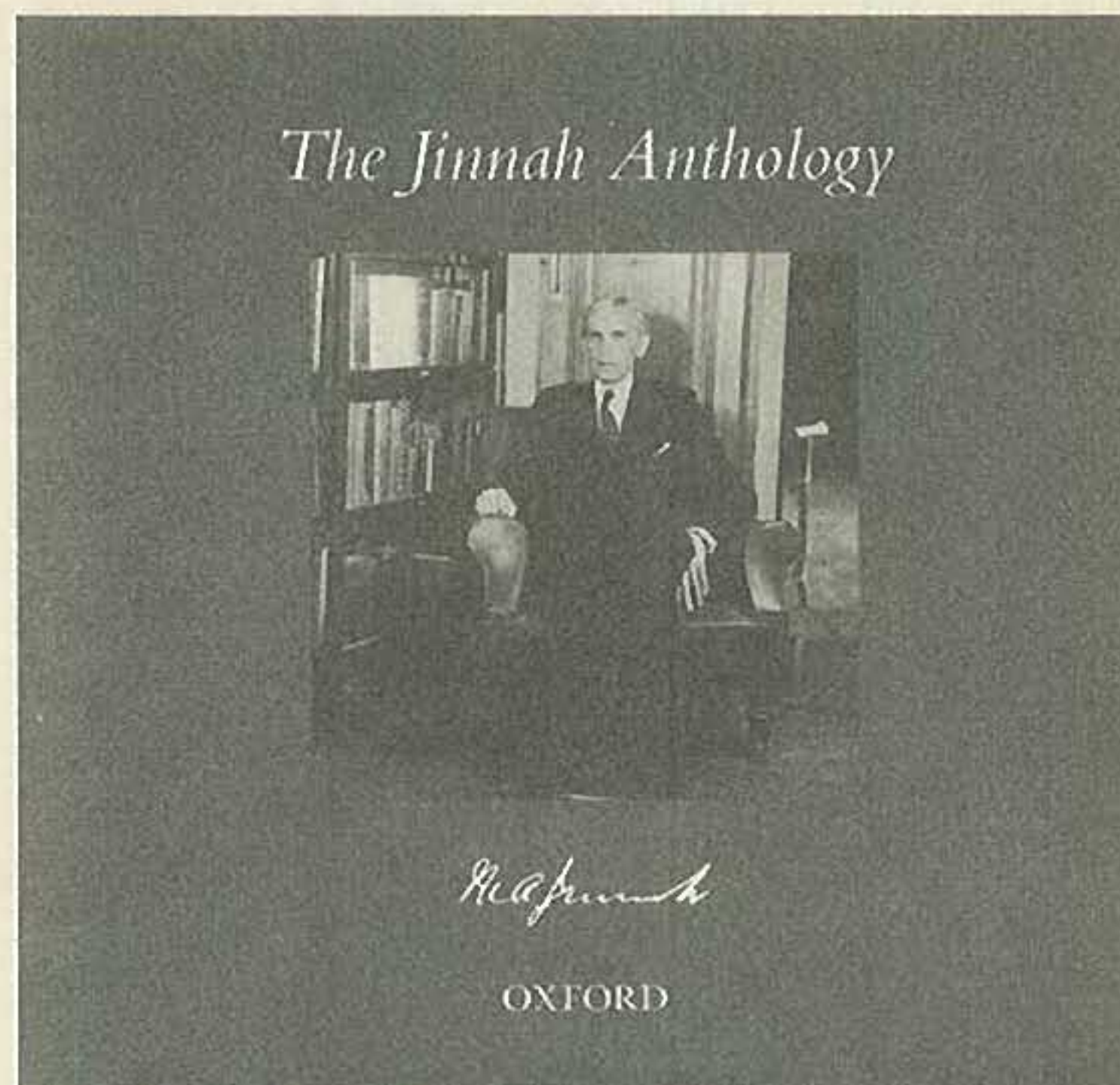
ing, social, welfare-oriented, egalitarian, democratic and Islamic." The refrain about Islamic is obviously forced.

There is no harm in saying that the Quaid was loyal to Islam. No Muslim leader in India could be anything else. But the real issue is: Which interpretation of Islam did Jinnah subscribe to? Iqbal's, or Abul Kalam's, or Shabbir Ahmad Osmani's, or Maudoodi's, or Hasrat Mohani's, or Obaidullah Sindhi's? Nobody can claim that these great scholars completely agreed among themselves on Islam's approach to politics. When this vital aspect of the matter is ignored and references to Islam are casually made, the conservative clerics or even militants get an excuse to claim they are as Islamic as the Quaid or vice versa.

Two other additions to this edition are significant. J.K. Galbraith's piece attracts attention because he did not react kindly to Partition. But this essay is only a review of Wolpert's biography of the Quaid, though the writer does admit that the public image of Jinnah did not do justice to him. The other addition is the obituary notice on Jinnah carried by *The Hindu* of Chennai, published on September 13, 1948, a piece of brilliant analysis and summing up of the Quaid's life.

Another fresh addition, *World of His Fathers* by Fouad Ajami, also a review of Wolpert's book, is an intriguing selection because it tries to reduce the Quaid's passion for Pakistan to the fury of a rejected assimile!

The additions also include Sharif Al Mujahid's tribute to Hector Bolitho, which is welcome for another reason as well – the light the essay throws on



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Pakistan's cultural environment and the problems a conscientious researcher faces. But Kazimi's essay had perhaps adequately covered this subject earlier.

The editors have chosen to drop Pervez Hoodbhoy's essay on the Quaid's motto, Unity, Faith and Discipline, that had been included in the second edition and which, in fact, was a lecture given at a function organised by the Jinnah Society. The reason given is that this essay was out of sync with the central theme of the book – an explanation that is unlikely to satisfy anyone who reads the whole book.

The older contents of the book have stood the test of time – Wolpert's brief summing up of his assessment of Jinnah, Ayesha Jalal's masterly analysis of Jinnah's success despite holding poor cards, Sikandar Hayat's review of the many facets of Jinnah as a leader, Sharif Al Mujahid's study of Jinnah's transformation into Quaid-i-Azam, and A.G. Noorani's short essay on the incomparable defender of civil liberties that Jinnah was. One wishes the redoubtable Sharif Al Mujahid could get over his obligation to Zia-ul-Haq to publicise the reference to the presidential form of government in a page torn out of the Quaid's notebook that the General had shared with him. Sharif Al Mujahid does not scrutinise this piece of paper the way he had done the August 11 speech in his book written over 30 years ago.

The section that contains excerpts from the Quaid's statements and speeches will always be relevant to Pakistanis as it reveals what Jinnah stood for. In the next edition the editors could perhaps include an excerpt from the Quaid's letter of resignation to the Central Indian Assembly in protest against the adoption of the Rowlatt Bill, and another from his speech on Subhash Bose's Indian National Army (INA). In the latter speech, the Quaid had blamed the colonial power for creating conditions in which the INA was formed and had also prescribed the penalty for any soldier who would rebel against the state in "my Pakistan."

The selection of quotations in this anthology is equally useful. But one wonders why the operative part of the Quaid's address at the Staff College, in which he had reminded the military officers of their duty to obey the constitutional authority, has been dropped.

Fortunately, the compilers of the anthology are conscious of the need to improve it each time, and one hopes the next editions will be even better than the present one in terms of throwing more light on the Quaid's vision than on his personality.

In attempting to make this book a collector's item, Oxford University Press have invested in it much more than they were required to do as mere publishers. ■