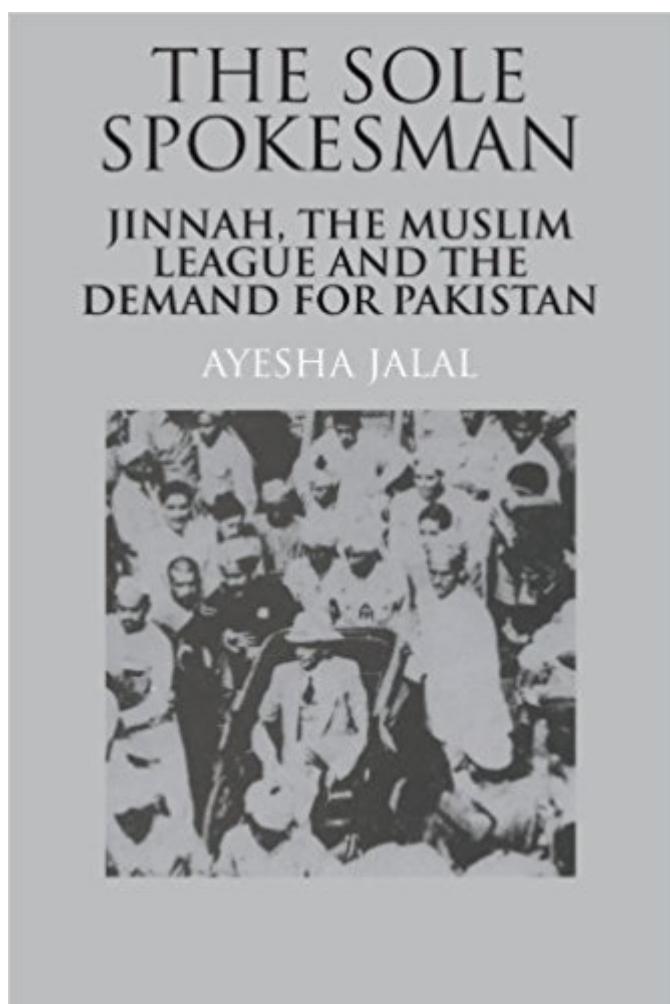


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The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, The Muslim League And The Demand For Pakistan (Cambridge South Asian Studies)



Synopsis

In 1940 the All-India Muslim League orchestrated the demand for independent Muslim states in India. Seven years later Pakistan was created amidst a communal holocaust of unprecedented proportions. Concentrating on the All-India Muslim League and its leader, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, The Sole Spokesman assesses the role of religious communalism and provincialism in shaping the movement for Pakistan.

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Customer Reviews

"At once compelling and closely argued, this is a work no student of modern India and Pakistan can afford to ignore." American Historical Review "Concise, elegantly written, amply documented..."

Pacific Affairs "This work provides a fresh perspective on the demand for Pakistan and its regional variations." Sajida S. Alvi, Religious Studies Review

The demand for "Pakistan" in 1940 led seven years later to the partition of India--in one of the most cataclysmic and violent events in recent history. This study examines the intervening years, identifying the factors that led to the creation of the independent Muslim state in India.

This is one of the most important books in the history of modern India, advancing a major new interpretation of Jinnah's role in the partition of India and Pakistan. It is standard reading in graduate seminars. Ayesha Jalal describes in The Sole Spokesman how Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the secular

and Westernized leader with ambivalent political views, became the “sole spokesman” of India’s Muslims in the years leading up to 1947. Jalal challenges the existing historiography by arguing that Jinnah sought parity and not separation for Muslims in a larger all-India confederation. Jinnah’s oft-cited comment that India needed a “surgical operation,” writes Jalal, “did not mean partition, but rather a notional division of India into two groups before they joined again in a new partnership of equality.” Jinnah’s aim of safeguarding the interests of all India’s Muslims, not only those in the proposed Pakistan, remained fundamental to his goal of achieving parity. In order to achieve this aim, Jinnah casted himself as the “sole spokesman” of India’s Muslims. This, in turn, required that he keep the “Pakistan demand” as unspecific as possible in order to create the unified Muslim voice that Jinnah hoped to achieve. According to Jalal, Jinnah’s “intransigence” must be understood as a tactic employed to

preserve the fragile unity of the Muslim League. For Jinnah to state his maximum demand and to reject anything less allowed the League to rally around a yet-undefined vision of Pakistan. This tactic forced the Congress to face the prospect of settling for a weak center, shared by the League, in the event of a unified Indian government. And it compelled British leaders, who feared a Balkanization of India, to take the League seriously or else face divisions that might undo an independence plan. In the final settlement of 1947, according to Jalal, evidence that Jinnah and the Muslim League desired parity rather than partition finds support in the League’s willingness to sacrifice the “richest plums of Pakistan” in order to achieve equal standing in a unified Indian government. In the event, the deal floundered on Congress’s refusal to join with the League on an all-India level. “This was the decisive reversal,” writes Jalal. “It was the Congress that insisted on partition. It was Jinnah who was against partition.” Jalal’s study stands as a significant revision of the view that partition and communal violence came as a result of Jinnah’s legendary “intransigence.” Much of Jalal’s study, however, relies on inference. As the author makes clear, Jinnah never stated his precise aims indeed, he stated the opposite of what Jalal argues. Nor did Jinnah take advantage of political opportunities when Congress leaders made statements calling for the unity of India. Nevertheless, *The Sole Spokesman* remains a cogently argued and compelling revisionist

study of the partition of India in 1947, deserving of its critical acclaim.

Ayesha Jalal's *The Sole Spokesman* explains the creation of Pakistan in 1947 by analyzing the intentions and political strategy of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Jalal focuses on the unlikelihood of the formation of Pakistan. She argues that Jinnah, its enigmatic founder, never intended to found Pakistan as a separate, sovereign state, but instead used the idea of Pakistan, first articulated in the 1940 Lahore Declaration, as a negotiating tool. Jalal explains Pakistan's creation as a result of political misunderstanding and miscalculation, and points in particular to the opaque process by which Jinnah formulated and implemented strategy. After a humiliating defeat for the Muslim League in India's 1937 Provincial election, Jinnah deployed all means necessary to repair his weak position, both vis-a-vis rival Muslim elites and the Indian National Congress, and focused single-mindedly on establishing himself as the sole spokesman for India's Muslims. He used the rallying cry of Pakistan simply as a tactic to convince all parties that he carried far greater influence than he did. By 1945, Jinnah had established himself as the sole spokesman for India's Muslims, but he lost control over the idea of Pakistan, which the Muslim peoples of the subcontinent embraced to an unforeseen degree. Misunderstandings between the British, who thought Jinnah would not budge in his commitment to Pakistan, and Jinnah, who did not foresee a precipitous British exit from India in 1947, led to a final set of pre-partition mistakes in 1946-47. Jalal's argument takes significant patience and sustained attention, but her account convinces through its careful and thorough presentation of evidence. Jalal paints Jinnah as the only Muslim leader to carefully plot a national, rather than local, strategy. The reader, however, wonders about the extent to which other Muslim leaders, deeply invested in the creation of a Pakistani state, may have possessed their own grand designs, and may have thus backed Jinnah into a corner. Jalal might have given more attention, for example, to the role of religious leaders and the ulema. The Sole Spokesman, though, succeeds in its intent to force radical reevaluation of why and how Pakistan emerged as a sovereign state from most unlikely beginnings.

Ayesha Jalal has delivered a highly impressive piece of work. The research is impeccable and the analysis rigorous. Contrary to most historical accounts of the creation of Pakistan, Ayesha does not engage in rhetoric or political slogans. Instead, her efforts to remain unbiased clearly come across and are admirable. She is a historian par excellence and her talent for writing clearly and lucidly about complex subjects is clearly revealed in this book. A provocative piece of work which might

actually get students of India/ Pakistan interested in a subject which they have always found dull.

You say Moderate and secular Congress :I say : "Mahatma" Gandhi and "Pandit" Nehru? Is this secularism? You say Poisonous fruit of their efforts "A Nuclear Rogue pakistan" I ask you which country detonated the nuclear device first? Gandhi's so called secular India or the Nuclear Rogue Pakistan? Kindly tell me where you acquires such biases... have you even tried to read the book? Have you read about Mr Jinnah? Why is it that people like yourself wish to propagate the same false myths again and again, and not salute people like Ayesha Jalaal who have done an extremely good job in bringing out the facts.. Ayesha Jalaal mentions a very important fact... the Muslim Extremists and fanatics like the Ahrar were actually in alliance with your Mr Gandhi and the "secular Moderate Congress Party". Indeed Gandhi brought all fundamentalists and religious fanatics together regardless of religion caste or creed. Truly secular!

This is a excellent book on the history of Pakistan. Ayesha Jalal has done her home work and has presented the facts in a very logical fashion. I find this book among the few honest assesment on India and Pakistan division.

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