

KASHMIR: Nearest to his heart

Jinnah first visited Kashmir in 1927

HISTORY

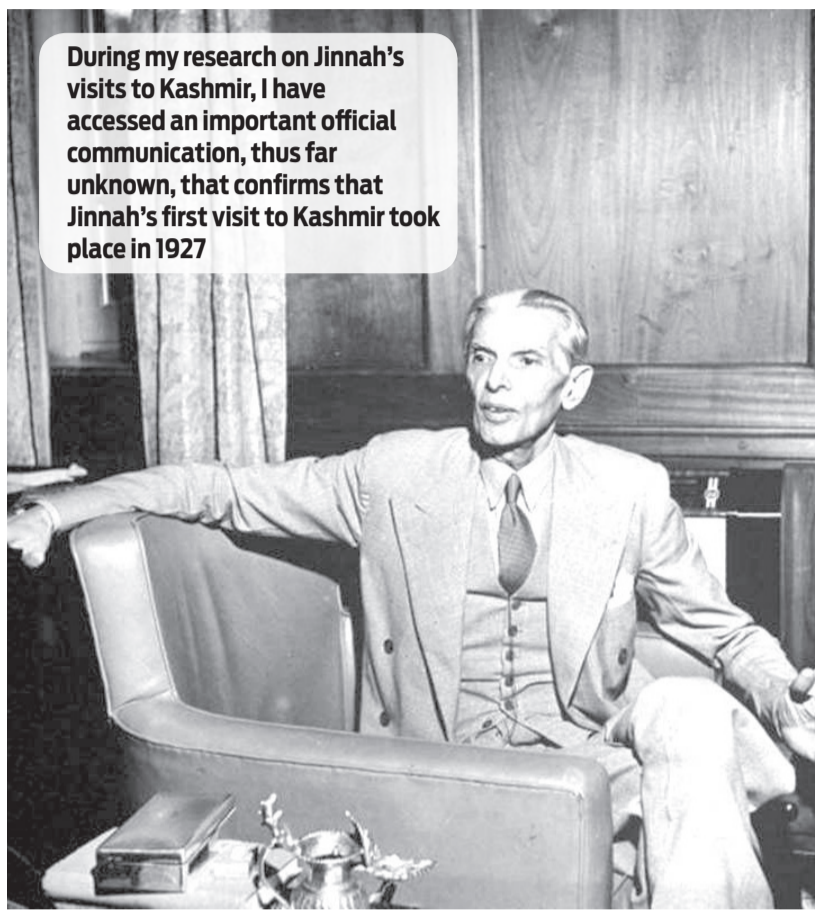
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Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited hill stations in summers despite his overwhelming pre-occupation with politics. Kashmir is one such place which drew him into its lap more than once. Emotionally, Kashmir remained nearest to his heart. During the last few days of his life, as his sister recalled in an interview on his first death anniversary, "the only news which interested him whether on the Radio or in the papers was regarding Kashmir." According to Fatima Jinnah, her brother died with Kashmir as his constant care.

Two of his visits are well documented but did Quaid-i-Azam visit Kashmir only twice?

The two visits undertaken by Jinnah in 1936 and 1944 are entrenched in Kashmir's public memory. One, when he successfully fought an intricate case relating to a sensitive matter of the Muslim Personal Law and the other, when he was given rousing reception at Srinagar separately by the National Conference and the Muslim Conference.

Jinnah had been to Kashmir prior to these two widely known visits but till date the month or the year of his first visit has remained unknown. His Private Secretary, K H Khurshid, had written about the Quaid's three visits to Kashmir but was not able to locate the month or the year of the first visit. Similarly, Justice Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, author of 'Kashmiris Fight for Freedom', has alluded to a third visit, which is chronologically the first one, in some detail but, in the absence of any material evidence, was forced to conclude that this could have taken place before the death of Jinnah's wife in 1929.



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Saraf assumed that the year of the visit could be between 1925 and 1928. It was after, what he describes, going through Jinnah's personal papers and conducting "pains-taking research in Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam" that he could ascertain that the Quaid had visited Kashmir before his much known

visits in 1936 and 1944 - albeit without identifying the exact month or year.

It looks somewhat intriguing that no detail, except a sketchy account of the travel in to the Valley and a trip to Pahalgam, is available about the first visit of the founder of Pakistan to Kashmir, despite he being an inescapable link to its modern history. His life has

been thoroughly written about by biographers, scholars and contemporaries who had worked with him or had known him. But, strangely, not much light is thrown on his first visit to Kashmir nor has the exact year of his visit been located, notwithstanding the fact that by mid-1920s, Jinnah was already a very prominent political figure of India.

Saraf's assumption that Jinnah, accompanied by his wife, Rattanbai Petit or Ruttie as she was fondly known, visited Kashmir "perhaps between 1925 and 1928" is correct in relation to its broader time reference but it does not help the reader to locate the exact year in which the famous couple arrived in Kashmir. His failure to place the year of the visit aside, Saraf has given some account of Jinnah's departure for Kashmir from Rawalpindi where he had arrived from Bombay by the Frontier Mail at 3.45 p.m. Ruttie had preceded him by about two weeks. From Rawalpindi, Jinnah traveled in a Buick chauffeured by its owner, Agha Ghulam Jilani. The travel to Srinagar during which Jinnah was engrossed in a book was punctuated only by a stopover at Domel for luggage check at the Custom Post and at Gahri Dupatta for having lunch.

On his arrival in Srinagar, Jinnah stayed with Pestonjis, a Parsi family that hailed from Bombay and owned a building on The Bund situated on the right bank of the Jhelum. Next morning, the Jinnahs took another car to Pahalgam. The owner of the Buick that brought Jinnah to Kashmir had seen them in Pahalgam a few days later when he himself went there for a sojourn. He had seen Mrs. Jinnah wearing a light coloured sari and carrying a tin of 555 cigarettes.

No material is available about the period of stay of the Jinnahs in Kashmir or to whom they met during their stay in the Valley. There is, however,

an incident related to this visit that, on one hand, shows that the couple had also stayed in a houseboat in Srinagar and, on the other, speaks about Jinnah's love for his young wife who came from a very rich Parsi family and had converted to Islam against the wishes of her father. She lived a luxurious life and he gladly paid all her bills. Kanji Dwarkadas, author of 'Ruttie Jinnah: The Story of a Great Friendship' writes that during their stay in Kashmir Ruttie spent Rs 50,000 on refurbishing the houseboat and Jinnah paid for it.

The Jinnahs had actually arrived in Kashmir on a private visit in May 1927, two years before Ruttie died. The visit appeared to have been a patch up attempt by the couple that despite being very fond of each other had separated and were now trying to reconcile their differences. It was summertime in the Valley which was then ruled by Hari Singh who had succeeded his uncle, Pratap Singh, only two years back.

During my research on Jinnah's visits to Kashmir, I have accessed an important official communication, thus far unknown, that confirms that Jinnah's first visit to Kashmir took place in 1927. The communication from the Maharaja's Minister-in-Waiting to the Minister for Police and Public Works, G. E. C. Wakfield, dated 18th May 1927, shows that Jinnah was in Kashmir for at least six weeks. The significant document, besides setting at rest the speculation about the year of Jinnah's first visit to the Valley, brings to light that Maharaja Hari Singh, then at Jammu, was oblivious of the VIP arrival in his country. Surprisingly, he had been kept in the dark by his administration about the high profile visit. His indignation was profound as he had come to know about it only through a report published in a Lahore based newspaper,

the Pratap, on 11th May 1927. The report mentioned Jinnah having gone to Kashmir on one and a half month sojourn.

The Minister's communication demanded of Mr. Wakfield to explain why the Maharaja Bahadur was not informed about the visit.

The letter reads: "The Pratap of 11th May 1927 contains an article to the effect that Mr. Jinnah has gone to Kashmir for a period of six weeks. Will you kindly let me know, for the information of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur, if this is a fact, and if so, why this was not reported by the Police?"

The document is of huge interest and value for researchers working on Jinnah and Kashmir as it conclusively establishes the year and month of his first visit to Kashmir.

There is no evidence of Jinnah taking any interest in Kashmir politics during his first visit even as the official website of 'Azad Kashmir Government' claims that he felt concerned at the appalling condition of the Kashmiris at that time too. The visit, it may be borne in mind was private in nature and appeared a patch-up effort by the estranged couple.

The 1927 visit was followed by Quaid-i-Azam with two other visits. On both occasions he was accompanied by his sister, Fatima Jinnah. His desire to visit Kashmir yet again in 1947 was not met with favourable response from the Kashmir Darbar. According to Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, Quaid-i-Azam wanted to go to Kashmir about the middle of September hoping to have a friendly talk with the Maharaja, but the latter did not want him to come. On November 1, 1947, he offered Lord Mountbatten a joint visit "at once" to Srinagar to solve the Kashmir problem "once and for ever" but India did not agree to the proposed visit.

Internal Displacement in South Asia

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CONCERN

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South Asia is one of the most conflict-prone regions in the world and internal displacement is a fact of life here. Discrimination against minorities, religious and ethnic hatred, state repression, demands for self-determination, famines, floods and ill-conceived development projects have contributed to massive internal displacement in South Asia. For the most part victims are unable to cross borders and are forced to live within a regime that created the occasion for their displacement in the first place.

All South Asian states consider internal displacement to be an internal matter. National policies emphasise welfare and do not recognise the rights of internally displaced people. There is little acknowledgement that the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are citizens - with the concomitant entitlements that citizenship brings. No state in South Asia recognises land as a fundamental right, thus making it very easy to displace people. Policies which were intended to be pro-poor today work in favour of the rich and the powerful.

Policymakers and the general public only became aware of the extent of internal displacement in South Asia in the 1990s. As internal displacement accelerated, governments across South Asia established National Human Rights Commissions but their mandates were limited. Impetus to address IDP issues was provided by a two-year research project - supported by Robert Cohen and the Brookings Project on Internal Displacement - which helped regional scholars and activists to expand their knowledge of displacement in order to promote better policies and programmes for vulnerable displaced groups. Research drew attention to the increased vulnerabilities of displaced communities, especially religious and ethnic minorities, lower caste people, women and children. It became clear that very few people could access any form of compensation or other assistance. Women were particularly marginalised, finding it virtually impossible to access resettlement aid in their own names.



Significant numbers of Indians have also been displaced by conflict. It is very difficult to estimate the total number of IDPs in India as there is no central Government agency responsible for monitoring the numbers of people displaced and returning, and humanitarian and human rights agencies have limited access to them. The numbers on IDPs are based on those living in camps and registered there, and it is not known how many people live in displacement outside of camps. A conservative estimate of the total number of people displaced by conflict and violence would be at least 650,000, as of August 2010 (Sibaji Pratim Basu, 'The Other' in the 'Self': The IDPs in India). In 2009 and during the first half of 2010, at least 650,000 people in Central India (Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal), India's North-east (Assam, Mizoram-Tripura and Manipur), Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa and Gujarat were living in displacement owing to armed conflict and ethnic or communal violence. Besides, a large and unknown number of displaced people were living in Indian cities.

Large-scale involuntary internal displacement has almost been the norm in Pakistan throughout the last decade. Between April and July 2009, 2.7 million people were internally displaced in Pakistan in the context of military operations against militants. It was the largest internal displacement of population in the country's history until then. Pakistan faced unprecedented internal displacement once again in the summer of 2010 as floodwaters cov-

ered almost a fifth of the country.

Currently, Pakistan is facing unprecedented rise of militancy and violence. To counter this threat, the Government of Pakistan launched operation Zarb-e-Azb on 15th June 2014. It is a joint-military offensive involving the Islamic Republic of Pakistan against armed insurgent groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Afghan militant factions such as the Haqqani network. As per the official reports some 566,000 people were displaced in the last twenty days (Dawn, July 5th 2014). Women and Children are severely hit by displacement. Women become increasingly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The education of internally displaced children is a concern of utmost priority.

South Asia needs a paradigm shift. Programmes for rehabilitation and care for IDPs must fall within the framework of rights and justice, not those of humanitarian needs and welfare. Governments have to recognise that they cannot give aid to one group of IDPs and deny it to others on flimsy political grounds. They need to acknowledge the reality that the bulk of conflict or development-induced IDPs are adivasi/tribal, lower caste, rural and urban poor and women. Besides, a regional approach is needed to address this grave humanitarian crisis. The first step could be to establish a SAARC Rehabilitation Fund for IDP. Unless the situation of IDPs is addressed and justice achieved, there will be no lasting peace in South Asia.

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Parvez Rasool-Off the Field

Parri Bai, as the star is called locally by all of his youngsters, is the name impregnated with love, respect, hope and happiness

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The social media is again abuzz, this time discussing the state's young cricket sensation Parvez Rasool's entry into the national team. Everybody is pouring his heart out. Some are, as usual, appreciating this move while others are equally aghast sans any valid reason. This is no surprise as things always work here similarly. And it is also no taboo to have diversity of opinion, as far as it doesn't encroach on anybody's freedom.

But my subject matter is not the pros and cons, if it has any after all, of this act on our political struggle. In fact I'm not either going to evaluate his crickering skills, as I myself never played any formal game. Fortunately sharing my birth burgh with him and among many of his acquaintances I thought of throwing some light on the other side of his persona. This constitutes the considerable part of his life yet least known to others.

Parri Bai, as the star is called locally by all of his youngsters, is the name impregnated with love, respect, hope and happiness. They habitually hurdle around him whenever he is outside for some practice or work out session. This also carries no astonishment taking his stature into consideration. But what amazes is the way every child freely approaches him, hugs him and asks whatever any child wants to know about his hero. The questions are usually bizarre like asking about the price of his gear and other sporting goods. And sometimes offering him to exchange the same with that of theirs. It is only his utmost care that they never feel dejected or admonished; instead they are diverted through entertaining answers.

Most of the kids approach him for seeking some help in learning the skills of the game and he benevolently offers them whatever they can grasp. Some even bother him going up to his home and asking for whatever they lack in their kitbag. Only Parvez has the golden heart of not sending any of them unhappy, but with their wishes fulfilled. These kids barely know about his skills and achievements but they enthusiastically brag about his performances and take pride in all of it. They truly love him from the core of their heart.

As far as the elders are concerned, I



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always saw him approaching them with open arms. Gleefully offering his greetings and cordially receiving their glad tidings. Every foreigner remains awestruck on gazing him in excitement and finding himself embraced by his hero. Status and profession is no criteria, being human you are treated by him warmly. His local, senior team mates, although many of them had not made any mark in this arena, are given their due share of attention. Everybody among them is revered and regarded equally.

This temperament of the young

lad, when most of the ones on experiencing such a glamour, might have gone astray is quite astounding. Very few, but inevitable, changes had been found in his lifestyle post stardom. He is simply the summation of values like courtesy and humility, affection and exuberance, honesty and simplicity. Meet him once you will be left with enormous love and obsession for this guy. The indelible prints thus made will not be easily rubbed off. This is the mark of true hero who will continue living in the hearts of men even after completing his innings of life.