

Fatima Jinnah: The Devoted Sister

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During 1951, a bold, straightforward and dedicated lady of Pakistan made it clear to a world fame author, James A. Michener, that: “We are not a state run by priests or a hierarchy. We are a state organised according to Islamic principles and they are very fine principles organising a state.” [This statement, published in *The Voice of Asia* was made by Fatima Jinnah.]

Fatima Jinnah was not merely a loving loyal and life-long companion of the Quaid, but also had a credit of knowing her brother’s mind in depth. The Quaid himself had a great love for his sister calling her endearingly *Fatto*.

After obtaining a diploma in dental surgery from Calcutta in 1923, she started practice as dentist in Bombay, and thus was recognised to be the first Muslim woman among the dental surgeons of the Subcontinent. Miss Jinnah attained much proficiency in the field. But she had to abandon the practice in 1929 to live with the Quaid after the death of his wife. She left all her belongings in Bombay only to look after her great brother. Thus Miss Fatima gave him company and comfort with full devotion and took care of the lonely and ailing brother during the whole stormy period of his life.

It is known to all that the Quaid fought his killer disease with indomitable character and sheer will-power only for the cause of freedom movement. He was not ready at all to minimise the heavy pressure of work. Fatima always remained worried about the

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deteriorating health of her brother. Once she pleaded with the Quaid to take a holiday so as to slacken the pace of preoccupations. On hearing this, he replied: "Have you ever heard of a general taking a holiday when the army is fighting for its very survival." Thus Miss Jinnah had to give her argument a logical touch: "But your life is precious to your people and you must take good care of it."

The Quaid also gave a logical reply. "What to talk about the health of one individual when I concerned with the very existence of the hundred million Muslims of India? Do you realise how much is at stake?"

Yet the loyal sister continued to look after the health and household management of the great leader of the Muslim world till his eternal depart. It is an undenying fact that the founder of Pakistan always found sympathy and solace in the company of her loving sister *Fatto*. In 1930, Miss Jinnah proceeded along with the Quaid to England and participated in First Round Table Conference. After visiting European countries, she came back to India in 1935. She participated in the 25th Session of All India Muslim League, held in Lucknow during October 15-18, 1937. Thereafter she wholeheartedly supported her brother in his political activities.

Since 1940, she used to attend all the annual sessions of the Muslim League. She was the first lady who organised the Muslim women of undivided India in favour of the Muslim League. At the emergence of Pakistan, she arrived in Karachi. The next year she visited East Pakistan. In 1954, she undertook the journey of East Pakistan to get the Muslim League popularised. Afterwards, she was the only lady of Pakistan who became the symbol of democracy. During 1964-65, she took active part in politics and contested as Presidential candidate of the combined opposition parties against Field Marshal Ayub Khan. She campaigned for the restoration of democracy, direct polls and parliamentary system in the stormy periods.

She was also the patron of a number of social, educational and cultural societies. Under her patronage, the T.B. Centre flourished to a great extent. She always remained busy in humanitarian

services. Even the old age did not prevent her from such tiresome tasks. Thus this distinguished lady left behind a series of sacrifices engulfing a period of forty years.