

Facts about the Partition : Jinnah's Legacy

If Jinnah is a hate-figure in India, there is ample justification for it. He is responsible for the great bloodbath in 1947. He was the main actor - call him Tragic Hero - in the "Tragedy of Partition." He did not live long to see the abysmal condition of this newly created homeland for Indian Muslims even after six decades.

By G L jalali

Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 by the British rulers constitutes the most tragic chapter in the contemporary history of India for a number of reasons. The most prominent feature of this tragic event was that millions of people from either side lost their lives in the wake of the communal riots that followed this historic event. Millions had to migrate from either side, bidding adieu to their hearths and homes which had serious repercussions on the mutual relations between the two countries- newly created "Homeland for the Indian Muslims (as desired by the Muslim League) Pakistan and India. What we witness today - for instance Pak-sponsored Islamic terrorism in India and deterioration of relations between the two neighbouring countries - is the direct off-shoot of the Partition of the Indian sub-continent. After the lapse of 62 years, it is interesting to know who was mainly responsible for the partition of the country in 1947. Expelled BJP leader Jaswat Singh's 700 page book on Jinnah has generated controversy over the main players of the Partition. If we study the history of India, we can infer the conclusion that all the political leaders, belonging to India's two main political parties - Congress and Muslim League - were, more or less, responsible for this tragic event. Muslim League headed by Mohammad Ali Jinnah demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims. British rulers agreed after the Congress leaders gave their assent. So, all the three agencies are, overtly or covertly, responsible for enacting the partition of the country. This is historical fact which no one can challenge. But, we have to remember one important fact that the British rulers agreed to the Partition proposal because of "the British strategic interests". The Labour Party came to power in Britain in 1945. It was willing to grant independence to India, but was rather worried about "losing its 60 year old military base here in India." It was from this military base that the British government exerted full control over the Indian Ocean area." This vast area included the eastern Middle-east that was rich in oil wealth. It contained numerous oil wells which, from strategic viewpoint, were "Wells of power." There was increasing demand for oil from developing countries. Russia under Stalin had "rising ambitions to control these "Wells of Power". The British feared that once their suzerainty over India ended, Russia would leave no stone unturned in registering its control "over these wells of power". During the second World War the British deployed "their forces in Iran and Iraq from India" which served as a strategic military base for them. When the question of granting independence to India came forth the British Army commanders were adamant on keeping a military foothold in India." Once India gone out of their hands, the British were sure to suffer military defeat and their occupation of other parts of Asia, including Sri Lanka Iraq, Burma, would be at stake. So the retention of India by the British rulers was essential for fulfilling the military (strategic) interests. This was the main imperialistic plank.

The British Prime Minister and his cabinet colleagues were fully convinced that the government of free India under Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, who had pathological hatred for the British rulers, would never allow India to remain a military base for the alien government. Nehru would not like the British government extending its influence over India's neighbouring countries. He was deadly against any form of colonial rule. Nehru was at heart a socialist. He regarded Soviet Russia as the only socialist country that could stem the tide of imperialism. How could he allow Great Britain to form a military base in free India against Soviet Russia? Partition of India could serve the purpose of the British government. The vivisected part of India - Pakistan - could become a military outpost for Great Britain. That was the ultimate aim of the colonial government.

In 1945 Field Marshall Wavell was appointed the Viceroy of India. He came with concrete proposal to find out a possible way to solve this problem. It may be recalled that the Congress party had refused to cooperate with the British government in the war effort. It had laid the condition that India could cooperate provided British would give freedom to India after the termination of war. Lord Wavell's predecessor Lord Linlithgow had encouraged Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a Bombay lawyer and topmost Muslim League leader, to make earnest demand for the creation of separate homeland for the Muslims called Pakistan. Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a stooge in the hands of the British Viceroy. This message was conveyed by Linlithgow to his political masters in London. "He represents a minority and a minority can only hold its own with our assistance", the Viceroy told British masters. Even the entire Muslim landed aristocracy in India was on the side of the British. Consequently, Jinnah's demand for carving out a separate state for Indian Muslims received a shot in its arms. Lord Wavell followed into the footsteps of his predecessor Linlithgo. He suggested that Jinnah's demand was feasible. He was adamant to create a separate state in the north-west on the condition (to be agreed by Jinnah) that "Pakistan would cooperate with them (The British) on defence matters". In other words, it meant that Pakistan would, for all practical purposes, serve as military base for Great Britain. Lord Wavell in a historic dispatch on February 6, 1946 sent a map delineating the boundaries of Pakistan he had already thought of in his mind. It was exactly the copy of the map delineating the border worked out by Lord Redcliff eighteen months later. It is beyond any shadow of doubt what Pakistan was going to be was already decided in 1946 by the British rulers. In fact the British rulers had already decided to vivisect India to serve their strategic interests.

They just awaited the formal consent of Indian political leaders. The final touches to the partition proposal were given by Lord Mountbatten who succeeded Lord Wavell as the Viceroy of India. He made both Jinnah and Nehru agree to the partition of India and creating Pakistan. "All the British manoeuvring can be discerned by studying the British top secret files. It is a myth that Jinnah founded Pakistan. President Roosevelt had already posted his representative in Delhi after 1942 and his dispatches in the US archives also tell us much, says former ADC to Lord Mountbatten, Narendra Singh Sarila (The Tribune, August 19, 2009).

Keeping this background in view, it is rather naive to think that the Cabinet Mission Plan would have resulted in avoiding the partition of the subcontinent as Mr. Jaswan Singh says in his book. The British were determined to create Pakistan in their own strategic interests. As per recommendations of the Cabinet Plan, "After ten years Punjab, Sindh and NWFP had the option to break away or secede from the federal unit, called united India, on one side and Bengal and Assam on the other side." It meant that Pakistan would be much larger after ten years. That would have been in the interests of the Muslim League headed by Jinnah. It would have fanned the flames of communal riots which had already broken out in some parts of northern India. As regards the princely states they had the option to break away too. There was possibility of Hyderabad joining Pakistan. Manipur and Tripura could have opted for Pakistan, joining its eastern part which is now Bangladesh. Even Hari Singh of J&K state could have declared independence. Nehru was right in rejecting the Cabinet Plan which would have resulted in the balkanisation of India. The credit for the political unification of India turning down outrightly the Cabinet Plan goes to Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. After the Congress refused to cooperate with the British in the war effort in 1939, the British Viceroy sought the cooperation of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. His Pakistan scheme was wholeheartedly supported by them. The main plank of Jinnah plan was the "Two Nation theory." Commenting upon his achievements and personality traits (of Jinnah) Chandan Mitra writes, "There can be no two opinions that Mohammad Ali Jinnah was among the most malevolent figures in contemporary history. It boggles the mind how a normal, well-educated epitome of the westernized Oriental Gentleman, who never wore religion on his sleeves could have convinced an entire generation of Indian Muslims that their destiny lay in vivisecting the homeland of their ancestors. In this process, the pork-eating, whisky-sipping, cigar-smoking barrister from Bombay who even married outside his faith, also caused the greatest migration in history to take place a catharsis that left hundreds of thousands dead, brutally injured, raped and homeless" (Sunday Pioneer, August 23, 2009). His "Direct Action Call" triggered wide-spread communal riots.

There are many agencies responsible for the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Of course Jinnah is one of them. He was an astute lawyer. "His success was largely due to the fact that he was quick to seize the tactical implications of any development. His strength lay not in any firm body of general principles, but throwing all his tremendous powers of tenacity and strategy into a cause which had been nursed by

external factors." Rhmat Ali and his British friends had first conceived the idea of Pakistan. The idea of Pakistan was there, but Jinnah gave it proper shape with the full support from the British. Had the British been not inclined vivisect India, Jinnah would not have succeeded in his mission. Pakistan began "with Iqbal as a poetic fancy". Rehmat Ali and his friends at Cambridge provided it with ideology and dogma. Britain's "Divide and Rule diplomacy served it as elixir of life and driving force. What Moham- mad Ali Jinnah did was to instil a new life into moribund Muslim League which died a natural death after Jinnah's premature death in Karachi. We must not forget that Jinnah began his life as a Congressman. He stood for parliamentary democracy. But a time came when, to quote Chandan Mitra, "Democracy was anathema to him for he insisted it was a euphemism for Hindu domination" (Sunday Pioneer).

Separate homeland for the Indian Muslims proved a mirage when over 15 crore Muslims still live in India whereas Jinnah's Pakistan is inhabited by half the number of the Indian Muslims called Mohajars (refugees). If Jinnah is a hate figure in India, there is ample justification for it. He is responsible for the unprece- dented blood bath in the history of India. His "Two Nation Theory" soured the relations between Hindus and Muslims. To believe that he was a great man simply for the fact that he created a theocratic state may not be correct in correct perspective. If this yard stick is applied to Hitler, Chengez Khan, Stalin and Musoluni etc. can we say that such people were heroes and deserve an honored place in history.

"To conclude, it is apt to say "Pakistan was no more than an ego trip for the naughty barrister who considered himself intellectually superior to the entire clutch of Congress leaders and was contemptuous of them" (Chanden Mitra, The Pioneer, August 23,2009).

He was the main actor-call him Tragic Hero - in the Tragedy of Partition.

(To be concluded)