

AN ODE TO QUAID-E-AZAM

*The son of a trading merchant was he
Who went by the name of Mohammad Ali
At sixteen he left home, his kith and kin
For England, where he joined the Lincoln's Inn
The youngest Indian to be called to the bar
For a trader's son, it was a cry too far
Assiduous, devoted, he made his own way
And finally met fame in the courts of Bombay.
But law alone was too small for a scope
Politics he felt had more promise, more hope.
He soon made a name in this field too
As a man of honour records Naidu.
For the national interest he worked from the start
But within this framework, he was a Muslim at heart.
Dedicated, bold, and sincere to the core
He fought for the Muslims on a nationalist floor.
As ambassador of unity he wanted home rule
Any thoughts to the contrary, was not his school.
As time went by it was abundantly clear
That the Congress wanted no power to share.
For the Muslims he saw consequences dire
Out of the frying pan into the fire.
The British must leave of that he was sure
But for the minorities, he had to find a cure.
He drafted safeguards, which at first were agreed
But this was short lived, a Congress misdeed
Upright he was and his rivals knew
That promises made would be carried through*

*His word of honour if once spoken
Was known to all would never be broken.
While he remained steadfast on any agreement
Breaking covenant by others was alarmingly frequent.
It made him bitter, it made him irate
But go back on his word was not his trait.
Reason or logic they were loath to understand
They had majority and hence an upper hand
Concessions to Muslims was not their desire
As that would lessen power over India entire.
Here! Here! They cried, it's for all to see
The All India Congress is the only party
Mr. Jinnah and his League has nothing to do
'With the affairs of India', so said Nehru
He cried for unity but there was no echo
The Congress was riding high, and all were to bow
Rioters were rampant, and Muslims were the prey
The head counts were rising day after day.
Great Gandhi too added to the hurt
When Muslims he said, must quit or convert.
Jinnah fought on but despair was his lot
His pleadings he could see, totaled to naught
Disgusted, frustrated, he called it a day
Gathered his talents and sailed away.
As soon as the Muslims could sense their plight
They sent for Jinnah to lead in their fight.
Homeward he came, the true son of the soil
And tried to find reason in the growing turmoil.
Shortchanged and slighted, but the leader of the League
Forestalled, checkmated, all sham and intrigue*

*His manner throughout had poise and grace
Of duplicity no hint, of deceit no trace.
"Think a hundred times," he would say
Then decide on a course, and hold no sway.
A rule which he followed through thick and thin
A rule by which he made many a win.
He soon could see the futility of it all
As loud and clear came his clarion call
"Muslims are a nation by all canons of the law"
And those who thought different their thinking had a flaw
Regarding the British, he sent a clear note
To verify his uttering, they must take a vote
Thus to the polls went the whole country
Where support for the league was for all to see.
Though the League was established by the poll result
For the Congress it was an affront, an insult
Which widened the gap between the two evermore
Erupting in the shape of riotings galore.
And so with the tension and grimness of things
The mounting distrust and the senseless killings
The growing intrigues, the deceit, and the mess
He cried, I want Pakistan, no more, no less
The British laughed the Hindus mocked the cronies taunted
But he pressed on, determined and undaunted
Till the final hour struck a victory to his cause
A new home for the Muslims, Pakistan it was.
Disjointed, unruly, unsure was the band
Which he led so bravely to the promised land.
Unity, Faith, Discipline, was his call
And like the pied piper, behind him came all.*

*He gathered the crowd, and welded a nation
Some for sacrifice, but most for salvation.
Such was the spirit, and such was the need
And the man behind it was Jinnah indeed.
Humble to the humble, and proud to the proud
Elite and lordly, yet a darling of the crowd
They understood his tongue, nor habit, nor style
But deep down they knew that he had no guile.
The Congress still hoped to inherit the power
Unmindful that coalition was the need of the hour
Forgetting it is always majorities that give
To others the reason and freedom to live
They called him stubborn, unyielding, unbending
But so were all great men in principles defending.
His heart was so clean, his mind so clear
In a logical debate, he had no peer
No Hindu, no Muslim, no Briton could say
That he tried to win in a dubious way
And even his ardent enemies agreed
That he had no need, he was the need
How all the pundits, the prophets had failed
As this one man moved on unassailed.
In times to come, the Hindus may see
That Jinnah was the cause for India to be free.
There never was a man born quite like him
A great human, a great Muslim
But the human in him was greater still
As that is the true bow to Allah's Will.
A fighter he was, a soldier he was not
A man so straight he never could be bought*

*Power, nor riches, nor threats could subdue
His great will, towards a path he felt true.
I say no more, as it's for all to see
The fruits of his deeds, a new country
Achieved through no war, or guns, or coercion
But by sheer dint of will and the power of reason.
Today when I see some talkers complain
My heart is in rue, my soul is in pain
But talkers are just talkers, they do no task
Where are the doers, is plainly what I ask?
Once in a millennium such a man does come
Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Quaid-e-Azam.*

- Written by Hadi Rizvi, Airline Captain, Wing Commander (rtd.) and author of the collection *Space* published by Paramount Books, Karachi. This poem was published in *The News* 14 Aug 1992 & in *Illustrated*, Sept 1997.

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