

Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah's Verbal Duel: Non Violent Resistance for Social Change in Pakistan

Abstract:

Miss Fatima Jinnah (July 30, 1893 — July 8, 1967), known as Khatoon-i-Pakistan after the establishment of Pakistan and Madar i Millat (mother of the nation), was an emancipated woman of early 20th Century South Asia. Historical sources reveal this younger sister of Quaid's struggle at various facades like women's role in national development, children, education, women participation in industrial homes, women national guards, opening up of health facilities, maternity homes, relief centers and above all on political issues like democratic rule in the country. Before and after the death of Jinnah she had been engaged in a sustained struggle against all odds in the social and political process of envisioning Pakistan, a country dreamt of, to fulfill the desires of 20th century Muslims in India. Like her brother she ascended in the new state as staunch symbol of a peaceful resistance against autocratic and undemocratic measures by the new rulers of Pakistan after Jinnah. She oftenly said that best social work is the work done silently and fearlessly. By looking after her brother throughout his political career, she had shared the vision and remained an integral part in the struggle for achieving a separate country for a marginalized community in British India. In this case study, what will be discussed is that women like Madar-i-Millat had played their role for the betterment of society and the methodology opted was a better world is possible through non-violent resistance.

A quick glimpse at the history of human civilization suggests to us that all civilizations are destined to endure a period of conversion at every stage of their development. Thus it is a continuous process of history that tends to unleash new forces that generates fresh energy to the existing social system. All such values did not appear to be alien to the local population instead these complemented their yearnings for complete restitution from the ideas of illogical influences. Here the case of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah would remind the readers how a new sort of social change had been occurring without any authoritative command and control just by peaceful rhetoric and strong desire to built an atmosphere suitable for marginalized sections of society in new state of Pakistan.²

Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah was born in Karachi, British India on July 30, 1893. Jinnah's parents, Poonja Jinnahbhai and Mithibai Jinnahbhai, had seven children: Muhammad Ali, Ahmad Ali, Bunde Ali, Rahmat Ali, Maryam, Fatima and Shireen. Of a family of seven brothers and sisters, she was the closest to

¹ Prof. Dr. Samina Awan, Chairperson, Department of History, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.

² Awan, Samina., "Quest for Identity in Women of South Asia: A Case Study of Fatima Jinnah", (edit.) *Quest for Democracy in Pakistan: Role of Fatima Jinnah*, (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centra, 2003), p23.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah.³ Her well-known brother became her custodian upon the death of their father in 1901, who got her registered in the Bandra Convent in Bombay, 1902. In 1919 she got admitted to the highly competitive University of Calcutta where she had attended the Dr. R. Ahmed Dental College. After she was graduated, she opened a dental clinic in Bombay in 1923. Fatima Jinnah started living with her brother until 1918, when he got married Rattanbai Petit. Upon Rattanbai's death in February 1929, she closed her clinic, moved into her brother Muhammad Ali Jinnah's bungalow, and took charge of his house. This began a new life-long companionship between the two which lasted until her brother's death on September 11, 1948. Paying tribute to his sister, Ali Jinnah once said, "My sister was like a bright ray of light and hope whenever I came back home and met her. Anxieties would have been much greater and my health much worse, but for the restraint imposed by her"⁴. During the transfer of power from British Government in India to new state of Pakistan in 1947, Jinnah established the Women's Relief Committee, which later transformed into the center for the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA). She also had been striving hard for the rehabilitation work for Muhajirs (displaced/refugees as a result of migration from both sides of the boarder) in the new state of Pakistan. In the 1960s Fatima Jinnah, popularly acclaimed as the Madar-i-Millat, or "Mother of the Nation" for her role in the Freedom Movement.⁵ After the imposition of Martial Law by Military General Ayub Khan after a long tussle of fragmented political forces, she sympathized with the opposition as she was strongly in favor of democratic ideals. Being the Quaid's sister, she was held in high esteem, and became a symbol of the democratic aspirations of the people. The electoral landscape changed when Fatima Jinnah decided to contest the elections for the President's office in 1965. She was challenging the incumbent President Ayub Khan in the indirect election, which Ayub Khan had himself instituted.⁶ Presidential candidates for the elections of 1965 were announced before commencement of the Basic Democracy elections, which was to constitute the Electoral College for the Presidential and Assembly elections. There were two major parties contesting the election. The Convention Muslim League and the Combined Opposition Parties. The Combined Opposition Parties consisted of five major opposition parties, National Awami Party, Nizam-i-Islam Party, Council Muslim League Party, Awami League and Jamat-i-Islami formed a coalition in July 1964.⁷ It had a nine-point program, which included restoration of direct elections, adult franchise and democratization of the 1962 Constitution. The opposition parties of Combined Opposition Parties were not united and did not possess any unity of thought and action. They were unable to select presidential candidates from amongst themselves; therefore they selected Fatima Jinnah as their candidate. Elections were held on January 2, 1965. There were four

³ The official website (<http://www.fatimajinnah.gov.pk>) contains photographs and details of Fatima Jinnah's early life, education, political career and portrays her efforts along with Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah for Pakistan.

⁴ Syed Shamsul Hasan, *Plain Mr. Jinnah*, (Karachi, 1976), p. 83.

⁵ Bokhari, Afshan (2008). *The Oxford encyclopedia of women in world history* (V 1 ed.). Oxford University Press. p. 653. ISBN 978-0-19-514890-9.

⁶ Tasawar Haider, "Madar e Millat aur Ayub Khan ka Intekhabi Ma'araka", Ahmad, Riaz., (ed.) *Madar e Millat: Qaumi Akhbarat ki Nazar Main*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), pp.29-33.

⁷ *Dawn*, Karachi, 21 July 1964.

candidates; Ayub Khan, Fatima Jinnah along with two independent candidates. There was a short campaigning period of one month, which was further restricted to nine projection meetings that were organized by the Election Commission and were attended only by the members of the Electoral College and members of the press. The public was barred from attending the projection meetings, which would have enhanced Fatima Jinnah's image. Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah returned to the forefront of political life when she decided to contest for the presidency of Pakistan as a candidate for the Combined Opposition Party of Pakistan (COPP).⁸ She described her opponent, Ayub Khan, as a dictator. Her early rallies nearly 250,000 people turned out to see her in Dhaka, and a million lined the 293 mile route from there to Chittagong. Her train, called the Freedom Special, was 22 hours late because men at each station pulled the emergency cord, and begged her to speak. The crowds hailed her as the mother of the nation. Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah lost the election, narrowly, winning a majority in some provinces.⁹ Fatima Jinnah died in Karachi on July 8, 1967. The official cause of death was heart failure.

Most Pakistanis remember her as a symbol of social reforms whose contribution to Muslim society was marvelous in the new born state. As Spivak says, that "violence cannot be brought to an end by ruthless extermination. I believe that we must be able to imagine our opponent as a human being, and to understand the significance of his or her action"¹⁰ so in that way, Mahatma constructed a steady resistance not against the proponent but the social evils in society by sensitizing public on the issues of mutual existence. She fought on all social fronts to educate the masses for the betterment of marginalized sections of South Asian society such as Pakistan. According to Professor Hardiman "Violence as a method is most suited to able-bodied males, with women, the elderly and the very young unable, as a rule, to play much part. The need for arms and training similarly excludes many. He further adds, "non-violence also encourages dialogue and negotiation, and does not alienate potential allies. It is, thus a far more effective force for building a future democracy. What the literature on non-violent resistance reveals, moreover, is that this method has proven highly effective time and again at a purely pragmatic level all over the world in the 20th century and beyond".¹¹ Now putting the case of Miss Fatima Jinnah in this context one realizes that she had been struggling hard to condition the society by her words which I would suggest Verbal Duel to transform public into an informed community.

Now in next few pages, her words will be quoted with references, how and why and where she had been struggling hard to bring changes in her society. During a function on Rehabilitate Refugees on a priority basis in Lahore on 1st October, in her message, she said "Rehabilitation of refugees is a big problem which has so far defied solution. It requires concrete and comprehensive planning. Deplorable conditions of Mohajirs is a challenge to our patriotism and brotherhood.

⁸ *Quest for Democracy*, Sharif al Mujahid, Dawn, 31 July 2003.

⁹ Haider, Syed Karim., "Election Campaign of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah", Abid, Mussarrat., (ed.) *Quest for Democracy in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre, 2003), pp75-83.

¹⁰ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (2004): "Terror: A Speech after 9-11", *Boundary 2*, 31(2): 93.

¹¹ Hardiman, David., (June, 2013) "Towards a History of Non-violent Resistance", A Special Article, *Economic & Political Weekly*.

Sooner it is solved, it will be better for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. I hope it will be given top priority”¹²

In a Public Address at Mirpurkhas, 12 March 1956, she suggested to sink differences and march forward when she said, “You are now enjoying the fruits of the victory of a free independent sovereign Islamic State achieved after tremendous efforts and sacrifices of the Muslim nation. By this miraculous achievement unparalleled in the annals of history the whole world was stunned. “Sink all your differences and march forward shoulder to shoulder towards the progress and prosperity of the country. Pakistan is a sacred trust and you should not allow to be exploited by others. Elect honest and sincere representatives who may serve you selflessly and truly.”¹³ She was not only striving for the ideological and political overhauling of the masses but at the same time worried about the general physical condition of the nation and state responsibilities towards that. She advised the government and the formacists on 4th November, 1956 in Lahore. Miss Fatima Jinnah said that health is the pre-requisite of all nation-building activity, but due to lack of adequate medical aid and nutrition, the people of Pakistan were not healthy enough. “If you should have a systematic method of preparing medicines on a good scale and give it due publicity your medicines will soon become popular”. She also suggested the establishment of research institutes and instructional centres in order to modernize the system.

“You must develop in your children love for your own culture and civilization and interest in your own art and literature. “I want you to sow the seeds and create in the spirit of patriotism so that they may sacrifices ad serve Pakistan as selfless workers when called upon to do so. “Remember, children are valuable asset of the nation and the future of the country. Therefore, more and more efforts should be made for their welfare.” “Education does not mean only book knowledge but side by side moral and physical development also. Stress should be laid to bring out the personality ad individuality of the child in such a way that he may be able to have originality and initiative so that when he leaves his school, he may be able to shoulder the responsibilities, in whatever walk of life, when called upon to do so. Then and then alone he can be an asset to the nation and the country. Today we need selfless ad patriotic workers who look to the interest of the country above self.” “I am glad to learn that facilities have been provided for your training in First Aid, Girl Guide, Co-operative Society.”¹⁴

Fatima Jinnah was aware of the significance of press in propagation of ideas and consciousness. She therefore, she advised press to advocate popular public interests. In her address at the 10th anniversary of *The Millat*, a Gujrati Daily of Karachi, she said: "with the growth of public awakening and consciousness throughout the civilized world, the Press too has grown in power and influence. It

¹² Message for All-Pakistan Refugee Convention, Lahore, 1 October 1955, cited in Riaz Ahmad (edit), *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews 1948-1967*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), p. 56.

¹³ Riaz Ahmad (edit), *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews 1948-1967*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), p. 58.

¹⁴ Health is the prerequisite for building nation activities, message to Pakistan Tibbi Conference, Lahore,

4 November 1956, cited in Riaz Ahmad (edit), *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews 1948-1967*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), p. 60.

has played a vital part in focusing attention on evens and issues of national and international importance, clarifying and spreading ideas, education public mind and public opinion; and bringing peoples of different climes, creeds and races into closer contact. So powerful has been its impact on social, cultural, political and economic developments that it has come to be regarded as the Fourth Estate which is not a mere euphemism".¹⁵

What, after all, is the objective, before the Press? It is to air people's grievances and feelings, to advocate popular causes and to protect, promote and advance public weal and national interests in the widest sense. In the same manner, She also advised students to elect their representatives cautiously. Inaugurating the Peshawar University Union on 9 May 1957, Khatoon-e-Pakistan, Miss Fatima Jinnah, said that "the coming general elections were a test of the political consciousness of the people and advised them to use their franchise in such a way that their elected representatives truly represented their opinions and interests and properly performed their duties in the legislatures". Union of students in this scheme of things was therefore, a very important means of inculcating in them a sense of responsibility besides affording them the experience to run common institutions, she said: "Every youth today is a potential leader, parliamentarian, legislator and ambassador of tomorrow. In those capacities it would be necessary for him to work in public institutions and social organizations."¹⁶

Women are the custodian of a sacred trust – the best in the cultural and spiritual heritage of the nation. Miss Fatima Jinnah being cognizant of the momentous position of women in society stood for the educational uplift of the women. In her Address to the staff and students of Frontier College for women, Peshawar, 13 May 1957, she said "that rust you could only discharge if you were properly equipped for the task of home-making according to the concepts and values which your nation held dear, she also said: "No one is better fitted for this task than the educated women, because she goes in for education not so much for the utilitarian point of view, as far the enlightenment and edification it affords."¹⁷

For women emancipation she wanted them to get acquainted with the modern and technical education. In her address at Muslim Ladies Industrial and Technical Institute, Karachi, on 30th May 1958 as President of the annual session she appealed to philanthropists and the authorities to help the Institute, the only one of its kind, to complete its schemes held up due to lack of funds. She said she would like the ladies to consider this institution as their own and to take advantage of every opportunity that it provided to them. If they did so she assured them they would gain much and would always be proud of their institution.¹⁸

¹⁵ Address at 10th Anniversary of *The Millat* a Gujrati Daily Newspaper, 3 May 1957 in Riaz Ahmad (ed.) *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews (1948-1967)*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), p. 84.

¹⁶ Address to students, 9 May 1957, Riaz Ahmad (ed.) *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews (1948-1967)*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), p. 86.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.90.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 96.

Fatima Jinnah stressed the importance of developing the national industries under a well-planned scheme. Inaugurating a two-day exhibition of arts and crafts, organized by the East Pakistan ladies Association at the B.V.S High School, Karachi, Miss Fatima Jinnah stressed the importance of developing a well-planned scheme. Praising the keen interest that the East Pakistan Ladies Association was taking in bringing the two wings of the country closer together, she reminded the audience: “Remember that no matter in what part of Pakistan we are born we are first and last but one nation”.

The following are extracts from Miss Jinnah’s speech:

*It was naturally expected that there would be an upsurge of cultural and industrial activity once the Pakistan Movement had freed the people from the dead hand of the past. Our independence has uncovered a great wealth of artistic treasures and talents among the people and brought them to the appreciative attention of the country and the world at large. The East Pakistan products, which are on display here, comprise mainly of Dacca series cottage industry products, and articles for decoration, and they are indeed indicative of a rich craftsmanship and artistic beauty.*¹⁹

My tour from Peshawar to Hyderabad has fully established the fact that the ten crore inhabitants of Pakistan are fully aware of the aims and objects of the Combined Opposition parties. They understand fully well the meaning of these elections, just as they understood the meaning of elections at the time of the establishment of Pakistan. These people are not ignorant. They understand their rights very well, indeed. They know the value of their votes. These are the people who constitute the nation. Democracy is in their blood. Democracy is their genius. She stood against the social stratification and desired equal distribution of resources.

Referring to the contention that the country had progressed enormously after its formation, Miss Jinnah said the progress of a nation had four facets, namely social, economic, educational, and political. Analysing the affairs of the country from these standpoints Miss Jinnah said Pakistan had made no progress in the social field. Indeed Pakistan had gone down in this respect; corruption and irregularities had increased beyond proportions. The Presidential Election of 1965 is one of the major events in Pakistan’s political history. There was a military dictator with all his might and all government resources at his disposal. On the other side was an elegant and graceful lady in her late sixties who had the honour of being the sister of the founder of Pakistan. She had idealized her brother in politics who always stood for principles, democracy and the will of the people.²⁰

After the Quaid’s death, Miss Fatima Jinnah kept herself secluded from political festivities. However, her well-established reputation forced Combined Opposition Parties (COP) to choose her for impeachment of law and national

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 98.

²⁰ Raza Ali, *Nawishta e Deewar in Riaz Ahmad.*, (ed.) *Madar e Millat: Qaumi Akhbarat ki Nazar Main*, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), pp. 27-28.

interests. That was inevitable because even undesirous of any political placement, she was the only Quaid's successor. She had stood by the side of her great brother in the stern and hard struggle during the creation of Pakistan. She simply stood up against the blatant politics of General Ayub Khan. Quaid-i-Azam had won the battle of Pakistan within the rule of legal and constitutional means which he visualized as the only war of government in Pakistan. Being undemocratic was a norm which was unbearable for Quaid-i-Azam which he could not tolerate. She could not remain a mute spectator when she saw democracy being throttled in Pakistan at the hands of Ayub Khan who introduced presidential system of government against the will of people. She very rightly sought to utter her difference of opinion whenever she needed. She repeatedly pointed out the unjust impediment in formation of constitution even after three years of the military take-over.

After the formation of the National and Provincial Assemblies under the 1962 constitution, the elections were held respectively on April 28 and May 6, 1962, Miss Fatima Jinnah once again raised her voice on the country's situation. She perceived that members of National Assembly had been performing without answerable to people. Everything revolved round them. The situation had arisen despotic due to no check on their conduct. She also urged the people not to remain spectators of what was being done in their name and on their behalf with regard to the conduct of the affairs of the state. Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah had devoted her life in a verbal duel for the sake of social uplift of community in a new country like Pakistan. For that reason she had struggled hard for the rehabilitation of refugees, women education, children's welfare and formation of several health institutions.