

## Obituary

### Ahmad Saeed

(21 November 1942 - 13 January 2021)

Professor Ahmad Saeed was born on 21 November 1942 and died on 13 January 2021

He had a long and distinguished academic career. He served as Professor and Chairman of the Department of History, Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College from 1967 to 1988. Thereafter, his services were acquired, in the same capacity by the Islamia College, Lahore from 1989 to 1993. He became legendary as his presence was by itself a support to knowledge and academic excellence. He was a prodigious author with seventeen Urdu and eight English language works to his credit.

I was privileged to meet him only once during the twenty-fourth Pakistan History Conference on 15 April 2014, at the Punjab University but before and after that meeting, we had corresponded extensively. These days no morning passes without bringing to survivors the news that yet another stalwart has left us. Yet his death comes not only as an academic but as a personal loss.

Of the twenty five works mentioned, two edited works and two written works stand out. The first is *Muslim India (1857-1947) A Biographical Dictionary*, Lahore, Institute of Historical Research, 1997. Ahmad Saeed, thus achieved individually a project which should have been achieved by a whole institute. The other is *Writings of the Quaid-i-Azam*, Lahore, Nazaria-i-Pakistan Trust, 2014. This volume contains 20 essays most early speeches not available in volume form. M. A. Jinnah's early writings are contained in a volume edited by Sarojini Naidu published from Madras, Ganesh, 1918, but Ahmad Saeed has included writings from 1919 to 1944 also. They include Quaid-i-Azam's considered views on the Khilafat Movement, underlining how he held the British to account for refusing to honor their undertaking to Indian Muslims at the advent of World War I; an article on Lord Birkenhead, The Secretary of State's position on the Constitution after Congress and Muslim League had

come together over the Delhi Muslim Proposals 1927 and an essay preceding the Lahore Resolution. These writings help us greatly in understanding the forces at work, and the political response preceding Independence.

Of his written work is *Do Qaumi Nazariya Munh Bolte Haqaiq*, Lahore, Nazaria-i-Pakistan Trust, 2019. This is a very recent book and had come after demands for removing the Two Nation Theory from the History and Pakistan Studies syllabus had been made by some influential scholars. Ahmad Saeed gave on the ground instances of how communal relations were conducted. We have repeatedly stressed that theory does not validate experience, rather experience validates theory and Ahmad Saeed's book is in the same vein. The other is *Trek to Pakistan* re-issued in 2019, by Lahore, Pakistan Institute of Historical Research. Here Ahmad Saeed had the collaboration of Khwaja Mansur Sarwar, It shall be difficult to find a book containing a more detailed account of the Pakistan Movement and no doubt, he had the feedback of his students, many of them teachers themselves before approaching such a vital and contested theme of our national history

In his last but undated letter speaking of 2020 events he said that he was writing a book *Quaid-i-Azam Lahore Mein* and *Roznama Zamindar Maqalat-i-Iftatahiya aur Shuzrat* which contain editorials dating from 1924 to 1933. This was to be in 6 volumes of 600 pages each. Ahmad Saeed was a crusader, and it shall be a loss to history if these volumes, incomplete though they may be are not retrieved. May God reward his efforts.

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