

Remembering Miss Jinnah

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The last forty-six years of our independent existence have witnessed great changes in the writing of history. Whereas we have, to some degree, stopped the process of explaining and apologizing for Pakistan's existence, we have at the same time confused the contours of history with the rise and fall of political philosophies. More court historians have written on what they call history and the images that have been shown to the people have neither any relevance to our political culture nor our intellectual heritage.

A nation that has not been so lucky in producing leaders of outstanding merit has fallen prey to ignore even those few whose lives were devoted to uphold the best and the most cherished principles in their public and private lives. Pakistan's roll-call of leaders is extremely disappointing yet there are some in the glory of our history whose equals one seldom finds in the annals of world history. The literature on those who have contributed positively is not only scant but also poor in quality.

Miss Fatima Jinnah's role in the making of Pakistan and after 1947, in acting as her brother's representative in the independent Pakistan has been neglected to the disadvantage of the posterity. She deserves to be remembered not because she was a sister of the great leader but because she worked for the creation of Pakistan. Her life, political as well as social, had no other colour but that of the Quaid and the movement for Pakistan. History has often deceived us by showing only those faces that appear on the stage and by hiding those who were actually and actively behind these

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leaders. Miss Jinnah's career before 1947 was like that of a nurse, a doctor and even a mother who cared for comfort of that mind which was working for the materialisation of the ideal of Pakistan.

Miss Jinnah's role between 1947 and 1965 was that of a warner and warner only. Ayub Khan says:

She was leading a solitary life and had shown little interest in politics except for issuing periodical statements to the press on days of national importance. Since the death of the Quaid-i-Azam she had maintained a consistent posture of opposition and criticism towards every government.

Though Ayub's assessment of her role was motivated by political designs and he wanted to show that Miss Jinnah's opposition to his government was not an exception but a matter of attitude. But I consider it a compliment, actually manifestation of a rare quality. She opposed those governments which should not have been there. She raised her feeble voice against the outbursts of thundering dictators and demagogues whose prime motive was to save their own chair and push the national interest in the background. This struggle that Miss Jinnah continued verbally took an active shape during the presidential elections of 1965.

In her seventies Miss Jinnah accepted her 'nomination for the office of the president at the insistence and persuasion of Khwaja Nazimuddin, Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, Maulana Bashani and Sheikh Mujibu-ur-Rehman. After accepting her candidature, Miss Jinnah undertook a tour of the country to talk to the people. She appeared not only as a living memory of the Quaid but also the last hope for united Pakistan.

When people would go in millions to receive her at the railway station with emotions and exuberance hitherto unprecedented and when she was told that they have come to see you, with modesty and grace and with dignity and candour, she would say. "They have come to show their contempt for a dictator. I have passed through station many times in the past without even being noticed".

Apparently that was not true but with one statement she demolished the temple of personality worship cult and raised the minaret of peoples' voice in support of democracy.

Her symbol in the elections of 1965 was 'lantern' - the source of light - indigenous and known to every Pakistani, she came forth as source of light when the alleys of Pakistani politics were darkened by the huffing and puffing of the dictator and his legates. She will be remembered as the first and the foremost defender of democracy and if the polls would not have been rigged, no one could have stopped her from coming to power not like other presidents but as a repository of the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of Pakistan.