

FATIMA JINNAH'S LIFE*

Early Life

Fatima Jinnah was the youngest of eight brothers and sisters born to Jinnah's father Poonja Jinnah, a comfortable merchant of Karachi. In appearance Fatima Fatima resembled Mohammad Ali Jinnah, her eldest brother.¹ In 1902, she was sent to the Bandara convent where she remained in the hostels as her parents had died. In 1919, she enrolled in Dr. Ahmed's Dental College at Calcutta. On graduating in 1923, she opened her own dental clinic in Bombay.² By his support for his sister, Jinnah made a point that he was not averse to the idea of girls getting higher education. He always wanted women to participate in political rallies. Fatima was always at her brother's side on all public occasions. She made speeches at various girls schools and colleges, and also at the women's rallies.³ No wonder she came to be known as *Khatoon-i-Pakistan*.⁴ He trusted her implicitly and she had full faith in him. Once Jinnah told his naval ADC Ahsan, "nobody had faith in me; everyone thought I was mad except Miss Jinnah".⁵ After Jinnah's death, she came to be called *Madar-i-Millat*.

Review of Literature

There have been few important books written about Fatima. Her own account of her brother is full of Jinnah's praise, even her description of her father's trade is full of lucrativeness⁶ (Fatima Jinnah 1987: vii-viii, 45-47). About Jinnah Poonja's

* This article is written about "Fatima Jinnah's Life" as a sister and as a social worker after Jinnah's death. Some books on Fatima Jinnah both English and Urdu have been consulted. Fatima Jinnah papers (F.J) were also read in detail to know about her social work. Her death shrouded in mystery to date, is also explored.

prosperous trade in early years has also been penned by Jaswant Singh⁷ (Singh 2009: 62). Dr Riaz Ahmed's book consists of Fatima Jinnah's role in women up lift and girl development. Other political issues had been addressed by her but it was rare⁸ (Ahmed 2003). She became political during president campaign against Ayub Khan⁹ (Khyber Mail 14 May 1957).

She was a social activist in many forms. To suffer of flood in East Pakistan and West Pakistan, resettlement of refugees, health issues and T.B patients was her priority¹⁰ (Fatima Jinnah Papers file 174, National Archives of Pakistan *Dawn* 5 November 1956). As a presidential candidate failure she put the blame on pressure of major political parties and her desire to do some thing for Pakistan¹¹ (Ahmed 2003: 155-57). Fatima Jinnah accompanied Jinnah to all political and social gatherings. Therefore in various letters to Jinnah a respectful reference to Fatima is always made¹² (Abdul Khaliq to M. A. Jinnah file 896: 29, Ram Nandan Chowdhary to Jinnah file 1083: 31-32). Jamiluddin Ahmad to M. A. Jinnah dated 4 March 1940 from Aligarh requested Miss Fatima Jinnah to visit along with her brother¹³ (Zaidi 2007: 188). Even Khawaja Nazimuddin and Qazi Isa while writing to Jinnah never forgot to pay their regards to her¹⁴ (QAP file 392: 8-11, file 302: 27-28). Liaqat Ali Khan wished Miss Jinnah best regards¹⁵ (Zaidi 2007: 300, 366, 609, 673). M A. H. Ispahani always wished her best of luck and good health¹⁶ (QAP file 310: 673, file 305: 62). Mohamad Aurangzeb Khan thanked her for dinners and functions at Jinnah's residence¹⁷ (Mohamad Aurangzeb Khan to M. A. Jinnah QAP file 329: 101). When Jinnah replied he sent good wishes from her as well¹⁸ (Zaidi 207: 583). Mohammad Amir Khan, Liaqat Ali Khan, Haji Abdus Sattar, Qazi Isa and M. H. Ispahani while communicating at different years and at different months to Jinnah never forgot to send Miss Jinnah good wished¹⁹ (QAP files 302,335,797 and 95). Most books were penned in 2003 which was declared as Fatima Jinnah's year²⁰ (Jaffery 2003). Research on speeches and her messages were started in 1976²¹ (Khan 1976). This effort at collection of her speeches, messages and statements gathered momentum in 2003²² (Ahmed 2003).

Some important references are given below. Urdu books are explanatory. Some important references are given below.

Surriya K. H. Khurshid's *Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah Ke Shab-o-Roz* is a detailed life and death of Fatima Jinnah²³ (Khursheed 1998). *Madar-i-Millat Ka Jamhori Safar* by Azhar Munir is an account of speeches on democracy²⁴ (Munir 1993). There is a book on Brohi language²⁵ (Mengal 2003). Dr. Riaz wrote about her personality via newspapers²⁶ (Ahmed 2003). His other book consists of chronology of important dates in Fatima Jinnah's life²⁷ (Ahmed 2004). *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Hayat-o-Fiqr* describes her life²⁸ (Shakir 2003). *Fatima Jinnah Hayat Aur Khidmat* is a detailed work²⁹ (Hamdani 1989).

Later Life with Mohammed Ali Jinnah

A graceful lady, dignified, personification of eastern simplicity, confident with a countenance of keen comprehension of men and matters, personified Fatima Jinnah. Born in a well off business family, she developed attributes of greatness like her brother Mohammad Ali Jinnah who took charge of young Fatima.³⁰ Professionally a dentist at a time when Muslim women were all clad in pardah, she learned to stand on her own feet. She developed feelings of sympathy for others and tried to ameliorate their problems. When her sister-in-law Ratti Jinnah died in 1929, she readily wound up her clinic and came to live with her brother and stayed at his side until his death in 1948.

Initially she took care of her brother's household affairs but this offered her a golden opportunity to observe and evolve a political personality. In the 1930s, when Jinnah, disappointed at the way politics were developing in the subcontinent, decided to settle in London, she went with him and stayed there for four years (1930-34). As a keen observer, she took interest in the status of women in the British society. She concluded that education and social status had made the British women equal partners in the affairs of their state and the society.³¹ When Jinnah returned to India and started organizing the Muslim League, Fatima's companionship of her brother entered into a new phase. She accompanied him everywhere and felt the

necessity of bringing Muslim women into the political affairs of the Muslim nation. She attended various women's organizations varying from Girl Guide movement to mass agitation. Since Jinnah had not been keeping good health it became Fatima's life to look after her brother and work for the success of his mission.³² So by default she became a political worker as well. In this respect she promoted women's education, health, political work and social activities.³³ She would organize various committees but never accepted any office herself.³⁴ Other contemporary ladies like Begum Aminuddin, Begum Haroon, Begum Salma Tasadaq Hussain and many others were given the leadership of various organizations for the uplift of the Muslim society. She was content to look after her brother's comfort. She lived with her brother for about twenty-eight years.³⁵ After the advent of Pakistan when the nation was faced with serious problems of the settlement of refugees from India, she set up various organizations to help them start a new life.³⁶ Following her example, various other organizations cropped up in various parts of the country to help the government to settle the refugees.³⁷ Another wave of refugees poured in after India sent its troops into Kashmir in 1948. The Kashmir refugees posed similar problems. Fatima would visit various camps along with her brother to talk to ladies of the camps and encourage them to fight the ordeals they were facing.³⁸

As has been highlighted, Fatima's companionship was the the dire need of a lonely man who was also the Quaid-i-Azam, the great leader of the Muslim nation.³⁹ In the words of Beverley Nichols, Jinnah was "the most important man in Asia, truly an intellectual giant" and Fatima used to discuss with her brother, various issues and involved personalities. Many a time her opinion was accepted by her brother.⁴⁰

Fatima was the lone companion of her brother at Ziarat during Jinnah's illness.⁴¹ After his death she became keen to get a biography of her brother written by a Pakistani author. She would not trust a foreigner with the material she had collected on Jinnah's life and work. Finally, she asked G. Allana to assist her in writing the biography. This work, however, could not be

completed during her lifetime, as she died on 8 July 1967. She lived 19 years after Jinnah's death. G. Allana was able to complete and publish the biography under the title of *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: The Story of a Nation*. In words of Sharif al Mujahid, "This biography remains the best biography of Jinnah by a Pakistani". Fatima's own work on her brother has been published as *My Brother*.⁴² This manifested her talent as a writer.⁴³

No doubt she was a great woman. Promoted the cause of the Muslim League, helped Jinnah to achieve his mission. It is said that there is a woman behind every man and Fatima was the woman behind Jinnah's success story-as a companion and a positive influence in all walks of his life.⁴⁴ Miss Jinnah established a fund for refugees⁴⁵ (F.J file 325: 138). Many people helped Miss Jinnah and contributed warmly for refugees from India⁴⁶ (F.J-DI 122: 66, F.J Di-163, F.J Co 7: 5). Miss Jinnah helped refugees herself and asked other people to help them⁴⁷ (F.J-DI 138, file 309, 20). In Hyderabad many refugees got land and made houses there⁴⁸ (F.J-DI, 142). Even Pakistanis abroad helped refugees into Pakistan⁴⁹ (F.J-DI 146). She opened baby show organized as a part of the celebrations of the world health day. It was organized on 22nd September, 1949⁵⁰ (F.J-EP 232: 1, F.J- E 243: 6). Fatima Jinnah visited Anjuman Hayat-ul-Islam on 27th September 1949⁵¹ (F.J-CT 3: 1). She also gave her message to Hayat-ul-Islam orphanage on 29 September 1949⁵² (F.J-CT 7: 3,5). The effect of her visit to Anjumane Hayat-ul-Islam was that they were exempt from income tax on donations by the government on 27th March 1953⁵³ (F.J-CT 28: 36). Fatima Jinnah was a member of flood relief committee, East Pakistan Dacca⁵⁴ (F.J- file 447: 60). For flood relief she also distributed various items of daily use on 25th August 1955 and 1st September 1955 at new government H.E. School, Armanitolla camp at Dacca⁵⁵ (F.J-A 56: 80). It was known as 'Miss Fatima Jinnah Relief Fund'⁵⁶ (F.J-A-57: 81). Besides Miss Fatima Jinnah there were other important and rich persons who helped in flood relief⁵⁷ (F.J-A 95:140 and F.J-A-111: 169-170). Fatima Jinnah made appeals to for aid to relief of flood victims at Dacca⁵⁸ (F.J-N-189: 55-57). Miss Jinnah was present on 19th June 1964 to All

Pakistan Jamiat-e-Kanizan-e-Janab Fatima-ul-Zahira ⁵⁹ (F.J-CU 72: 77-78). Miss Fatima Jinnah donated to National Tuberculosis Association of Pakistan ⁶⁰ (F.J-CV file 347: 319). She donated to National Tuberculosis Association of Pakistan. She even donated to female hospital at Muzaffarabad ⁶¹ (F.J-CS-3, 1). She increased the amount on 25th April 1957 so that new capacity may be constructed ⁶² (F.J-CS-23, 7). To Azad Kashmir Government at Muzaffarabad she gave Rs. 10,000 for scholarship of boys and Rs. 10,000 for the girls middle school ⁶³ (F.J-CS 25: 8). This was acknowledged as well as her personal visit to far flung and down trodden area in 1957 ⁶⁴ (F.J-CS 29: 10). She even helped Azad Kashmir government with stretcher ambulance in 18th October, 1958. Miss Fatima Jinnah dispatched two stretcher ambulances by passenger train on 21st November, 1958 as well as related documents were sent by airmail ⁶⁵ (F.J-CS 43: 23). People as well as government of Azad Kashmir and that of Rawalakot district conveyed thanks to Miss Fatima Jinnah for the gift of one ambulance car cum mobile dispensary for Azad Kashmir medical department.

If the women of Pakistan want to recognize and emulate Fatima Jinnah's contribution in the Pakistan movement then let them select a few of those organizations she initiated to help women and promote her ideas of freedom and social status for the down trodden women of Pakistan.

Fatima Jinnah as an Activist

She was a member of A.P.W.A. It was dominated by official wives (F.J-SA 153: 5). "World Muslim Women ARE AWAKE." This was the title of A.P.W.A conference at Lahore (F.J-EA, 165: 8). Women from Turkey, Indonesia, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Iran said that in their respective countries they have similar rights as men (F.J-EA, 219). 8th meeting of the regional flood relief committee was held on 3rd September 1955 (F.J-A-2: 2). Miss Fatima Jinnah distribution articles during 23rd August 1955 and 4th September 1955 at the Bandar School Camp, for the relief of flood victims (F.j-A-34: 35, 75, 77). Miss Jinnah also spoke on women's role in nation-building (Dawn

August 25 1950). She visited Lady MacLagan College also (F.J-EP 265: 4).

1965 Elections

In the course of preparations for the elections there were two main political rivals, the ruling Muslim League and a bloc of opposition parties. The struggle between these two camps reached its climax when the meetings of the candidates met with representatives of the basic democracies who formed the electoral college for the election of the president in accordance with the 1962 constitution. Fatima Jinnah had generally kept herself aloof from politics and the affairs of the state.⁶⁶ Ayub Khan, on the other hand, was the sitting president and enjoyed the support of the armed forces, the bureaucracy and the Basic Democrats. On top of this the opposition parties were divided with no attractive programme.⁶⁷ From the 1960s there had been a growing linkage between the army and state ideology. Fatima Jinnah stood no chance.⁶⁸

Naturally, Ayub Khan won with 63 percent of votes. Fatima trailed behind with only 36 percent of votes.⁶⁹ She might have won if the elections had been direct. The orthodox religious political parties, including the Jamaat-i-Islami led by Maulana Maududi, modifying their stance that women could contest elections had supported Fatima. Nevertheless, her campaign suffered a number of drawbacks, such as unfair and unequal election campaign, poor finances and indirect elections through the Basic Democracy System.⁷⁰ The campaign time was also too short. Moreover, there was the misuse of presidential powers and the Elections Commission was always anxious to please military dictator.⁷¹ Ayub Khan used basic democrats, radio and newspapers for the character assassination of his opponents.⁷² He also saw to it that women did not favour her openly.⁷³ Ayesha Jalal notes that "Ayub had an easy walk over against Fatima Jinnah" because she had the support of rag-tag coalition of opposition parties united only in their intense dislike of the man who had denied them so much for so long".⁷⁴ The Combined Opposition Parties (COP) was a confused lot and consisted of heterogeneous parties who fought for the spoils among

themselves. It consisted of tried and discredited leaders. Several ministers taunted the opposition for having failed to attract any national figure while awarding tickets.⁷⁵ Fatima Jinnah had votes from the professional and middle classes in urban areas. Ayub's victory meant a vote in favour of continuing stability and against an uncertain parliamentary democracy.⁷⁶ Fatima Jinnah was unable to break the back of the dictator.⁷⁷ Of course, she did not lose courage and in spite of old age and defeat in the elections kept herself on the move. She took on the entire Ayub regime and openly criticized the dictator. She was ridiculed by the Basic Democrats but she did not lose heart.

Personality

There are different aspects of her personality, more negative and less positive.

Miss Jinnah accompanied Jinnah every where. When seriously ill on 12 August 1948, she ordered the move to Karachi be kept a secret. She did not want any one to see him lying helpless on the stretcher. Professor Mahmud Brelvi in interview with Hector Bolitho recalled that she would never allow her brother to enjoy himself ⁷⁸ (Sharif-al-Mujahid 2007: 16). Near N.W.F.P when they saw that Miss Jinnah was unveiled they turned their backs ⁷⁹ (George Galitzine 2007: 18). Miss Jinnah bickered constantly. She disliked Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, the roots were petty matters said here and there. She was an old fascist ⁸⁰ (Sharif-al-Mujahid 2007: 44). She was beastly to Jinnah ⁸¹ (ibid). Jinnah praised her once in her presence in Amir of Bahawalpur's place. Miss Jinnah kept her brother's house hold and looked after women's wing in Muslim League. She managed all things ⁸² (ibid: 76). Colonel Knowles liked Jinnah and Fatima Jinnah. Dina Jinnah said about Miss Jinnah that she was not very intelligent and was simple, and she hated all politicians. None of the servants liked her or her proud ways. Nurse Dunham described the terrible events after Jinnah's death. Miss Jinnah was furious. When the priests came to read the Koran over Jinnah, Miss Jinnah would not allow them into the room where he lay and insisted they read on the veranda outside. Jinnah never compromised on his look, when pointed at a small

blemish only once he pointed his finger at Miss Jinnah⁸³ (Sharif-al-Mujahid ed. 2007: 6-10, 16, 18, 24-27, 29, 41-42, 60-66, 87-90).

Her Death

On 11 July 1967, in early hours she was discovered dead. Doctors pronounced the reason as heart failure due to old age. Many newspapers published this report. Others like M. A. H. Ispahani said her death was a result of natural causes.⁸⁴ Matlub-ul-Hassan Syed, Quaid's personal secretary for many years, stated that she was at Mir Laik Ali Khan's dinner when she complained of low blood pressure due to which she was discovered dead in the morning.⁸⁵ But according to Mir Laik Ali Khan himself she left his house in good spirits.⁸⁶ K. H. Khursheed declared that her neck had wrinkles but it was wrong to presume that the cause of her death was strangulation.⁸⁷

When lady Hidayatullah and her niece opened her bedroom door they found Fatima Jinnah lying on bed with her hand on her neck. They also noticed that her dressing room was open which she always kept locked before going to bed and even the door to the gallery was open. But Lady Hidayatullah said that there were no marks on her neck.⁸⁸ The first to link her death with political murder openly was Hassan A. Sheikh who had handled her election campaign against Ayub Khan.⁸⁹ He demanded to the government of Yahya Khan to do justice to her death.⁹⁰ The murder theory gained currency from the statement of Haji Kallu, an aged man who had prepared her body for burial. He revealed that there were injuries on her person.⁹¹ But the old man was asked to keep silent.⁹² Every one had something to say about Fatima Jinnah's death once Ayub Khan's rule came to an end. When Syeda Fatima wife of Syed M. Zafar started to give bath to Fatima, she revealed she had deep injuries and her clothes were full of blood.⁹³ It may be inferred that when Fatima Jinnah returned from the function late at night somebody was hiding in her house. When she fell a sleep the same person attacked her for her precious jewellery. It was discovered later that she had been upset with one of the servants and had fired

him. Household servants were afraid of her. In all probability some servant might have murdered her.⁹⁴ But unfortunately, no in-depth inquiry into her death was held. Ayub Khan was a sitting dictator and he did not bother. Later, too, no one bothered to re-open the issue seriously. Some still believe that her death was due to natural causes while others maintain that it was a murder. Even in 2009 we do not know the real story.

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⁴ ibid: 45-7.

⁵ Sharif al Mujahid, *In Quest of Jinnah* (Karachi, 2007).

⁶ Cohen, 2005, 60-3.

⁷ *Huriyat*, 5 November 1964.

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⁹ 16 August 1971.