

M. A. JINNAH: THE FORMATIVE PHASE

PROF. DR. ANNA SUVOROVA
 Department of Asian Literatures,
 Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow
 Email: asuvorova73@gmail.com

Abstract

There are very few statesmen, other than Mohammad Ali Jinnah whose early political activity contrasted so sharply with their later political career. Jinnah began his political career in the Indian National Congress, he was the leader nominated as head of the Committee formed to receive Mahatma Gandhi on his return from South Africa to India 1915. When Jinnah's term as President of the Indian Home Rule League was coming to an end, in 1919, he nominated Mahatma Gandhi to succeed him. At the last stages of British rule, we see Mohammad Ali Jinnah as the Quaid-i-Azam, the Great Leader of Indian Muslims, engaged in a struggle to have a partition of India and form a new state, Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims. To trace such a transformation, it is necessary to see what were the formative influences on such a figure; and how his temperament interacted with political developments, that had step by step led the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity to become the founder of Pakistan.

Keywords: *Sindh Madressa, Lincoln's Inn, Charles Oliphant, John M. MacPherson, Gujrati, Congress.*

Introduction

As for many historical figures, the date of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's birth is the object of controversy. In the registry book of *Sindh Madrassatul Islam*, where he studied in Karachi, his birthday is given as 30 October 1875. However, Jinnah himself always said that he was born on Sunday, 25 December (Christmas Day) 1876.

Jinnah's ancestors belonged to the *Khoja* religious community of Ismaili Nizaris from India, whose spiritual leader is called Aga Khan. The

term *Khoja* derives from the Persian Khvājah a term of honour for a devout person. In India, Khojas mainly lived in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan and spoke Gujarati. After the foundation of Pakistan, most Khojas moved to its capital Karachi.

The Khoja sect and the Khojki script used in its *Ginans* (spiritual hymns and mystical poetry) were created by the outstanding Ismaili theologian and missionary (*da'i*) Pir Sadardin (or, more precisely, Pir Sadruddin, 1290–1367). He Islamized most of the Gujarat Rajputs of the Lohana caste, who made up the first generations of the Khoja community. As a result, the Khoja spiritual heritage contains a lot of Hindu influence, including the notion of the 'Ten Avatars' (*Dashavatara*, Sanskrit: *दशवतार*, *daśāvatāra*). Indian Ismaili Nizaris initially denoted their doctrine by the Sanskrit word *Satpanth* ('The True Path'); the term 'Khojas' began to be used only subsequently.¹ The Khojas often gave their children non-Muslim names such as the names of Jinnah's mother and aunt: Mithibai and Manbai.

Jinnah's family eventually abandoned Ismailism in favour of Twelver Shi'ism.² On the death of Miss Fatima Jinnah on 8 July 1967 when the surviving sister Shirin Jinnah came to Pakistan, an inheritance litigation took place in which questions of Jinnah's sect at the time of his death surfaced. The official funeral was led by the renowned Sunni cleric Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani.

Details of Jinnah's childhood and early education have surfaced in three stages. Hector Bolitho, when writing his official biography of Jinnah, met a number of contemporaries of Jinnah and could have given a credible account. However, Miss Fatima Jinnah, Jinnah's sister refused to co-operate with Bolitho³ and we only know Jinnah's childhood and early life—from her book *My Brother* Karachi 1987. Still later an Indian author B. R. Nanda in his book on Jinnah searched the London records of his journey and education, contesting some incidents mentioned by Bolitho, such as his participating in Dadabhoy Nauroji's election.⁴

The most intimate knowledge comes from Fatima Jinnah, who related that their family stemmed from the small village of Paneli in Gondal princely state in Kathiawar peninsula (Gujarat). From here, Jinnah's father moved with his young wife Mithibai to the growing port city of Karachi, where they rented a two-room flat on the first floor of a three-storey mansion; located on Newnham Road, the house was named 'Wazir Mansion' after its owner.⁵ Today, the building houses the Quaid-

i-Azam Birthplace Museum. (There are oral traditions that say that Jinnah was born in a town called Jhirak, in the Karachi district.)

The couple's first child Mohammad Ali (called by the pet name 'Mamad' at home) was born in this rented flat. There exist a lot of stories and legends about Jinnah's childhood that have little to do with reality. One of them is due, strangely enough, to Sarojini Naidu (1879 –1949) who described Jinnah as 'the eldest son of a rich merchant ... reared in careless affluence'.⁶ Yet a rich merchant would have hardly lived with seven children in a two-room flat in the crowded port district of Kharadar with crying rickshaw drivers and bellowing camels loaded with bales of cotton.

Another legend about the young Jinnah is about a mythical astrologer who stopped Mamad in the street and predicted that he 'would grow up to be a king'.⁷ Indeed, this is not the only story of predictions about Jinnah's bright future. A clairvoyant Irishwoman once came to the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay, where almost all the people mentioned in our story lived from time to time. She talked with Sarojini Naidu about Jinnah and, in particular, asked whether he felt a pain in his arm. For some reason, Jinnah had concealed this ailment from others. When Sarojini asked him about it, referring to the Irishwoman, he became all upset and showered her with questions, 'Why do you wish to know? Who told you? Yes, I do have pain in my arm sometimes.'

When Sarojini Naidu told the Irishwoman about this, she answered 'Yes, I knew. And I know also that this man will someday create a state of his own.'⁸ While it may be quite difficult to understand the connection between a pain in the arm and the creation of a new state, Mrs. Naidu was very impressed with the clairvoyant and later brought her friends and relatives to see her.

Another legend, which stands in direct contradiction to Sarojini Naidu's account of the financial standing of Jinnah's family, says that he was so poor in his childhood that he did his homework under the streetlamp outside, as there were no candles or matches at home.⁹ Yet it is clear that Mohammad Ali was neither the son of a rich man nor a beggar sitting under a streetlamp. As is often the case, the truth lies somewhere in between.

Jinnah's family lived modestly, for, no matter how much his father earned, he avoided unnecessary expenditures on principle. Money was spent only on what was truly needed. Such an attitude to earnings and expenditures passed to the children and especially Mohammad Ali,

who had to support the entire family for some time following his father's bankruptcy, and Fatima, who kept her brother's house in a fairly frugal way. Jinnah's father had a clear knack for commerce and eventually his export-import business became so profitable that he was able to send his elder son to study in England, what only very few of well-to-do Indians could afford.

As Fatima Jinnah writes, 'Although my father had not had regular education at school in English, his diligence and natural aptitude had enabled him to be fairly conversant with the English language. This was then considered as quite an accomplishment, few of the merchants in Karachi being able to converse in English. It is likely that it was his ability to speak English that brought him close to the General Manager of Graham Trading Co., and this proved to be a great blessing for the rapid expansion of his business.'¹⁰

By the time Jinnah was born, his father had begun to make a considerable profit by exporting cloth, cotton, wool, and leather and by importing Manchester textiles and refined sugar. His business went so well that Mithibai could afford the best midwife in Kharadar and frequent visits from the paediatrist.

The fact is that her first child was born weak and emaciated and had disproportionally long arms and a large, elongated head as if he had hydrocephalus. Despite the doctor's assurances that the child was healthy and only has to gain some weight, Mithibai constantly cried from anxiety, fearing for the life of her precious son. The boy, who was given the name Mohammad Ali, became once and for all her darling, although six more children were subsequently born into the family: the daughters Rahmat, Mariam, Shirin, and Fatima and the sons Ahmed Ali and Bande Ali.

As Mamad was often ill, demanding the intercession of higher forces, Mithibai convinced her husband to take the child to the *dargah* of Hasan Pir in Ganod near their native village in order to perform the Islamic rite of *aqiqah*. *Aqiqah* takes place on the seventh day after birth; the child's head is shaved, the hair is weighed, and the weight equivalent in gold or silver coins is handed out as charity (*sadaqah*). On the day of *aqiqah*, the child's name is officially announced, and a sacrifice of two rams for a boy and one for a girl is carried out.

Unlike so many Pakistani politicians (including the former Prime Minister Imran Khan), Jinnah was indifferent to the popular South Asian cult of saints and Sufi spiritual leaders. Nevertheless, it would be strange if no saint had figured in his life at all. Mithibai believed to the end of her

life (and turned out to be right) that her boy had a great future ahead of him, and so the blessing of the local saint Hasan Pir was essential.

As a result, Jinnahbhai Poonja took his wife and their new-born child on a fairly dangerous voyage on a sailboat from Karachi to Veraval, the closest port on Kathiawar. The hired a sailboat, which also carried several other passengers, got caught in a storm on the way and barely made it to land. The overland part of the voyage to Ganod in a cart drawn by buffaloes went much more smoothly.¹¹

Given Hasan Pir's role in Jinnah's biography, we should say a few words about this saint, whose life is typical for South Asian hagiography. A fifteenth century Ismaili missionary from Iran who converted Kathiawari pagans to Islam, Hasan Pir erected his tent next to the village of Paneli, where he preached during the day. At night, he prayed and meditated on the banks of the nearby river Bhadhar. A violent storm broke out one night; a huge wave descended on the bank, sweeping the saint into the river. In the morning, his dead body resurfaced near the village of Ganod, whose inhabitants buried the saint and built him a mausoleum (*mazar*) that eventually turned into a popular and highly visited shrine (*dargah*.)

Most South Asian saints have a precisely delimited sphere of activity – a 'narrow specialization' of sorts. People turn to them with specific needs, and they provide assistance in concrete real-life situations. For example, Hasan Pir is known for his patronage of boys that undergo the rite of *aqiqah* in his *dargah*. This explains the fervent desire of Jinnah's mother, who believed that Saint Hasan Pir would protect her darling child if the latter's *aqiqah* was performed in Ganod.

When Mohammad Ali turned six, his parents hired a tutor who taught him Gujarati (the native language of the Khoja community) and arithmetic. Worrying about her first-born, Mithibai believed that the school was too far from home and that the child would find it tiring to go there. From the start, Mamad disliked learning, and, while he was simply indifferent to reading and writing, he detested arithmetic. This upset his father, who wanted the boy to continue the family business, which required a mastery of calculations.

In 1887, the family received a visit from Jinnahbhai's sister Manbai, who lived in Bombay. She was married to a Khoja merchant by the name of Pirbhai, who was wealthier than Jinnah's father. Mohammad Ali liked his aunt a lot for her buoyant and cheery temperament. Fatima

later recalled that Aunt Manbai would tell the children Arabic fairy tales about Aladdin's magic lamp, the fearful jinn, and beautiful *peris*.

In turn, Manbai developed a fondness for her handsome, well-mannered nephew and convinced her brother to let him go with her to Bombay—the city in which he would later live and work for the greater part of his life. In Bombay, Mamad was sent to school; according to Fatima, it was the Muslim school of *Anjuman-i-Islam*, where Mohammad Ali demonstrated no more interest or assiduousness than at his other schools. At the same time, Mamad's mother missed her son a lot and, six months later, requested that he return home to Karachi, where he was sent to the *Sindh Madrassah*.

Jumping ahead, let us say a few words about Jinnah's attitude towards the Gujarati language, the native tongue of his family. Jinnah knew the language yet used it only occasionally. He had learned Gujarati at *Sindh Madrassatul Islam*, one of the oldest and best traditional schools in Sindh,¹² and could read, write and speak the language. He knew Hindi and Urdu at approximately the same level. However, his true native tongue, of which he had a brilliant, near-perfect command according to many British people, was English—the language of the colonizers.

Strange though it may seem, Jinnah's English speeches had a highly emotional impact on audiences that knew the language poorly or not at all. This was, no doubt, largely due to Jinnah's 'magnetic' personality about which Begum Shaista Ikramullah (1915 – 2000), a Pakistani politician from Bengal, diplomat and author) has written in the *Reader's Digest*

Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan (1905 -1951), also spoke about this quite vividly: 'You must remember that Jinnah, apart from his integrity, which was frightening, was a powerful man when he decided to dominate anyone—an individual or a multitude. I have seen him shake his finger at someone and say, "You are talking nonsense: you do not know what you are talking about." They always subsided into silence. But his real power was over a great audience. Even with them he would use his monocle; put it to his eye, remove it, and then speak. *All this power over a vast crowd was asserted in spite of the barrier of language. He spoke to them in English—but they listened, bewitched*' (Emphasis added --A.S.).¹³

Without a doubt, there were interpreters in the crowd, and many young Indians had some knowledge of English, yet Jinnah's incredible energy and powerful personality could bring his words across any audience, regardless of its language proficiency.

Mahatma Gandhi, possibly wanting to emphasize this shortcoming of Jinnah, publicly urged him on several occasions to improve his knowledge of Gujarati, which was Gandhi's native language, too. On 28 June 1919, Mahatma wrote to Jinnah, who was in London with his young wife at the time, 'I have your promise that you would take up Gujarati and Hindi as quickly as possible. May I then suggest that like Macaulay you learn at least one of these languages on your return voyage?'¹⁴

Once, Gandhi managed to convince Jinnah to speak in Gujarati at the Gujarat Sabha legislative assembly in July 1917. Jinnah walked to the podium and declared, 'Gentlemen, I am speaking today in Gujarati as ordered by Gandhiji. Having now made this first part of my speech in Gujarati, Gentlemen, I shall complete my speech in English.' The audience burst into laughter and applause, while Jinnah imperturbably continued his speech in English for another 40 minutes.¹⁵

There is another curious story from Jinnah's personal life relating to the Gujarati language. In 1916, the Gujarati magazine *Vismi Sadi* ('Twentieth Century') published from Bombay asked Jinnah to fill out a questionnaire. Such questionnaires about the respondent's tastes, personality traits, goals and beliefs had become popular in English salons in the second half of the 19th century. This salon fashion began among the educated class of the Victorian era and took the form of a 'confession album' with a series of questions on each page. This pastime spread throughout Europe and remained popular for decades.

This genre is also sometimes known as the (Marcel) 'Proust Questionnaire', as this great writer's answers, published in the magazine *La Revue Illustrée* in 1892, are highly interesting. An even more famous example of such a questionnaire is the *Confessions* (1865) by Karl Marx. As we can see, the Bombay publishers of a magazine written in a language that was hardly known in Europe kept up with the latest international trends of the time.

Jinnah's questionnaire, filled out in Gujarati by hand and signed by the author, contains only eight fairly banal questions that nevertheless give us a glimpse of Quaid-i-Azam's personality:

1. What quality is admirable in a man? – Independence.
2. What quality is admirable in a woman? – Loyalty.
3. What do you believe is the success of life? – To acquire love of masses.
4. What do you like for recreation? – Horse-riding.

5. Which flower do you like? – Lily.
6. Which writer do you like? – Shakespeare.
7. Which book do you like? – *Monte Cristo*.
8. What is your motto? – Never to be disappointed.¹⁶

It should be said that, with the exception of the answer to the third question about success in life, the ‘Jinnah Questionnaire’ has nothing artificial or unexpected about it. Jinnah was, indeed, totally independent from his earliest years on. All the ladies close to him – his mother, his sister, his wife, and even female friends such as Sarojini Naidu and Jahanara Shahnawaz – were highly loyal to him. And he was truly fond of William Shakespeare, whom he knew extremely well.

At the same time, only a highly ambitious, vain, and arrogant person could consider the love of masses to be the primary token of success. Moreover, there is a certain discrepancy between Jinnah’s favourite author and his favourite book: after all, Shakespeare and Dumas *père* are writers of totally different calibre.

Let us return to Jinnah’s education, in which he hardly took any interest at all and which was also quite unsystematic. He studied at many different places: first at the Muslim school *Anjuman-i-Islam* in Bombay, where he lived with his aunt, and then at the *Sindh Madrassatul Islam* in Karachi, from which he was removed a few years later due to a ‘prolonged absence’.

Jinnah’s parents then sent him to a privileged school, the *Christian Missionary High School*, but he did not stay there for long, either, and returned to the *Sindh Madrassatul Islam*. It remains a mystery how, lacking a serious secondary education, Jinnah managed to enter a British law school after just a few years of preparations on his own.

Mohammad Ali spent the time remaining from school in the street, playing marbles with friends. Apparently, marbles appeared in the present-day territory of Pakistan during the Indus Civilisation. Various stone marbles have been found by archaeologists at Mohenjo-Daro. One day, Mohammad Ali, who was the leader of the street company, said to the other boys, ‘Don’t play marbles in the dust; it spoils your clothes and dirties your hands. We must stand up and play cricket.’ His friends obediently followed him from dusty Newnham Road to a large field. Jinnah had a bat of his own and showed the others how to use it and how to set up vertical stumps on the field. When he went to England a year later, he left his bat to his friend Nanji Jafar and told him to teach the whole company to play cricket in his absence.¹⁷

Still, the young Jinnah's biggest passion was horses and horse riding. By 1890, Jinnahbhai Poonja's business was going so well that he managed to acquire his own 'stables' and several 'handsome carriages'.¹⁸ The young Jinnah spent his time in these stables instead of studying arithmetic. However, despite his son's lack of success in school, Mithibai continued to say, 'You wait. My Mohammad Ali will do well, and many people will be jealous of him.'¹⁹

In an attempt to change Mamad's attitude to school, his father told him, 'You see, my boy, there are only two ways of learning in life. One is to trust the wisdom of your elders and their superior knowledge; to accept their advice; and to do exactly as they suggest. The other way is to go your own way and to learn by making mistakes—to learn by hard knocks and kicks in life.'²⁰ The second approach was fully in keeping with the temperament of the young Jinnah, who listened to his father's advice attentively and never forgot it.

When Mohammad Ali turned fifteen, his father began to think in earnest about his future. Jinnah's attitude to learning changed completely by this time. As Fatima writes, 'He wanted to make up for the lost time, as boys of his age and even younger than him had gone ahead of him. He took to his lessons with a vengeance, studying into the late hours of the night at home.'²¹

Nevertheless, the family's financial status was not good enough to send Mohammad Ali to the university. Jinnahbhai also wanted his son to become his successor in business rather than a student-intellectual. At this time, the first miracle took place in Jinnah's life (not counting the blessing of the Ganod saint).

Sir Frederick Leigh Croft, general manager of Douglas Graham Trading and Co., took a liking to Mamad – possibly due to the latter's striking appearance and love for horse-riding, a rare passion for a boy of his social background, and proposed to send him on an apprenticeship to the company's head office in London for three years.

In so doing, Sir Frederick, a childless bachelor about whom little is known except for the fact that he was 'something of a dandy, with a freshly picked carnation in his buttonhole each morning'²² seems to have divined the incredible future in store for the skinny Indian teenager.

After carefully calculating how much his son's study abroad would cost and weighing all the 'pros' and 'cons', Jinnahbhai Poonja decided that leaving his business to a successor with a British degree in

commerce would fully justify the expenditures. Nevertheless, his consent did not settle the matter altogether. When Mithibai found out about her husband's plans to send Mamad away for three whole years, she nearly lost her mind from grief. For her, separation from her beloved son was tantamount to death. She cried for days on end, begging her husband and son to change their plans, yet they remained resolute.

Finally, Mithibai decided to make a condition of her own. She said, 'England is a dangerous country to send an unmarried young man to, particularly a young man who is as handsome as Mamad. He might get married to an English girl, and that would be a tragedy for the family.'²³ in other words, she was willing to let her son go abroad only if he got married beforehand.

A suitable bride was immediately found: Emibai, a merchant's daughter several years younger than Mamad who lived in the family's native village of Paneli and belonged to the Khoja community. This was apparently the only time that Jinnah allowed others to take such an important decision for him. Yet he loved his mother and did not want to hurt her—all the more so as his mother had convinced herself and others that she would not live to see the return of her beloved son.

Preparing to go to his own wedding in Paneli, Jinnah said farewell to *Sindh Madrassatul Islam*, about which a record remains in the school annals: 'Mohammad Ali Jinnahbhai left school to go to Cutch on account of marriage'. He nostalgically recalled this school in his first speech as Governor General on 9 August 1947: 'Yes, I am Karachi-born, and it was on the sands of Karachi that I played marbles in my boyhood. I was schooled at Karachi.'²⁴

In his will, Jinnah left major sums to three educational institutions: his alma mater *Sindh Madrassatul Islam*, Aligarh Muslim University (India), and Islamia College (Peshawar). Today, *Sindh Madrassatul Islam* is a major university.²⁵

As the inhabitants of Paneli believed that a millionaire had arrived from Karachi to marry his son, Jinnah's father decided not to disappoint them. He brought gifts for all his relatives, friends, and other villagers. A box of fireworks arrived from Karachi, and the quiet and sleepy Paneli came to life with explosions and lights of different colours. Professional drummers from Gondal walked at the head of the wedding procession that slowly moved with gifts and jewellery towards the bride's house. Women sang traditional wedding songs and scattered rice. The wedding receptions and celebrations lasted for a whole week, with all the

villagers taking part²⁶ wrapped from head to toe in streaming floral garlands connected by invisible threads, Jinnah proceeded to the house of his future father-in-law, where the 14-year-old Emibai was waiting for him in a luxurious wedding dress. Her face and hands were coloured with henna and sprinkled with gold dust. As Jinnah never said anything about his first marriage, we do not know whether he experienced any feelings towards his bride. Soon after the wedding, he left for London and never saw her again; Emibai having died long before his return to India.

Jinnah's biographers present different accounts of the time and circumstances of her death. Whereas Fatima Jinnah and G. Allana in *M.A. Jinnah Story of a Nation* (Lahore, 1967) write that Emibai died in Karachi while Jinnah was studying in London, the scholar Rizwan Ahmad states that Emibai perished from cholera in Bombay where she was living with her husband's father and sister in the Khoja Mohalla district.

Jinnah himself had purportedly returned from England to Bombay by this time yet chose to stay at the Apollo Hotel rather than with his family.²⁷ Upon Mohammad Ali's return to India, his father demanded that he take a new wife, yet Jinnah refused, saying that he had taken a vow not to marry again.²⁸ He kept this vow for almost 22 years.

Nevertheless, one thing is certain: in January 1893, Mohammad Ali left for England on a ship of the Pacific and Orient Company. Three weeks later, he came ashore at Southampton and took the train to London. In the Graham Company's office in the City of London, Jinnah was given accounting books to copy. He could not imagine more boring work. And the new surroundings, the cold and humid climate, the stifling London fog, and the insipid food gave him the blues.

While life in London seemed strange and baffling to him at first, its oddities subsequently became the subject of anecdotes that Jinnah recounted to guests with his characteristic dry humour. One of these tales, perhaps on account of its similarity to a story by Jerome K. Jerome, has become known all over the world.

No one had warned Jinnah that the British put hot water bottles into their beds to warm them up in winter. During his first night at the hotel, Jinnah accidentally overturned such a bottle in the darkness. Its lid opened, and hot water began to flow out. For a young man who had grown up in the tropics, the situation was all too clear: in the dark, he had accidentally squashed an animal lying in his bed, making it bleed. 'I have

killed it,' Jinnah kept screaming until the hotel owner came to his room with a lamp and showed him what had happened.²⁹

'I was young and lonely. Far from home... Except for some employees at Graham's, I did not know a soul, and the immensity of London as a city weighed heavily on my solitary life... But I soon got settled to life in London, and I began to like it before long.'³⁰ Subsequently, he fell in love with the city: he visited it on numerous occasions for business and pleasure, lived there for years on end, and even considered moving there forever.

On the whole, it is easy to understand why Jinnah grew so fond of London life. Clearly, he shared many of the basic traits of the 'insular' British mentality: respect of privacy and physical and psychological distance, self-composure bordering upon imperturbability, thriftiness, punctuality, and a specific sense of humour. Many of these qualities matched his nature and coincided with his personal traits.

'Paradoxically,' writes Akbar Ahmed, 'Jinnah's behaviour reflected as much Anglo-Indian sociology as Islamic theology. His thriftiness to the point of being parsimonious, his punctuality, his integrity, his bluntness, his refusal to countenance *sifarish* (recommendations) were alien to South Asian society. Yet these were the values he had absorbed in Britain. He later attempted to weld his understanding of Islam to them. His first two speeches in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1947 reflect some of the ideas of a Western liberal society and his attempts to find more than an echo of them in Islamic history from the time of the Holy Prophet. Jinnah was attempting a synthesis.'³¹

London not only altered Jinnah's name and wardrobe but also his habits, interests, and activities. The first British habit that Mohammad Ali had acquired once and for all was reading newspapers during breakfast in the morning. Together with reading newspapers, he developed a passionate interest for politics. Jinnah began to attend the visitors' gallery in Westminster to listen to political debates. These new interests were totally incompatible with his routine apprentice work at the Douglas Graham Trading Company, and, only a few months after arriving in London, Mohammad Ali applied for membership in Lincoln's Inn. Another British habit of his was to shake his finger at his interlocutor while saying, 'My dear fellow, you do not understand.'³² Jinnah would use this gesture and form of address to the end of his life.

Jinnah wrote a letter back home about his decision to abandon a business career. His father flew into a rage and demanded that the young man return home at once. Nevertheless, Jinnah assured him that he would find a job to become financially independent and that, in any event, he would earn a lot more money in Karachi as a barrister than as a businessman.

Jinnah took a simplified form of entrance examinations: preliminary exams called the 'Little Go'.³³ He was also exempted from the Latin exam, albeit it is difficult to imagine a lawyer without a knowledge of Latin. To become a full-fledged barrister, Jinnah had to become a member of one of London's four legal societies or Inns of Court: Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn, Middle Temple, and Inner Temple. Their buildings continue to occupy a vast territory at the junction of the City of London, the City of Westminster, and Holborn.

The impressive list of people who graduated from Lincoln's Inn includes Thomas More, William Pitt, and two of the greatest British prime ministers – Disraeli and Gladstone, both of whom studied at the institution without completing it. Jinnah's law education was basically modelled upon the medieval system of guild apprenticeship that had been adopted by Lincoln's Inn at the time of its establishment in the second half of the 14th century.

Students had originally lived in the complex's sombre buildings. However, after their numbers exceeded the capacity of Lincoln's Inn, the tradition of cohabitation became purely symbolic; all students had to dine together in the Great Hall at least three times. The informal atmosphere of these dinners, where young barristers could learn from the experience of elder colleagues, was considered to be an important part of legal education.

Jinnah's class belonged to the old school, i.e., its students were young gentlemen who were judged fit for the profession if they were able to learn the professional jargon, dress properly, and show good table manners.³⁴

Subsequently, Jinnah mentioned on several occasions that he had chosen Lincoln's Inn because the Prophet Muhammad figured on the list of great legislators inscribed above the Inn's main entrance. Nevertheless, Stanley Wolpert and Akbar Ahmed categorically state that no such list ever existed above the entrance to the Inn.

‘What Jinnah recalled seeing, however, was G. F. Watt’s fresco in Lincoln’s New Hall called “The Law Givers”, depicting the Prophet with Moses, Jesus, and other great spiritual leaders of civilization’³⁵ A. Ahmed adds that, on the fresco, the Prophet was depicted in green clothes and a green turban.³⁶

It should be said that Muslims consider any depiction of the Prophet to be a blasphemy subject to severe punishment or even death. Thus, Jinnah could not tell his Muslim audience that his choice of a place of study had been influenced by an *image* of the Prophet. His memory obligingly effaced this prohibited *image* and replaced it by the simple *name* of the Prophet that was purportedly inscribed over the entrance.

We know little about Jinnah’s student days except for his passion for theatre. Nevertheless, a story that he recounted himself shows that he did not entirely abstain from simple and quite crude student pastimes. Jinnah was once asked how he managed to avoid imprisonment during the struggle for Indian independence. After all, virtually all Congress leaders had found themselves behind bars at one point or another.

‘Oh, I also have had my friction with the police,’ replied Jinnah. ‘It was on Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race night, when I was a student in London. I was with two friends, and we were caught up with a crowd of undergraduates. We found a hand cart in a side street, so we pushed each other up and down the roadway, until we were arrested and taken off to the police station. But I am afraid we were not imprisoned: we were let off with a caution.’³⁷

Studying law, Jinnah worked hard to expand his knowledge and interests. He spent a lot of time in the British Library. On Sunday mornings, he went to the famous Hyde Park Corner, where street orators presented their outlandish projects to crowds. He was a regular visitor to the House of Commons, where he listened enthusiastically to such outstanding statesmen as Gladstone, Lord Morley, Joseph Chamberlain, and Balfour. Here he appreciated for the first time the power of parliamentary eloquence, which he would subsequently use to his great advantage.

Still, the most important result of Jinnah’s perusal of newspapers, frequent visits to the House of Commons, and even interest in street orators in Hyde Park was probably his adoption of political views that were progressive for the time. More precisely, he became familiar with political views that corresponded to his idea of a just world order.

Jinnah later recalled, 'Fortune smiled on me, and I happened to meet several important English Liberals with whose help I came to understand the doctrine of Liberalism. The Liberalism of Lord Morley was then in full sway. I grasped that Liberalism, which became part of my life and thrilled me very much.'³⁸

Still, Jinnah's lack of a traditional university education undoubtedly left a mark on his personality. This circumstance helped him to resist the temptation of art, literature, and even history. He rarely focused on the past, while the habits that he acquired in London were limited to attending lectures, the House of Commons, the British Library, and Hyde Park. It did not even occur to him to visit the National Gallery on the way. 'It seems a pity that so fine an intelligence should have denied itself the hall-mark of a university education,' wrote Sarojini Naidu.³⁹

While he was still a student, Jinnah experienced the first and, possibly, greatest loss of his life: his mother Mithibai died in childbirth. Jinnah cried for days on end, staying in his room and abstaining from food. He was totally alone without any relatives or friends with whom he could share his grief. He was particularly tormented by the fact that his mother's presentiment had proven right: she did not live to see him again.

Inevitably, he recalled another prophecy of hers: the great future in store for him. It may well be that the sudden death of his mother, whom he loved most of all in the world, and the eternal separation that she had predicted made him reconsider the words that she had constantly repeated from his childhood on: 'My son will do well.' After becoming convinced of his high calling, he subconsciously lived and behaved in such a way as to make his mother's prophecy come true.

Mithibai's death put an end to the family's established lifestyle and turned Jinnah bhai into an elderly widower with six orphans of different age, including the new-born Bande Ali. At the same time, Jinnah's father began to suffer major losses in his business activities. The stables, horses, carriages and other attributes of 'affluence' had to be quickly sold to cover the losses.

Jinnah got a letter from his father asking him to return home at once to help save the family business from bankruptcy, yet Mohammad Ali firmly refused to leave London prematurely and assured his father that he would solve the family's financial problems after finishing his studies and finding work as a barrister in India.

Altogether, Jinnah spent about four years in London. In May 1896, he was awarded the title of Barrister-at-Law with the right to appear in court. This allowed him to enter the bar of any court in any city of British India.

Jinnah decided not to return to his native Karachi, which was now associated for him with the death of his mother and wife, the bankruptcy of his father, and other tribulations. Instead, he opted for Bombay, not yet knowing that it would become the city of his successful legal practice, fulgurant political career, and life's love.

Nevertheless, his first three years in Bombay were quite difficult. He had to make a name for himself in the professional sphere, earn a good reputation at the bar, and attract clients—in a word, to find his place under the sun. As a barrister of the Bombay High Court, wrote Fatima Jinnah, he went 'round the courts daily, as if it were a religious routine, and . . . return[ed] to his cramped-up room in the Apollo Hotel in the evening without having earned a single rupee for months. But when the irksome months lengthened into three agonising years, he felt really miserable. . . . Disappointed and frustrated, he showed a stiff chin to the world outside, but within his heart there gnawed the rancour of an unsatisfied yearning.'⁴⁰

It should be said that, when he began his legal practice, Jinnah was the only Muslim barrister in Bombay. At the time, this profession was dominated by Europeans, Parsees and Hindus. Despite his youth, Mohammad Ali led a fairly monotonous life, poring over court cases day and night. One of his older colleagues later recalled in an interview given to H. Bolitho: 'I can see him now; slim as a reed, always frowning, always in a hurry. There was never a whisper of gossip about his private habits. He was a hard-working, celibate, and not very gracious young man. Much too serious to attract friends. A figure like that invites criticism, especially in the lazy East, where we find it easier to forgive a man for his faults than for his virtues.'⁴¹

Yet, as on numerous other occasions, 'fortune smiled on Jinnah' and radically changed his life. John Molesworth MacPherson, the Advocate-General of Bombay, took a liking to the young barrister and invited him to work in his chamber. This was essentially a repetition of the story with Frederick Croft, thanks to whom Jinnah had managed to leave Karachi for London.

In both cases, Mohammad Ali evoked the sympathy of influential people whom he hardly knew and who brought him to a higher social and

professional level. After working with MacPherson for a few months, Jinnah got the position of Municipal Magistrate of Bombay, and his career ascended ever after.

When Charles Ollivant of the Bombay High Court offered Jinnah a permanent position with a salary of 1,500 rupees a month, he refused, saying that he would soon earn as much a day. And he turned out to be right. At one point, Jinnah's earnings surpassed the wages of all other Bombay barristers. In the early 1930s, he earned about 40,000 rupees a month—a fortune at the time.⁴²

Even Jinnah's opponents such as M.K. Gandhi considered him to be one of the best barristers in the Subcontinent who was fully entitled to charge high fees. Moreover, Jinnah was skilful at placing money into real estate, and his houses in London, Bombay, and New Delhi were good investments. In short, he successfully solved the dilemma faced by many people who tried to resist British colonialism yet were obliged to make compromises.

Jinnah managed to build a 'financial cushion' that assured his independence—in particular, with respect to the British administration. He could permit himself to say the most blatant and unpleasant truth to British officials of any rank, albeit he always took care not to violate the law in the process.

It is extremely important that Jinnah had earned his wealth with his own hard work. He did not exploit peasants, unlike *zamindar* land owners, receive 'under the table' profits from secret deals unlike corrupt politicians, accept the financial support of British authorities as a bribe for going against his conscience, or inherit 'old money' unlike the carefree scions of Indian rajahs and nawabs. He had legitimately earned all his property thanks to his outstanding abilities as a barrister.

Just as he had promised his father earlier, Jinnah assumed financial responsibility for his brother and sisters. The family moved from Karachi to Bombay, settling in a small house in the Khoja Mohalla neighbourhood. Jinnah visited them from time to time, yet he was on close terms only with his youngest sister Fatima. By 1900, Jinnahbhai Poonja had moved to the Bombay coast of Ratnagiri, where he spent the few remaining years of his life. He apparently did not see his elder son often yet nevertheless understood that his late wife had been right in saying that the boy would 'do well'.

After his father died in 1902, Jinnah's main problem was marrying off his sisters. The eldest of them, Rahmat, was already 19—an age at which most women of her social background already had several children. Using his business ties, Jinnah managed to marry her off to a well-to-do widower from Calcutta. The main problem was, as always, religion: the groom was a Sunni Khoja rather than a Shi'ite Khoja like Jinnah's family. This was a different community, and Rahmat's marriage could have also created problems for her sisters.

Nevertheless, Jinnah had correctly reasoned that his success as a barrister and his good financial status would silence the discontented members of his community. Indeed, the wedding of his sister Mariam, who also married into the Pirbhoi family of prosperous Sunni Khoja merchants, evoked no difficulties at all.

Now only the youngest siblings remained on Jinnah's hands. He sent his brother Ahmad Ali to the *Anjuman Islamia* boarding school. The two brothers would hardly keep in touch later: Jinnah did not refuse his brother financial assistance yet received him only in his office without inviting him over to his home. The 14-year-old Shirin was old enough to marry, yet, while the arrangements for the wedding were being made, she lived with Jinnah, which evidently was not to his liking. Before long, however, Shirin married the well-to-do Bombay merchant Karrimbhoi.

There remained only Jinnah's youngest sister Fatima, who, far from inconveniencing him, became his eternal Sunday companion while she was still a schoolgirl. There was even a myth in the family about Fatima that, as a child, she had sworn on the Quran to stay single and devote her life to her brother.

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