Fatima Jinnah: The Voice of the People

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History has an inscrutable way of recognizing great souls, even if they are ignored in their own times. Those who serve humanity in one way or another, those who dedicate themselves to instilling a critical temper and advancing the cause of liberty, justice and public good, come to be appreciated, sooner or later.

For the moment, they may be chastised, penalized, called all sorts of names, or even simply ignored. But when the time for reckoning comes, it is not the men in power that find an assured niche in the hall of fame, unless they have used their authority for public good. Rather, it is those daring and dedicated souls who have helped their countrymen or humanity at large in creating order out of chaos, towards promoting peace and harmony, towards discovering a new integration, and towards creating a better world, that do. That is precisely the reason why we don't remember a Ghulam Muhammad (1895-1956), an Iskander Mirza (1899-1969), or even an Ayub Khan (1907-74) except in a negative sense. And that is, also, the primary reason why we do recall, almost religiously, year after year the singular services rendered by Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah (1893-1967).

I

What, then, is Fatima Jinnah's claim to our admiration and reverence? The answer was provided by Malik Ghulam Jilani. In a telling tribute on her death, he said, *inter alia*,

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*. The writer was Founder-Director of the Quaid-i-Azam Academy (1976-89), and authored Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation (1981), the only work to qualify for the President's Award for Best Books on Quaid-i-Azam.

> She had her hour of loneliness, her hour of despair and her long hour of distress and yet her courage never failed her. Her voice never faltered. Her spirit was never taken by weariness. She bad the strength of those who live for the great principles, silent endurance of those whom the world needs.

And what were the great principles she bad lived for and strived after? In a word, she stood for democratic norms and principles. She had strived all through the 1950s and the 1960s to get the people their inalienable democratic rights. She stood for justiceable fundamental rights, for a free press, and for the rule of law.

But, then, what equipped her for this historic role? Her apprenticeship under the Quaid-i-Azam whose sister and life-long companion she was. That, moreover, equipped her to become the foremost symbol and advocate of the cherished principles for which Jinnah had stood and struggled all along, and by which she herself had, in turn, stood with unremitting courage and unflinching determination till her rather tragic end, whatever the circumstances, whatever the disabilities, whatever the consequences.

Thus, during the 1950s and the 1960s the one figure that had carved for itself a niche in our national pantheon was, indeed, Fatima Jinnah. What she stood and worked for, and what she accomplished, constitute, as it were, a part of our national heritage. It beckons us to the pristine principles that had impelled the burgeoning demand for Pakistan, that had inspired the endless strivings and heroic sacrifices in its quest, that had enabled the beleaguered nation to establish it, despite heavy odds.

Her steadfast adherence to principles, her courage of conviction, her strength of character, her indomitable spirit and her incredible powers of endurance -- these sterling qualities, though latent in her for a long while, however, came to public notice only after Jinnah's death, when she assumed, albeit through sheer force of circumstances, a more active public role in the country's affairs.

Till Jinnah's death, Fatima Jinnah was content to live in the shadow of her illustrious brother, unassuming, somewhat cloistered except when she accompanied him wherever he went,

working behind the scenes: nursing and tending him when he was sick, looking after his comforts, and sustaining him during the ongoing onerous struggle for Pakistan. Of course, she had played some role in organizing the women's wing of the Muslim League during the 1940s (as Vice-President of the Women's Wing of the All India Muslim League, and as President of the Muslim girl students conference at Delhi in 1942 which gave birth to the All India Muslim Girls Students Federation)[1] but, generally speaking, she had scrupulously shunned both politics and publicity: she had abstained from assuming public roles. Actually, during the period several other Muslim women leaders, such as Begum Mohamed Ali (Delhi) (-1944), Begum Habibullah (Delhi), Begum Jahan Ara Shahnawaz (Punjab) (1896-1979), and Begum Aijaz Rasul (UP) (1909-2001), were more widely known. They also outshone her on the political platform and in public life. Thus, unlike the latter day politicians' wives, sisters, daughters, and other close relatives, she was averse to capitalizing on her relationship with the Quaid, to project herself during his life-time, or to claim the Quaid's mantle after his death.

This overriding penchant of both the brother and the sister becomes all too evident when their conduct is juxtaposed with Nehru's and Bhutto's. Despite his democratic orientation, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), had nominated his sister, Vijay Lakshmi Pundit, as leader of the UN Indian delegation and later as the Indian nominee for the presidentship of the UN General Assembly. He also got his daughter, Indira Gandhi (1919-84), elected as the Congress president during his own life-time, paving the way for her to ascend the prime ministerial *gaddi* in 1966. The super populist Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-79) got his second wife, Nusrat Bhutto, elected to a woman's seat in the National Assembly in March 1977. Inextricably though, the self-centred Nusrat Bhutto, on being felicitated by Anis Mirza, *Dawns'* Islamabad

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1 Fatima Jinnah was nominated a member of the All India Muslim League Women's Sub-Committee, with her name heading the Bombay panel, at the twenty-sixth All India Muslim League (AIML) session at Patna, on 28 December 1938. See Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents* (1906-1947), p. 318 and Mukhtar Zaman, *Student's Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1978), pp. 55-56.

correspondent, had haughtily quipped, "Am I only the Prime Minister's wife?"[2] More inexplicable, Bhutto had Nusrat nominated as his successor for life as PPP Chairperson – as if there was none more suitable than her in a nation of 100 million, in terms of talent, character and commitment, to succeed him. Nusrat got her imperious daughter, Benazir Bhutto, nominated as PPP's Co-Chairman, ensuring the retention of the populist PPP within the family and setting the trend for dynastic rule in Pakistan. This nomination helped Benazir to have a bite at the apple twice, in 1988 and 1993, and get herself "elected" PPP's Life-Chairman, by her self nominated Central Committee. Bhutto's trend was followed by Khan Abdul Wali Khan, getting his wife, Nasim Wali Khan, and son, Isfandyar Wali Khan, "elected" as NAP's NWFP President and as NAP's President respectively. Likewise, in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) Bandaranaike followed her husband in the seat of power in the 1950s, and in Bangladesh Hasina Sheikh and Khalida Zia assumed leadership roles in the wake of her father's/husband's assassination, since the 1980s. Thus, Fatima Jinnah alone had set her face against the dynastic tradition, so characteristic of, and so prevalent, in the entire region.

But, despite Fatima Jinnah's cloistered approach and low-key profile for over a decade, the nation was able to discover in her a leader in her own right, after she emerged from the Quaid's towering shadow. Thus, in the post-Jinnah period, she donned the role of a supreme guide and became the foremost symbol and advocate of Jinnah's cherished principles. Thus, in a real sense, leadership came to be trusted on her. Indeed, she had to don the leadership role, whether she liked it or not.

II

One outstanding feature of Fatima Jinnah's personality was that all through her life she had donned the role of a modern Muslim female persona. Consider, for instance, her early life.[3] In

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2 Author's interview with Anis Mirza, *Dawn's* Islamabad, correspondent, Islamabad, December 1979. This remark was also quoted by Mirza in her column on elections to women's seats in the National Assembly, *Dawn*, March 1977.

3 For details, see Agha Husain Hamadani, *Fatima Jinnah: Hayaat awr Khidmaat* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural research, 1989), p.32-35.

an age when few Muslim girls took to British-oriented, English education, she went in for modern education. In an age, when convent schools and boarding schools for girls were shunned, she went in for a convent, enrolling herself in the Bandhara Convent School (1902) and, later in St. Patrick School, Bhandara (1906) from where she did her matriculation. And all the while she stayed on her own in a hostel, much against the family and Khoja traditions. She did her Senior Cambridge in 1913. In an age when few Indian (not to speak of Muslim) women went in for a professional degree or diploma and training, she went in for one. She moved to Calcutta in 1919, got herself enrolled in Dr. Ahmad Dental College, and decided to stay on her own in a hostel, although her elder sister, Maryam, was living along with her family over there. Not only did she train herself as a dentist; she also, with Jinnah's encouragement, opened a dental clinic on Abdur Rehman Street, a Muslim locality in Bombay, in 1923. Indeed, a rare phenomenon even for cosmopolitan and modernized Bombay. In an age, when social work was not an in-thing, nor a sort of fashion, even with educated and affluent womenfolk in India's most modern society except for the tiny Parsi community, she exhibited a penchant for social work: she worked simultaneously at the nearby Dhobi Talau Municipal clinic, on a voluntary basis.

Although Fatima Jinnah had lived with her elder sister during this period, her choice of a modern profession and leading a busy professional life indicated that she was determined to live on her own, to lead a useful life, instead of being a burden on the family or living off the family, that she was determined to pursue the values she deemed important to give meaning and purpose to one's life, and, above all, to contribute for the upliftment and welfare of the community rather than being a drain on it.

All this, *inter alia*, indicated her independence and will power, her capacity for decision-making her belief in hard and sustained work, her penchant for social welfare activities, and her dedication to social and economic upliftment of the downtrodden and poor womenfolk. This, also, indicated the progressive streak in her thinking – a streak that requires women to take to the professions and make themselves useful to the community and country at

large, instead of wasting their talents and frittering away their energies, just sitting idle at home and/or engaging themselves in routine domestic chores and non-productive and non-consequential pursuits. Even in those days she believed that women should take part in nation building activities – a view she propagated repeatedly, later.

But life is much more than a mere career, as Hillary Rodham Clinton has pointed out recently. When the call from the family comes, the profession inevitably takes a back seat, however committed one is professionally. Thus, when Ruttenbai (b. 1900) died on 20 February 1929, Miss Jinnah abandoned her career, wound up her clinic, took charge of Jinnah's Malabar Hill mansion, and looked after his domestic chores. In so doing, she was not merely helping out her brother in terms of his personal chores and comforts; though. More important: in providing him with a salubrious atmosphere at home she was also, albeit indirectly, helping him to give undivided attention to the problems that Muslim India was confronted with. Additionally, she served as his confidante and advisor: she stood by him all the time, giving him hope and encouragement, and trying to sustain him during the most strenuous period of his life. And she remained his constant companion for the next twenty years (1929-48). Years later, Jinnah, who is seldom known to give public expression to his private feelings, acknowledged his debt to her: "Miss Fatima Jinnah is a constant source of help and encouragement to me. In the days when I was expecting to be taken as a prisoner by the British government, it was my sister who encouraged me, and said hopeful things when a revolution was staring me in the face. My sister was like a bright ray of light and hope whenever I came home and met her's, Jinnah told the guests at the first official dinner, hosted by Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah, (d.1948), Premier and Governor-designate of Sindh, at the Karachi Club, on 9 August 1947.[4]

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[4] Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: Speeches and Statements 1947-48 (Islamabad: Directorate of Films and Publications, 1989), p. 41. Extremely interesting was the background to this rather uncharacteristic remark on Jinnah's part which was reported to me by Yusuf Afghan, editor, Illustrated Weekly of Pakistan, (Karachi), in March 1951, when the present author was serving as the

Fatima Jinnah's role in causing awakening among Muslim women, albeit indirectly, was yet extremely crucial. It is not usually realized that by merely accompanying Jinnah wherever he went during the late 1930s and the 1940s, Fatima Jinnah had served as a role model: she had psychologically prepared the Muslim women, by her own conduct and demeanour, to stand shoulder to shoulder with men during the freedom struggle. Numerous pictures of the period show Fatima Jinnah walking *alongside* Jinnah, not *behind* him. The message was loud and clear – the message both the brother and the sister wished to convey to the nation. And by 1945-46 the message had sunk deep enough. In part, it induced Muslim women to participate to the hilt during the critical 1945-46 general elections. Mian Mumtaz Daultana told me in 1985 that almost one-third of the audiences in the election meetings in the Punjab comprised women. Women volunteers campaigning door to door in the urban areas, he said, made the Muslim League's success at the hustings possible — and inevitable. These dedicated women saw to it that their menfolk voted for the Muslim League candidates, and none else.[5]

Likewise, Miss Jinnah's political role during the 1950s and the 1960s helped a good deal in making women's role in public life both respectable and credible. It facilitated other women in later

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Weekly's assistant editor. At the dinner, Fatima Jinnah was sitting opposite Jinnah at the high table, and Raana Liaquat Ali Khan next to her. After dinner, Raana took out from her purse her glittering cigarette case, offered a cigarette to Fatima Jinnah, took herself one, and lighted them. While the two distinguished ladies, then at Olympian heights status-wise, were having their routine smoke after a sumptuous dinner on that pleasant, breezy evening, Jinnah, who was otherwise engaged having small talk with his host, Hidayatullah, accidentally came to look towards them. Since Jinnah had religiously maintained dietary propriety in public, especially, since the middle 1930s he was, presumably, upset at Fatima Jinnah's smoking in public Fixing his gaze at her, and with an agitated look, exuding extreme disapproval, he simply said in a hushed voice but an admonishing tone, "Drop it, drop it!." At which both the ladies dropped their respective cigarettes, instantly and sat sheepishly, chastened and stupefied, with their gaze down, riveted to the table. In the light of this anecdote, Jinnah's public tribute to Fatima Jinnah, so uncharacteristic of him as indicated earlier, was presumably meant to make amends for the snub handed down to her earlier, almost in public. It was also meant to send out the message, both to her and those within the listening range, how much in esteem he held her, despite her momentary laps.

5 Interview with Mian Mumtaz Khan Daulatana, Lahore, 25 July, 1984.

years to take to public life and play out political roles without let or hindrance, without raising eyebrows. Indeed, her candidature in the 1965 presidential elections settled, once and for all, the knotty question whether a woman could be the head of a Muslim/Islamic state. In the circumstances, it was her candidature alone that could have induced a favourable *fatwa* from Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, the Jamaat-i-Islami chief.[6] And once that was acquired, the controversial issue ceased to be all that controversial, and that for all time to come. Thus, no Moulvi or Maulana could seriously challenge a Benazir Bhutto when she became Prime Minister on 2 December 1988. In perspective, then, Fatima Jinnah's candidature represents a singular contribution towards women's regeneration and women participation in public life in Pakistan.

Interestingly, Fatima Jinnah firmly believed that "women are the custodians of a sacred trust, the best in the cultural and spiritual heritage of a nation." And all through her life she called on women to equip themselves and play out their due role in the onward march of the nation. Thus, her genius lay in helping the development of a modern Muslim female persona, which would equip women to shoulder, along with their male counterpart, the tasks of nation-building that the dramatic birth of the new nation in the most treacherous circumstances had called for.

III

Initially, Fatima Jinnah's public role was confined to a few appearances at various functions, mostly related to education, health, women's upliftment, Girls' Guides (of which she was the founder), women's community works and industrial homes, other social welfare activities, and students, and messages on important occasions.[7] On 11 September 1951, her broadcast was tampered

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6 President Ayub did get a fatwa, against a woman being the head of the state, through Maulana Kausar Niazi, who later came to prominence during the Bhutto era (1971-77). But it didn't work in the face of the more weighty opinion given by Maulana Maududi, who, in any case, stood head and shoulders above other religious leaders at the time, in terms of religious knowledge, expertise and standing, as well as public esteem.

7 Surayya Khurshid provides glimpses of Fatima Jinnah's activities in her diary for the period, 5 January – 30 May 1956, when she, along with her newly wed husband, K. H. Hurshid, stayed with Fatima Jinnah at the Flagstaff House, Karachi. Khurshid

with by the radio authorities, with the microphones going silent for a few minutes when she was a little critical of the drift and indecision that had characterized the then governmental policies. At that time, Liaquat Ali Khan (1895-1951) was the Prime Minister and Khwaja Nazimuddin (d.1964) the Governor-General. She was obviously chagrined; and so was the nation.[8] Her riposte was characteristic of her: she decided never again to use the government-controlled medium. Henceforth, her views were generally aired and heard mostly through her press statements and messages on six important occasions during the year – viz. the two Eids, Independence Day and Pakistan Day and the Quaid's birth and death anniversaries.[9] And the nation looked forward to her statements and messages. Clearly, they were often critical of the powers that be.

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was Private Secretary to Jinnah during 1944-47 and had stayed with Fatima Jinnah after his return from England in 1954, where he had gone to do. Bar-at-Law on Miss Jinnah's encouragement and under her sponsorship. Khurshid, who would become President, Azad Kashmir (1959-64), and later found the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), served as Manager/Organizer of Fatima Jinnah's election campaign (1964-65). His relationship to her is indicated by, among others, the fact that he undertook to make arrangements for her funeral (1967). He stood by the coffin in the truck, all the way from Qasr-i-Fatima, Clifton, to the Polo Grounds, where her funeral prayers were held, led by Mufti Muhammad Shafi, to the Quaid-i-Azam Masoleum complex, where she was buried. Her funeral was the largest ever in the sprawling Karachi metropolis, and was estimated to have been attended by some 300,00 people – a huge concourse by any standard for a funeral. Surayya Khurshid's diary contains only two entries on Fatima Jinnah's presidential elections stint, but it is extremely valuable for the personal glimpses it provides. See Surraya Khurshid, *Fatima Jinnah kay Shab-o-Roze* (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1976).

The causes Fatima Jinnah was involved in during 1948-67 also get explicated in her messages, speeches and statements and the various moots she had participated in, presided over and/or addressed during the period. These are covered in Salahuddin Khan (ed.), Speeches, Messages and Statements of Madar-i-Millat Mohtarama Fatima Jinnah (1948-1967) (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1976) and Riaz Ahmad (compiled), Madr-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews (1948-1967) (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2003).

8 *The Times* of Karachi, 11-16, September 1951.

9 Her messages and statements and a good many of her important speeches, have been included in: Salahuddin Khan (ed.), Speeches, Messages and Statements of Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah (1948-1967), and most of the fugitive pieces in Riaz Ahmad (see above, note 7).

But instead of being a blemish, her critical approach provided the only ray of light and the glimmer of hope in the otherwise sombre situation as it developed especially since 18 April 1953, when an authoritarian Governor-General (Ghulam Muhammad) dismissed a Prime Minister (Khwaja Nazimuddin) who, being in command of majority support in the country's highest parliamentary institution, had represented political elitist consensus at the time. Indeed, against the darkening backdrop of the crescendo of chorus that occasioned the rise to power of every regime, or almost every move (whether positive or negative) of those in power, the paeans of praise in favour of the regime that characterized the statements and speeches of most public leaders and the writings in the press, and the growing tendency to worship the rising sun, she alone attempted, and was able, to feel the pulse of the nation, she alone was able to articulate their innermost thoughts and cherished yearnings, and, above all, she alone was able to give public expression to their deep sense of desolation and disconsolation at the tragic turn the events had taken since the early 1950s.

Her minatory role, which oft and anon, brought her into clash with the powers that be, was appreciated, by and large. Donning the role of a warner and guide was by no means an easy task. But for this critical role she was eminently suited, playing it out with courage and conviction. This was made possible if only because her strength of character and her steadfast attachment to the lofty principles she had imbibed from her distinguished brother. If the people listened and responded to her, it was not primarily because she was the Quaid's sister – but, chiefly, because, amidst the wreckage of ideals all around she alone represented certain ideals and values which they cherished themselves and which hundreds of thousands of them had staked their lives for, in the years gone by. Equally important: in moments of despair, her voice rose high, above the din of official rhetoric and rosy pledges, to lift the drooping spirit of the general populace. While striking terror in the seats of unholy power, it instilled courage in the minds of the forlorn masses; confirming them in their democratic quest, and enkindling hope in the ultimate triumph of their democratic

destiny. It was thus that Fatima Jinnah came to represent the hopes and aspirations of the people.

And her minatory role finally climaxed in her entry into active politics when she accepted the Combined Opposition Parties (COP)'s nomination on 16 September 1964 in the ensuing presidential elections. For now, she had decided to take on Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan, despite his being a formidable candidate and an entrenched President on all counts, under his own incumbent-oriented system. Though seemingly unexpected, this decision was not uncongenial to her previous role and her mettle. In a sense, it signified but an extension, indeed the culmination, of her erstwhile role.

At that time Miss Jinnah was already 71. Till then, she had majestically occupied a position of "lofty eminence", and was looked upon as *Khatoon-i-Pakistan* ("the First Lady of Pakistan"). And there obviously seemed little sense in her giving up this lofty eminence in favour of the rough and tumble of active politics, nor in becoming the centre of a bitter, gruelling controversy. Yet when the call of conscience came, she responded readily, though it meant great personal discomfort.[10] She promised to "spare nothing in devotion, service and hard work in achieving the objective for which the millions in Pakistan have been silently and devotedly yearning for the last few years."[11]

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10 Initially, Fatima Jinnah was extremely averse to accepting COP's nomination in the ensuing presidential elections, since she felt that "politics had become such a dirty game in Pakistan that no respectable woman could afford to take an active part in it", as she told Fazlur Rahman in September 1965, when he, having been a *persona grata* with her all through the 1950s and the 1960s, was engaged for weeks in prodding her to accept the Opposition's nomination as its candidate. Fazlur Rahman (d. 1966), a Central Minister (1947-53) in Pakistan's first two cabinets under Liaquat Ali Khan (1947-51) and Khwaja Nazimuddin (1951-53) and a member of the first (1947-54) and second (1955-56) Constituent Assembly and of the first National Assembly (1956-58), was debarred from active politics under Ayub's EBDO in 1959. But he remained active behind the scenes, and became Nazimuddin's tactical advisor, when he revived the Council Muslim League, in opposition to the Ayub-sponsored Convention Muslim League, in October 1962, and became is President. Author's interview with Fazlur Rahman, January 1965.

11 For details, see Sharif al Mujahid, "Pakistan's First Presidential Elections", *Asian Survey*, V: 6, June 1965, pp. 282-84. See also *Dawn* (Karachi), 1 October 1964.

An index to the measure of suffocation and the sense of helplessness felt by the people and the press was provided in the fact that it took sometime for the people and the press to give public expression to their reaction to her candidature. For instance, the editor of *Daily News* told me in November 1964 that when her candidature was announced, he had a hard time deciding whether to publish the news item or not, and if published, on which page and in what form.

But what a sudden and sweeping change the political landscape of Pakistan underwent during the next three months. Anti-Ayub sentiment, thus far silent out of either fear or sheer expediency, became vocal and strident almost overnight. Her candidature gave nerve and verve to the democratic forces in the country. In the result, demonstrations, protest rallies and strikes swept the country from one end to the other. Jute workers throughout East Pakistan went on strike for 53 days, leading to serious riots in the Khalishpur industrial area (Khulna). And there were strikes galore, as if the whole country was on strike. More serious were those by the Chittagong port workers; the West Pakistan Transport workers; paralyzing communications throughout the province; and by the Bannu Woollen Mills' workers in the Frontier. Strike notices were also served by the East Pakistan Railway Employees' League and the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC) employees. A new labour front (East Pakistan Workers Council) was launched in October, and a 15-point programme formulated. Secondary school teachers in East Pakistan and Primary school teachers in West Pakistan went on strike. To make it all the more serious, students' grievances; whether genuine or supposed, erupted into a snowballing strike throughout West Pakistan, and that to a point that it forced the government, for the first time, to close down all educational institutions for an indefinite period early in December 1964.[12] Thus, for the first time since Ayub's rise to power, the Field Marshal's Pandora's box had been broken wide open. In a word, the much-acclaimed "stable" and steel-framed regime looked

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12 For details, see Mujahid, "Pakistan's First Presidential Elections", pp. 284-85. See also *The Economist* (London), editorial, 12 December 1964.

neither so stable nor so enduring; nor did its architect so indispensable.

And, as she promised while accepting the nomination, Fatima Jinnah spared nothing. She was on her feet and on the road for three long months. She went in processions for hours on end. She subjected herself to the exacting rigours of addressing mammoth meetings in cities and towns, wayside gatherings on her whistle stop tours, and surging crowds at railway stations during her long train journeys, both in East and West Pakistan. And, she travelled endlessly. The Green Arrow, East Pakistan's fastest express train, which carried her from Dhaka to Chittagong, took more than 28 hours to cover 196 miles of journey, normally covered in just seven hours. And all the time Miss Jinnah was up, responding to the demonstrations of smothering affection from the surging crowds at stations, big and small. Indeed, the inexhaustible energy, the unrelenting stamina and the unflinching determination she displayed during the hectic, tearing and shearing election campaign surprised almost everyone, friend and foe alike. It won tributes even from her formidable opponent as well.[13]

All through the election campaign, her message was loud and clear: she was struggling to restore to the people their right to choose their rulers directly and in free and fair elections. She believed that stability does not come through the diktat of a person, but through a system. She stood against personality cult; she did not even preach Jinnahism. She felt that no one had the right to equate himself with Pakistan or to claim that Pakistan's future depended upon him or her alone. She wished to actualize the grand dream of a democratic, progressive and welfare-oriented Pakistan that was aspired and struggled for, and was finally won. And because she stood by these principles, she refused to be overawed

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13 For details and the two divergent viewpoints, see Mujahid, "Pakistan's First Presidential Elections", p.285-87, 289-91; Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.235-240; Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1992), pp.273-88; Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, *The Nation that Lost it's Soul* (Lahore: Jang Publications, 1995), pp.255-56; and Lawrence Ziring, *The Ayub Khan Era: Politics in Pakistan, 1958-1969* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), pp.10-11, 39 and 57-59.

by the pomp and power of the rulers; she refused to be cowed down by self-appointed messiahs; she refused to be deflected by the chorus of sycophancy and glorification that Ayub's minions, veranda boys and courtiers indulged in, day in and day out. Thus, she stood apart as a towering figure, feeling the pulse of the nation, articulating their innermost thoughts and yearnings, and reflecting their sense of desolation and disconsolation that had disfigured Pakistan's political landscape during the 1960s.

That was Miss Jinnah's hour of triumph. She became the rallying point for the otherwise disparate, disunited and dejected democratic forces. But for her candidature, the elections would have been reduced to a mere farce – a mere formality to legitimize Ayub Khan's authoritarian rule. For her candidature initiated a political dialogue – a dialogue in place of the stultifying authoritarian monologue of the previous six-years, to quote *The Economist* (London).[14] From the stifling, prevalent pattern of conformism and diktat, this, indeed, was a refreshing change.

This was not her sole contribution, though. It provided a focus of crystallization for the country's democratic temper and aspirations. It provided the climate for the reactivization of the political process which had remained suspended or dormant since the promulgation of martial law in the country on 7 October 1958. Demands for fundamental rights and basic freedoms, demonstrations, protest rallies and strikes by the labour, students, teachers, journalists, lawyers and railwaymen tore the deadly silence of the political landscape, burying for all time to come the suffocating conformism of the first phase of Ayub's regime (1958-69). Indeed, the regime showed signs of cracking up.

Equally important was the monumental fact that but for her candidature that first presidential elections in Pakistan would not have assumed the significance they did, nor the campaign conducted on a serious and national level. Indeed it is to Miss Jinnah's eternal credit that she never let the campaign degenerate into raising parochial, provincial and petty issues as it usually happens in multi-racial, multi-lingual, politically fragmented and

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14 *The Economist*, 12 December 1964.

economically disparate societies, and as it did happen in the 1970 water-shed general elections. Thus, as against President Ayub's repeated claim, Miss Jinnah's candidature had helped the cause of national integration rather than disintegration.

Fatima Jinnah "lost" the election, of course. But it is also a measure of her popularity that despite the serious disabilities and built-in handicaps under which she conducted her campaign and fought the elections under his opponent's system, she could still muster up 28,691 (36.4 per cent) votes of the Basic Democrats, and carry three out of sixteen divisions – Karachi, Dacca and Chittagong. [15]And that against a well-entrenched President and in a system geared to the vested interests of the incumbent. Thus even in her "defeat" she brought home a basic lesson to the powers that be. She demonstrated that the country wanted to engage in critical debate and discussion rather than subscribe to the cult of docile conformism, that without such a dialogue and the requisite climate for various ideas to compete for people's allegiance in the free market place of ideas *a la* Milton, democracy would be utterly meaningless. Indeed during the 1960s she alone helped to keep the torch of democracy aflame, she alone helped to sustain the nation's quest for democracy.

Liberty, said Burke, doesn't come down to a people; they must rise themselves to liberty. Likewise, democracy is never given or ensured for the mere asking; it calls for sincerity of purpose and sacrifices on the part of both the leaders and the people. And to the cherished memory of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, the sacrifices the people have made in the quest for democracy over the decades represents the most fitting tribute.

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15 For details see *Dawn*, 3 January 1965; *Pakistan Observer* (Dacca), 3-6 January 1965; and Mujahid, "Pakistan's Presidential Elections", p. 292. Fatima Jinnah knew all the while that she would be made to lose the elections, eventually. Before her acceptance, Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan frankly told her, "… if you hope to win, please do not make an attempt, because elections will be rigged against you. It would be impossible to win in the limited college of 80,000 [basic democrats] created by him [President Ayub Khan], but if you are prepared to lose it, it would be the greatest service to the Nation by breaking the back of the present dictatorship." Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, *The Nation that Lost it's Soul*, p.255.

In the historical perspective, the presidential elections represented the middle-point in Ayub's much-trumpeted "development decade"; the beginning of the end. For the first time and on a national plane, the elections exposed mercilessly the absurdity of the premises of the system, and its shortcomings, as well as the tall claims of its architect. Once this occurred, Ayub, despite his electoral "victory", could not legitimize "his' constitution, nor his regime. The moral ground having been prepared and the nation's conscience aroused, it was only a matter of time before the regime and its high-priest were swept aside.

Indeed the values that Miss Fatima Jinnah exemplified in her life-time are still relevant to us. While they provide a source of inspiration to us in our present predicament, her life provides us with a role model, as indicated earlier.

To sum up, then Miss Jinnah's greatest contribution lay in crystallizing the country's democratic temper and traditions, in initiating critical debate and discussion in place of dead conformism, in rekindling and refurbishing the enfeebled and dying flame of democracy in Pakistan, and in, thus, setting the sails anew towards a democratic destiny.