

Ghulam Shabbir,* Muhammad Kashif Ali,** Abdul Basit Mujahid, ***Syed Akmal Hussain Shah, **** Farzana Arshad*****

Gandhi- Jinnah Relations: An Overview

Abstract

Most historians have painted Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi as charismatic leaders in the history of South Asia who worked for the freedom of India. Because of their services both of them are regarded as ‘father of their Nations’, Pakistan and India respectively. In the academia of Indo-Pakistan, their mutual relations are accredited as two adversaries or rivals but these are biased studies and need to revisit with a fresh look. In this paper, an attempt is made to highlight the relationship of Jinnah with Gandhi in their early phase of political struggle. The paper argues that Jinnah and Gandhi had great regards for each other and worked as a team for the liberation of their motherland-India. There are several documents and archival material that show that Jinnah had immense respect for Mr. Gandhi as a human being and politician. Their differences which developed in the last phase or later, are twisted in a way that blurred their services for the freedom struggle of India. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of Gandhi-Jinnah relations in the early phase of their struggle which lasted from 1906 to 1920. During this period Jinnah was a member of the All-India Congress Party. . The paper argues that Jinnah and Gandhi had great regards for each other and worked as a team for the liberation of their motherland-India.

Keywords: Jinnah, Gandhi, Charismatic Leadership, Indo-Pak Historiography.

Introduction

Jinnah and Gandhi were born in a ‘Gujarati speaking family’ and their ‘ancestors’ belong to Gujarat.¹ They completed their early education in India and went for their ‘higher studies in England’.² More interestingly, on the

* Dr Ghulam Shabbir, Lecturer, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, University of Gujrat. Gujrat.

** Dr Muhammad Kashif Ali, Lecturer Department of History & Pakistan Studies, University of Gujrat. Gujrat.

*** Dr Abdul Basit Mujahid, Assistant Professor, Department of History, AIOU, Islamabad.

**** Dr Syed Akmal Hussain Shah, Assistant Professor Department of History & Pakistan Studies, IIU, Islamabad.

***** Dr Farzana Arshad, Assistant Professor, Department of History, GCU, Lahore

¹ Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 04. See also, M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (London: Penguin Books, 1983), pp. 19-20.

demand of their mothers, they both had to marry in their teenage to visit abroad, as a guarantee of their return. Gandhi had to “solemnly took three vows: not to touch wine, women and meet”.³ During their stay in England, both were highly inspired by British liberalism, politics, and constitutional development. Both completed their Bar-at-Law from the prominent institutions of London. Both came back to India as British educated lawyers. Gandhi was failed to perform as a professional lawyer in the bar. He himself recollected his first case, “I stood up, but my heart sank into my boots. My head was reeling and I felt as though the whole court was doing likewise. I could think of no question to ask.”⁴ He hastened from the court without knowing whether his client won or lost. He decided to get an opportunity of gainful employment other than Rajkot. He decided to accept a ‘big case’ of “Dada Abdullah & Company” in South Africa.⁵ His professional fellow Jinnah emerged as one of the best among top Indian ‘constitutional lawyers’.⁶ The same legal integrity and acumen were shown by Jinnah in the case of Pakistan. As compared to Gandhi he had have established ‘himself high in the legal profession was indicative of his confidence in himself’.⁷

Jinnah, Gandhi and the Indian Community of South Africa

These two charismatic leaders had already known each other for nearly a generation. Their association reached back to the days of Gandhi’s campaign in South Africa. On February 20, 1908, Gandhi wrote a letter to *Indian Opinion*⁸ defending his *Satyagraha*⁹ philosophy against the allegation that his program divided the Hindu-Muslim communities. In this letter, he wrote that he knew of Jinnah and regarded him “with respect”.¹⁰ When in South African British Indian Committee had some communal disagreements on the issue of the Licenses Act, Jinnah helped Gandhi to unite the members. Gandhi claimed in a letter, “Jinnah, Bar-at-Law, showed me a telegram...which says that the about 700 Muslims are displeased with the compromise.”¹¹ Moreover, he suggested

² Stanley Wolpert, *Gandhi’s Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³ Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. (London: Granada Publishing, 1982), p. 35.

⁴ Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 97.

⁵ Wolpert, *Gandhi’s Passion*, p. 33.

⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 241.

⁷ Riaz Ahmad, *Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: The Formative Years, 1892-1920* (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1988), pp. 46-47.

⁸ The *Indian Opinion* was a newspaper started by Gandhi in South Africa on 6 June, 1903. Its aim was to educate the European Communities in South Africa about Indian atrocities. The newspaper was published in multiple languages, Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and English.

⁹ It is Sanskrit word means, ‘holding firmly to truth’ or ‘truth force’. See, Mark Shepard, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Myths* (Los Angeles: Shepard Publications, 1990), p. 20.

¹⁰ M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, VIII (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1962), p. 161.

¹¹ *Indian Opinion*, 21-03-1908.

Jinnah say everyone Indian community in South Africa were united. In a lengthy letter from Johannesburg to *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi claimed, “There was a suggestion that Mr. Jinnah, Bar-at-Law, be invited to join the campaign.”¹² That possibility never materialized, but the collaboration of two charismatic leaders was steadfast. After the victory of Imperial Council Elections, 1909, Jinnah in his first speech fully endorses Gandhi’s objectives. Gandhi was also inspired by the Jinnah’s political struggle for the rights of Indians. On 20 July 1908 in Johannesburg he delivered a speech at a mass meeting:

As for the issue of the educated Asiatic, I must repeat that we must fight it out. If we do not fight for men like Mr. Jinnah, Bar-at-Law, Mr. Justice Ameer Ali, or Prince Ranjit Singh, or others equally well educated, we will be at Mr. Chameny’s mercy.¹³

Finally, Gandhi returned from South Africa to his motherland as a national hero and received with Royal reception.¹⁴ On the evening of 13th January 1915, the Gurjar Sabha arranged a welcome party in the honour of Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi. Being a chairman of the Sabha, Jinnah presided over this meeting in the spacious garden of Mangaldass house. There was a very large and representative gathering.¹⁵ M. K. Munshi opened the proceedings and praised Gandhi’s achievements in South Africa. After this Jinnah welcomed the guests on the behalf of Sabha and said that should have the opportunity of welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi back to their motherland. In his speech, Jinnah accredited his struggle and triumphs for the Indian community in South Africa. Jinnah paid tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi as:

Undoubtedly here he would not only become a worthy ornament but also a real worker whose equals there were very few (applause). He felt sure that he was uttering the sentiments of everyone...while he was praising Mr. Gandhi he did not forget Mrs. Gandhi, who had set an example not only to the womenkind of India, but he might say to the womenkind of the whole world.¹⁶

Some prominent biographers of both leaders portrayed this meeting as the beginning of the ideological clash between Jinnah and Gandhi. They misquoted the reply of Gandhi to the speech of Jinnah. They preferred a statement

¹² Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, VIII, p. 453.

¹³ *Indian Opinion*, 25-07-1908.

¹⁴ Wolpert, *Gandhi’s Passion*, p. 83.

¹⁵ *Bombay Chronicle*, 15-01-1915.

¹⁶ Riaz Ahmad, *The Works of Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, II (Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, 1997), p. 304.

that Gandhi protest against the use of English in Gujarati audience and they neglected his whole speech.¹⁷ In the reply to Jinnah's speech, Gandhi spoke in Gujarati and thanked Mr. Jinnah for presiding at this function. He was, therefore, 'glad to find a Mohammedan a member of the Gujar Sabha and the chairman of the function.'¹⁸ He continued and said that the chairman had a good deal with the South African question. He believed that Jinnah 'would explain the whole situation very shortly to the Bombay public and through them the whole of India'.¹⁹ It is a fact that Jinnah had emerged as the all-India level leader and Gandhi wholeheartedly accepted this fact.

Jinnah, Gandhi and the Indian Politics

The Bombay Provincial Conference was held in Ahmedabad from 21 to 23 October 1916. In this conference Jinnah was elected as president and a reception was given to Gandhi. Gandhi delivered a speech and paid tribute to Jinnah and the people of Ahmedabad as:

It has been chosen as President a person who holds a respected position in the eyes of both parties. It decided accordingly that it would be in the fitness of things to elect as President a learned Muslim gentleman. This is not for the first time that Ahmedabad has shown such wisdom. It has done so on many previous occasions. Our President, Mr. Jinnah, is an eminent lawyer; he is not only a member of the Legislature but also the President of the biggest Islamic Association in India.²⁰

Later on, when Jinnah started his struggle for the constitutional rights of the Muslim community, Gandhi and his followers were not ready to accept the Muslim League as a sole representative of the Muslims. On 4 July 1918, Gandhi wrote a letter to Jinnah to convince him the recruit soldiers in the British Army.²¹ This recruitment campaign failed and British Government was disappointed with his attitude.

The prime clash of Jinnah and Gandhi occurred in the Nagpur session of the Congress, 1920. When the open difference of their ideologies ascended and for time being the ideology of Gandhi was prevailed at the audience. Jinnah decided to quit the membership of Congress and left the emotional public to taste the bitter

¹⁷ Allen Hayes Meriam. *Gandhi vs Jinnah: The Debate Over the Partition of India* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1980), p. 44. See also, Syed Abdul Latif, *The Great Leader* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946) p. 32.

¹⁸ Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, XIV, p. 343.

¹⁹ *Bombay Chronicle*, 15-01-1915.

²⁰ Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, XIV, p. 261.

²¹ Jinnah denied this offer and he was not ready to take an active part in this camping. See, D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol.1 (New Delhi: Publication Division, 1952), pp. 230-231.

reality.²² Jinnah opposed his Mass Civil Disobedience on some accurate political grounds. On 24 May 1924, he presided over the session of the Muslim League in Lahore, during his presidential address he explained Gandhi's program as:

Since the commencement of 1923, it was realised and admitted that the Triple Boycott was a failure and that the Mass Civil Disobedience could not undertake successfully in the near future. Bardoli even was declared by Mahatma Gandhi as not ready for Mass Civil Disobedience; and even prior to his prosecution and conviction, Mahatma Gandhi had to resort to what is known as the Bardoli or Constructive Programme.²³

According to Jinnah, the Triple Boycott of law courts, schools and colleges and councils was a weak strategy. After a few days of this declaration, people did not pay much heed to his call and they realised that it was a mistake. In his whole speech, Jinnah used the word 'Mahatma' for Gandhi again and again. This shows that apart from differences and acrimonious experiments he still had had the respect for his old comrade.

Apart from differences in political methodologies Jinnah never disrespects Gandhi. On 16 March 1925, after five years of this incident Jinnah spoke in Legislative Assembly on The Indian Finance Bill. During his debate, he used twice the word "Mahatma" with the name of Gandhi.²⁴ No doubt, the ideological and political differences of both leaders have an unfinished length. But the archival shreds of evidence have a new side of the picture, which shows the reverential relation of both charismatic leaders.

Jinnah and the Parliament of Pakistan on Gandhi's Assassination

On 04 February 1948, Jinnah created a new history to call a condolence session of the Parliament on the tragic assassination of Gandhi. It was momentous that not only Jinnah but also other parliamentarians paid a lavish tribute to Gandhi. The condolence session was open up by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan. He showed a great sense of sorrow during the tragic incident. He revered his leadership, "he was, Sir, undoubtedly one of the greatest men of our time and during the last 30 years he occupied a very prominent place on the stage of

²² Sikander Hayat, *The Charismatic Leader: Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 44.

²³ M. Rafique Afzal, *Selected Speeches and Statements of the Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, 1911-34 and 1947-48*. (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1976), p. 131.

²⁴ M. Rafique Afzal, *Quaid-I-Azam M. A. Jinnah: Speeches in the Legislative Assembly of India, 1924-1930* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1997), pp. 124-125.

Indian politics.”²⁵ Moreover, he said that he was the person who strengthened Congress with his political approaches and his leadership. He believed that his assassination was an irreparable loss to India and he sent his sympathies to the Indian nation. Khwaja Nazimuddin added his remarks of sorrow, “I feel that his death is an irreparable loss to India and Pakistan because he was one of those who was trying his best to bring about good relationships between India and Pakistan.”²⁶ Mian Mumtaz Mohammad Daultana added his tribute, “I hope Sir, that by His martyrdom the two great communities, the Hindus and Muslims, inhabiting the two great Dominions of India and Pakistan, will find friendship, concord, and good-will towards each other.” Sris Chandra Chattopadhyaya²⁷ said that he did not know how the Hindus would be treated by the people of the world on account of the assassination of Gandhi by a Hindu. He continued, “he was indeed a great man and if we really want to show respect to him, it is the duty of every Indian to preach communal harmony and to complete his unfulfilled task.”²⁸ Muhammad Ayub Khuhro on the behalf of Sind said that ‘Gandhiji was undoubtedly one of the greatest men that the world has produced and one of the greatest leaders of his time.’²⁹ Finally, after all, prominent names the president of a condolence session, Jinnah, paid a great tribute to Gandhi as:

I share the expressions of sorrow and grief given by this House and associate myself in the tribute that has been paid to his greatness. I would further add that he died in the discharge of the duty in which he was engaged. He was a man of principles and when he was convinced and when believed that it was his duty, he took it upon his shoulders to perform It and his tragic death occurred in the discharge of his duty. However, much It may be deplored and condemned, it was a noble death, as he died in the discharge of his duty in which he believed. I will convey the message as desired by you, Mr. Prime Minister, in due course.³⁰

Jinnah as a Governor-General issued a ‘condolence statement’³¹ on the same day of Gandhi’s assassination and condemn this shocking act. Both of these great charismatic leaders tried their best for their respective communists.

²⁵ Condolence on the Tragic Death of Mr. Gandhi, *The Constitution Assembly (Legislature) Debates*, I, 23 February, 1948.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ He was from East Bengal and he was on General seat.

²⁸ *The Constitution Assembly (Legislature) Debates*, I, 23 February, 1948.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ In this statement Jinnah condemned as, “I am shocked to learn of the most dastardly attack on the life of Mr. Gandhi, resulting in his death. Whatever our political differences, he was one of the greatest men produced by the Hindu community, and a leader who commanded their universal confidence and respect. I wish to express my deep sorrow, and sincerely sympathies with the great Hindu community and his family in their bereavement at this momentous, historical and critical juncture so soon after the

Each man was 'frail, ill, and the target of fanatics and assassins in his own party; both were destined to die in 1948'.³²

Conclusion

Jinnah and Gandhi were great leaders of India in the twentieth century. They worked together and had no big difference of opinion about the freedom of India. But when Gandhi supported the Non-Cooperation Movement in the Nagpur session of Congress in 1920 Jinnah did not agree with this proposal because he believed that it would lead to violence and he was against agitational politics. Instead, Jinnah intended to adopt the constitutional and peaceful means to achieve complete independence. As the communal tangle between the Hindus and Muslims took a bitter shape Gandhi-Jinnah relations were affected. Jinnah always had great regard for the ideas and approach of Gandhi regarding the independence of India but Jinnah wished him to play an equally important role in bridging the Hindu-Muslim separatism which Gandhi could not fair well. Resultantly, the more Hindu-Muslim relations deteriorated the more Gandhi-Jinnah relations suffered and resulted in the partition of India. It is a million-dollar question to find a satisfactory answer whether their good relations could address the Hindu-Muslim question hence avoid the partition of India? However, the study has shown how these two leaders particularly Mr. Jinnah had profuse regards for Gandhi and offered tribute on the assassination as well. The study may help revisit the roles of legendary leaders with more impartiality and it may help to highlight the positive side of our great personalities which may bring peace and harmony to the region.

birth of freedom for Hindustan and Pakistan. The loss of dominion of India is irreparable, and it will be very difficult to fill the vacuum created by the passing way of such a great man at this moment." See, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: Speeches and Statements as Governor General of Pakistan, 1947-1948 (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Directorate of Films & Publications, 1989).

³² Wolpert, *Gandhi's Passion*, p. 210.