

# Jinnah Was Not Secular

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Jinnah was not secular but Jaswant Singh's book says 'Jinnah was a secular person'. Also his basic point concedes that Muslims have and are being treated as aliens in India. One of the major political parties which has targeted Muslims and whose aggressive anti-Muslim campaigns have resulted in their present plight, their exclusion from social and economic space is Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), itself. The question is what has Mr Jaswant Singh been doing when BJP has been asserting the concept of Hindu nation, has been part of processes which have relegated Muslims to the status of second class citizens? One is not arguing that the maltreatment of Muslims is only due to BJP. The major factor has been the subtle penetration of RSS ideology in the social and political arena of Indian life. While Jaswant Singh does not come from the RSS shakhas, he has been part of the party, which is the political vehicle of RSS. In this case his cry of "alienation of Muslims" looks like shedding crocodile tears!

As far as Jinnah being secular is concerned, it is ironical that a party, which Jinnah headed with 'brilliance', had the name Muslim League! If that does not clarify the communal evaluation of a person what else will. Jinnah despite his exposure to the Western culture, despite his being part of the Indian National Congress for initial part of his life, did become the 'sole spokesman' of interests of Muslims, i.e. Muslim elite, in due course of time. One agrees that the individual attributes of the Qaed-e-Azam of Pakistan were remarkable, but that does not make him secular. Secularism essentially stands for relegating religious identity to private realm to one's life, while Jinnah chose to lead Muslim League, where the religious identity was the base of the national identity. There were people like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and others who chose to be part of National movement for composite Indian nation. Majority of poor Muslims continued to support and follow Mahatma Gandhi and national movement. There were even Muslim religious leaders, and seminaries like those of Barelvi and Deoband, which stood for composite Indian Nationalism. On the other hand Muslim League, initially a product of the politics of Muslim Landlords and Nawabs and later joined in by a 'section of educated and affluent Muslims, kept talking of interests of Muslims' and kept branding Congress as Hindu party, despite its secular policy of Indian Nationalism.

The language of Interests of Muslims, leading to the notion of 'Muslims are a separate nation' was quiet akin and parallel to the concept of Hindu nation propagated by Savarkar-RSS, of India being a Hindu Rashtra, Hindu Nation. Do all Muslims have similar interests as asserted by Jinnah? What was the similarity between the interests of Ashraf and Arjal Muslims? What was the similarity of interests between the interests of rich landlords, businessmen Muslims and the poor artisan Muslims? Savarkar and RSS talked of the interests of Hindus, which layers of Hindus were these? Essentially the same layers which as Muslims were

the beneficiaries of Muslim League's articulation, i.e. landlords, clergy and a section of middle classes.

Jinnah's enticing 12th August 1947 "secular speech" notwithstanding, the whole Muslim League predominantly consisted of those communal elements, who did want to convert Pakistan into a Muslim Nation, which they did in due course. And it was the same Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership, which called for a separate state for Muslims, Pakistan, in 1940 Lahore resolution. Just because Jinnah was a non-practicing Muslim and a Westernized person does not make him secular. One's association in politics should determine one's characterization.

As far as role in the partition of the country is concerned, most of the debate is generally focused at superficial level. Muslim League, Congress, Nehru-Patel. Most of the debate is in the language of Heroes and villains, the deeper processes which gave rise to the political streams, which believed in religion based nation state, the role of British in creating such a situation is missing in the debate. While in Pakistan a large section will blame the intransigence of 'Hindu Congress' for partition, in India, Muslim League, Jinnah are blamed for the same. The source of "Hate politics" in India, the RSS ideology, holds Gandhi also as a major culprit. According to the RSS-Hindu Mahasabha thinking expressed in so many ways, most clearly in the speech and action of Nathuram Godse, Gandhi is to blame for partition as he followed the policy of Muslim appeasement leading to their becoming assertive and going on to demand Pakistan. In most of the communal discourse, a large part of which has become part of social common sense in both the countries, the role of British in leading to the divisive path, and class character of communal organizations, which believed in the Religion based nation state, is missing altogether.

After the coming into being of Indian National Congress in 1885, from amongst the rising classes of Industrialist-Businessmen, educated sections and workers, the old declining classes of Landlords and Kings came together (1888) to form United India Patriotic Association. It is in this organization in which the future founders of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were working shoulder to shoulder, e.g. Raja of Kashi and Nawab of Dhaka. British played their cards very well and in pursuance with the imperial policy of divide et impera (divide and rule) recognized Muslim League as the representative of Muslims in 1906. That time it was predominantly formed by Muslim elite, who themselves were contemptuous of low caste Muslims; Arzals and Azlafs. Similarly Hindu Mahasabha, which was founded in 1915 had Hindu elite who were for Hindu Nation and average Hindus and low castes had no place in their scheme of things.

There is a lot of deeper parallelism in the agenda and language of both these communal streams. These were not only predominantly male dominated organizations, they also talked exclusively of identity issues. At that time the process of social transformation of caste and gender was going on but these streams totally kept aloof from those social processes. These communal streams emphasized on Muslim (elite) and Hindu (elite) interests. That's why they kept aloof from the national movement which aimed to bring in people of all religions, regions, castes and gender into a single stream of Indianness. Jinnah's focus on Constitutional methods and deep opposition to participation of masses in

national movement was quite similar to Hindu Mahasabha and RSS policy of keeping aloof from freedom movement. It is from the Hindu stream, Savarkar, that the concept of Hindu nation and its politics, Hindutva emerged. This Hindutva was later picked up by RSS. There was not much difference in many a formulation, which came from these two stables. As a matter of fact Savarkar goes on to quote approvingly, Jinnah's statement that there are two Nations in India, Hindus and Muslims. And then says that since this is predominantly a Hindu nation, Muslim nation has to remain subordinate to the same. The deeper agenda of communal streams was same, the only difference was Muslim League called for parity and Hindu Mahasabha-RSS wanted subordination of Muslim nation.

While Hindu Communalism got fragmented between Hindu Mahasabha, RSS and some part of it entered Congress, Muslim communalism came up as a major force and later on a section of the Muslim educated classes came to support the same.

It is in this background that the logistics of partition has to be seen. For Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha-RSS it was a control over nation. National movement and Congress targeted for getting freedom, to come out of the shackles of feudal system and to lay the foundation of Industrial society on democratic basis. It is because of this that Nehru refused to accommodate Muslim League demand of taking them in UP ministry in 1937, despite the defeat of Muslim League. Nehru's argument was that since Congress wants to go for land reforms etc., how they can have a landlord representative sitting in the cabinet. Also Nehru refused to believe that Muslim League is a representative of all Muslims, the same way he opposed the formulation that Hindu Mahasabha-RSS are representatives of Hindus. Cabinet Mission plan, to which Congress and Muslim League both had assented, suggested a federal structure with all powers to provinces and have only defense, communication, currency and external affairs with the Central Government. During the course Nehru and Patel both realized that such a weak centre will not be able to undertake the programs for country, programs for centralized planning for industrialization and related progress.

Superficially Nehru and Patel can be held responsible for what happened, but that's like looking at the tip of iceberg. The deeper seed of divisiveness, the protection to interests of landlord elements was the British policy. It is in pursuance with that the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha was never the subject of British wrath, while the leaders of national movement had to make the British jails as their second home.

For Advani and Jaswant Singh the deeper fascination for Jinnah has some logic. Jinnah pursued two nation theory and succeeded in forming a Muslim nation. They have the wish to have a Hindu nation, so a subtle admiration as to how Jinnah could achieve his goal and so is a great hero for those pursuing religion based politics. At ideological level they are on the same wave-length, religion based nation state, as was Jinnah. They also visualize that by exonerating Jinnah from the blame of partition they are cornering Nehru and Congress, which at one level serves the BJP agenda. And here lies the problem. Since Nehru and Patel are inalienable as far as the trajectory of practical politics is concerned. Patel also comes in to the gambit of blame game which cannot be tolerated by

large section of BJP followers. Another reason is that in RSS shakhas indoctrination module, the blame of partition is put on Jinnah's head. So how can Jinnah be resurrected without annoying the RSS module of indoctrination? Here lies the dilemma of RSS controlled Rajnath Singhs and so the expulsion of Jaswant Singh for writing all this. Advani could save his skin earlier despite his 'secular Jinnah speech' because of electoral exigencies, as with sickness of Vajpayee, it was difficult to fill the gap by anybody else.

History has strange lessons to teach. Today lot of powerful opinions are being voiced, but most of them are based on one or the other superficial observation e.g. Jinnah's earlier period when he was part of Congress or his 12 August 1947 speech in the Parliament. Similar type of historiography is also used for the communal historiography where kings are glorified or demonized according their religion. The deeper issues related to the workers, peasants and other average people are missing in this discourse. Same is the problem with the presentation of recent history, where the roots of communal streams (Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha. and RSS) from the feudal lords and feudal values (Birth based hierarchy of caste and gender is undermined and deliberately overlooked). This attitude also revels in creating heroes and villains; one stream's hero being another stream's villain. □□□