

Mohtarama Fatima Jinnah and The Presidential Election of 1965

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Abstract:

The paper analyses the political contributions of Mohtarama Fatima Jinnah regarding the election of 1965 as a contender and the leader of Combined Opposition Parties (COP). Her decision to contest the Presidential Election of 1965 was the part of her firmed belief in democracy, sovereignty of political culture and the restoration of human and social values in the country. The paper also highlights the leadership qualities of Mohtarama Fatima Jinnah during the course of her whole life. As a sister of Great Quaid, her perceptions and aptitudes towards the right path, unity, faith and discipline are the main features of this paper.

Miss Fatima Jinnah, younger sister of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was born on 31 July 1893 at Karachi. She was very close to the Quaid-i-Azam, because he became her guardian upon the death of their father in 1901. Due to her brother's keen interest and despite strident family opposition, Miss Fatima received excellent early education. She joined the Bandera Convent School. Her graduation as a qualified dental surgeon in 1922 from Dr. Ahmad Dental College, Calcutta University, made her the first Muslim woman to enter the ranks of dental surgeons. Fatima Jinnah left her profession and closed her clinic immediately after the death of her sister-in-law Begum Ruttu Jinnah in 1929 and took over charge of the Quaid-i-Azam House. Ruttu's death turned out to be a turning point in Fatima's life. Thereafter, throughout those critical years of stress and strain, she looked after her brother. She loved him like a good sister, looked after him like a mother and served him like a daughter. In all Miss Fatima Jinnah lived with her brother for about twenty-eight years including the last days of her brother. Miss Fatima Jinnah, who not only lived with her brother but also accompanied him on his numerous tours. There is also evidence to show that Quaid-i-Azam discussed various problems with her, mostly at breakfast and dinner table; he also had confidence in her. On Miss Jinnah's part, she was to quote the Quaid "a Constant source of help and encouragement" to her, saying "hopeful things when revolution was starting him in the face."¹

The importance of this companionship can be gauged from the following sentences of Jinnah: "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."² In 1932, she joined the Quaid-i-Azam in London who had remained there after the second session of the Round Table Conference.

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When the All India Muslim league was reorganized in 1934, Miss Fatima Jinnah was taken as member of the Working Committee of the Bombay Provincial Muslim League. In 1938, she was nominated as member of the Women's Central Sub-Committee of the All India Muslim League, and worked in that capacity until 1947. In March 1940, she attended the Lahore session of the Muslim League. It was chiefly due to her initiative that the All India Muslim Women Students Federation was organized in February, 1941 at Dehli.³

Quaid-i-Azam used to tell the people that his political career de-pended on his typewriter and his sister Fatima. Miss Fatima Jinnah, thoroughly liberal in attitude, was fully committed to human rights, freedom of press, and supremacy of law and above all to social ref-ormation of Muslim society. She was an extremely good judge of character and capabilities. She could assess persons pretty shrewdly almost on the first meeting, but no amount of trying would get you an inch further with her unless she herself wished it."⁴ She worked hard with Quaid-i-Azam and played a key role in creating awareness among people for their basic rights and democratic values. She took an active part in the freedom struggle for Pakistan. After the creation of Pakistan, she showed great interest in the affairs of Pakistan. She was fully aware of the problems of Pakistan and exerted her utmost influence to solve them all. Due to her selfless struggle for Pakistan, the nation conferred upon her the title of *Madr-i-Millat* (Mother of the Nation).

After the death of Quaid-i-Azam, she often issued statements on important occasions as reminders to the nation of the ideals on which Pakistan had been created. In her view the solidarity of the nation lay in its 'sound and healthy system of democracy', and it was the responsibility of the state to provide such kind of democratic environment to its people that would be more supportive for the restoration of their confidence on the policies of the government.⁵ Despite her old age, she contested the presidential election against Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan. Throughout her life she remained as a selfless and sincere worker for the cause of Pakistan and the good of its people. She died on 2 July 1967 at Karachi but her unforgettable contribution for Pakistan would remain alive.

In the light of above-mentioned discussion, it will be appropriate to evaluate the unique contribution of Fatima Jinnah as an opposition leader, particularly her devotion for restoration of democracy. The main aim of this article is to examine the dynamic role of Miss Fatima Jinnah during Ayub Khan era. She was the first woman to stand bravely for election to any public office in Pakistan. She was a dynamic leader who struggled day and night for the democratic values in the country.

During initial years Miss Fatima Jinnah left the political affairs of the state to the political successors of the Quaid. Thoroughly dismayed by the political intrigues and politician's preference for personal rather than national agenda, forced her to intervene in politics. Also, the country was passing through political disturbances because it was experiencing its evolution as a nation-state along with the nation's emerging

dedication to democratic principles and the national enhancement of a collective sense of social and political values. Thus Fatima Jinnah was confronted with a radically new set of challenges. It became a beginning of a new relationship of affection for and service to Pakistan. Thus she re-emerged as a public figure in early 1950s and traveled all over Pakistan. Despite all official propa-ganda, she was very popular both in East and West Pakistan. In March 1954, she urged the nation not to lose heart and hope for the best. She asked them not to think that:

*'After getting Pakistan, our struggle has been over; on the other hand, we are still struggling for the stability and construction of Pakistan. We need to maintain unity, faith and discipline for the soli-darity of our country.'*⁶

Since independence, Pakistan has grappled with numerous prob-lems of integration and political development. Politics in Pakistan had been stamped with the mark of authoritarianism. Political parties were weak and divided. The imposition of martial laws and the suppression of fundamental rights resulted in political instability. The state had been run largely by the Civil Service, backed by Army, which has carried on much as it did before independence. The seizure of the power by the Pakistan armed forces was not unexpected. The widespread sense of relief that spread over the country when General Ayub Khan announced that Iskander Mirza had been sent into exile and that political parties must suspend their activities was sufficient evidence that the politicians had lost whatever confidence the people originally may have had in their leadership. Iskander Mirza announced his resignation on October 29, 1958. On the same night, General Ayub Khan assumed the office of president of Pakistan. The office of Prime Minister was abolished and the members of the cabinet took a new path as members of a presidential council of ministers. Thereafter General Ayub had three titles: president of Pakistan, Supreme Commander of the armed forces and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Miss Fatima Jinnah, who until then had been silent about the revolution, spoke expressing the sentiments of the people in a press statement on October 28, after the completion of the revolution. She said: Major General Iskander Mirza was head of state for three years. In this period he was able to solve none of the problems of the country politically and economically, the country reached at the brink of disaster. The people could only watch the situation helplessly; there were difficulties and social evils of all kinds. Now a new era has been ushered in under General Ayub Khan. At last, the armed forces of Pakistan have undertaken the task of restoring normal conditions in the country by eradicating the administrative crisis and the anti-social activities and creating a sense of confidence, security and social stability. She also stated: I hope and pray that God may give them wisdom and strength to achieve their objective.... With Faith, Unity and Discipline let us march forward as one nation.⁷ I pray that God Almighty may grant the armed forces the wisdom and ability to achieve that objective.⁸

With these words recorded by the *Morning News* of Karachi on October 29, 1958, Miss Fatima Jinnah, heralded the ouster of Iskander Mirza and “the completion” of the

revolution, little did she know that almost six years to the day she would be standing as the candidate of the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) against the incumbency of President Ayub Khan.⁹

On October 8, 1958, acting in his capacity as Chief Martial Law Administrator, General Mohammad Ayub Khan declared: "Our ultimate aim is to restore democracy but of the type that people can understand and work."¹⁰ It was obvious from the outset that Ayub Khan had no timetable for returning power to civilian hands. He firmly believed that his method of governing was preferable from that experienced in the parliamentary period (1947-1958). The 1962 Constitution made it clear that the military leaders, who led the 1958 coup, wanted to retain their privileged position. The military rule was brought to an end but the political power remained concentrated in the hands of Ayub Khan. The system of Basic Democracies was the important Source of strength for the regime. The basic objective of the system was to provide a basis for a new political system. The opponents of Ayub's political system talked about scrapping the system of Basic Democracies. Therefore, the Basic Democrats supported the Ayub regime for obvious reasons. The first presidential elections under the 1962 constitution were held in January 1965. These were preceded by the elections of the Basic Democrats during October and November 1964. Ayub Khan defended his political system and cautioned the people that if the opposition party's candidates succeeded, the country would once again be plunged into political chaos similar to that of pre 1958 period."¹¹ In his autobiography, *Friends Not Masters*, Ayub argued, that Pakistan needed a strong government" capable of taking decisions which might not be popular but which were necessary for the safety, integrity and, in particular, development of the country."¹² There are several related statements which explain Ayub's authoritarian attitude.

Miss Fatima Jinnah had applauded Ayub's takeover in 1958, especially his ouster of Iskander Mirza. By 1964, however, she had apparently lost faith in Ayub, sensing that he too was little more than an opportunist and power-seeker, and agreed to be the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) candidate.¹³ Her political appearance was a great challenge for the General Ayub Khan was surprised by the opposition's choice. Ayub's associates believed that the opposition would be too divided to put up any candidate on a unanimous basis and there would be no contest. They assured him that given his achievements and his prominent international status there really was no one in the country who could pose a challenge to him. Ayub Khan and his ministers were, therefore, taken by surprise when on 18 September the COP announced that Miss Fatima Jinnah had graciously accepted their request for nomination as a candidate for the Presidential elections.¹⁴ Miss Jinnah was a respectable lady, deeply admired throughout the country. She expressed her views about Ayub Khan's authoritative regime on different occasions in these words, "He should go to barracks".¹⁵

The joint front of opposition Parties (COP) supported Fatima Jinnah as their presidential candidate. The COP included: Awami League, National Awami Party (NAP), Jamat-i-Islami (JI), Nizam-i-Islam Party (NIP), and Council Muslim League. It was also being supported by the National Democratic Front (NDF).¹⁶ Ayub Khan was persuaded

by his party to use the “religious card” against Miss Jinnah. A ‘*fatwa*’ (religious decree) was obtained from some *Ulema* to the effect that a women couldn’t become the head of a Muslim State. Miss Fatima Jinnah’s candidature was challenged on this ground. The opposition organized an even larger set of *Ulema* to produce an equally authoritative ‘*fatwa*’ in support of Miss Jinnah. They discovered from the writings of various Muslim Jurists that women could become the ruler under exceptional circumstances.¹⁷ According to Sarwat Sawlat, the biographer of Syed Abul A ‘la Maududi, a renowned ‘*alim*, after discussing the religious aspects of the issue in a detailed resolution, opined that under the present extraordinary circumstances it would be permissible in Islam to accept this solution.¹⁸ Miss Jinnah remained a candidate and was the only effectual opponent against Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Her decision to contest the election was not for the sake of power but for the restoration of the rights of the people.

The COP gave their Nine-Point programme whose distinguishing features were the restoration of parliamentary system of government with direct election and universal adult franchise, and a promise to ‘democratize’ the 1962 constitution. The COP’s strategy was to build up sufficient popular support in both wings of Pakistan to pressure the Basic Democrats to vote for Miss Jinnah. Between September 1, 1964, and the end of the election campaign, Miss Jinnah addressed 43, and Aynh 28 public rallies.²⁰

The first phase of the campaign started on 18 September 1964 and continued until the end of October when Miss Jinnah finished her tour of major cities of West Pakistan. The halo around her brightened with each public appearance. The ruling political party maintained a discrete silence during this period because no one in the government had the courage to utter a word of criticism against Miss Jinnah. He repeatedly urged his associates to expose Miss Jinnah’s political record, and draw the attention of the people to her lack of experience and her old age. In her speeches Miss Jinnah attacked Ayub mercilessly, portraying him as an interloper and a dictator. In her Press statement on the eve of Presidential Election, She expresses her views in these words:

“In a nutshell my policy and programme consists of endeavours far restoration of democracy, ensure social, economical, political and educational progressed aimed at the general welfare of the masses, repeal of all repressive, coercive and oppressive and black laws like the Security Act. Press Ordinance. University Ordinance and the like, eradication of corruption, nepotism and favoritism and cutting down all extiavagant and unnecessary Government expenditure. We want to free the political prisoners and detenues.”²¹

Miss Jinnah was seen as the only hope of changing an unjust and oppressive system. The crowds that greeted her in East Pakistan were even larger than those in West Pakistan.

Another strategy of Miss Jinnah’s was to emphasize national political and constitutional problems and avoid regional issues. Also, she tried to polarize the issues; for example, she stressed that she stood for democracy and Ayub stood for dictatorship.

The election campaign clearly demonstrated that the personalities of the two candidates had greater appeal for the voters than the political parties supporting them. As a candidate of the COP Miss Fatima Jinnah in her above seventies showed remarkable reserves of energy and stamina during the election campaign. Her charisma was irresistible. The crowds saw her as the only person who could bring down Ayub's authoritarian rule and restore the democratic rights of the people. She toured the country and in every corner of Pakistan drew massive crowds in support of her opposition to Ayub's dictatorship. She was the ideal of the people and wherever she appeared hundreds and thousands of people would gather only to catch a glimpse of her. Miss Fatima Jinnah dominated the proceedings; the principal issue was the virtue of the parliamentary as against the presidential form of government and vice versa.

The Basic Democrats preferred to support Ayub Khan because they knew that in case the COP candidate won the election, the B.D. system would be scrapped. Miss Fatima Jinnah issued the following statement reminding the members of the Electoral College of their duty on the eve of the presidential Election, 1965.

*"Today the members of the Electoral College will take a momentous decision, which will determine the future destiny of Pakistan. The choice before them is whether Pakistan should have a democratic, and people's rule, or whether they would prefer an authoritarian and one-man rule. Therefore, the main question underlying the re-establishment of the democratic institution in Pakistan. We must always remember that sovereignty rests with the people. They are the masters of the country. No one is greater than Pakistan. Therefore, in all our present and future political activity, it must always be the people who should determine the course of action for the country and for themselves. The vote that is now in the hands of the Members of Electoral College is indeed a sacred trust, and I am sure that they will exercise it today with responsibility and with full faith in themselves, in Allah and in the future glory and prosperity of a free, democratic Pakistan"*²²

The results of the election showed that the Basic Democrats aligned with the Ayub regime and gave him a mandate for next five years. Though he won at the polls, opposition, once it had surfaced, remained alive. Miss Fatima Jinnah's campaign laid bare the repressed feelings of suffering and hardship, and the miserable economic state of the people. In a country in which GNP had risen from Rs. 20 crores in 1948 to approximately Rs. 600 crores, a thirty-fold increase, concentration of wealth in a few hands recalled the 19th century capitalist system of exploitation.²³ The COP accused the Ayub regime of corruptly managing the election. It was said that the Government machinery was used to compel the voters to vote for Ayub Khan. Out of 80,000 members of the Electoral College, 49,951 voted for Ayub and 38,691 for Miss Jinnah. But in East Pakistan the gap was much narrower. Miss Jinnah had 18,434 votes against Ayub's 21,012, giving him a winning margin of only 2,578 votes.²⁴ Ayub asked the Information

Secretary, who had accompanied him during the campaign, to carry out a detailed analysis of the campaign and its results. The analysis showed that the demand for democracy had been Miss Jinnah's main source of popularity, and had won her the support of the intelligentsia.²⁶

Table 1 indicates the votes cast for the two major candidates:

Table I
Presidential Elections (1965) Result

Candidate	Votes Polled		Total	% of Votes Polled
	East Pakistan	West Pakistan		
Ayub Khan	21,012	23,939	49,951	63.31
Miss Fatima Jinnah	18,434	10,257	28,691	36.36

Source: Hassan Askan Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2000), p. 132.

The election of the National assembly also showed that the basic democrats strengthened the hands of the Ayub regime. Field Mar-shal Ayub Khan's Convention Muslim League won an overwhelming majority in the elections. As a result, the Ayub Khan won the election. Flagrant official interference, police high handedness, intimidation, corruption and bribery as Fatima Jinnah analyzed marred the entire conduct of these elections.

Table 2 shows the final party position in 1965 Elections:

Table 2
Party Positions in the National Assembly

Political party	Seats Won		Total
	East Pakistan	West Pakistan	
Pakistan Muslim League (Convention)	55	69	124
The C.O.P.	14	1	15
Independent	9	8	17
Total	75	78	156

Source: Hassan Askan Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2000), p. 133.

In conclusion, we can say that the role of Miss Fatima Jinnah as an opposition leader in our national history will always be remembered. Her determinations, against heavy odds, shock the foundation of a Firm dictatorship and her example paved the way for democratic traditions in the country. Her popularity did not wane with the

defeat of the COP in the 1964 elections. Her defeat was her victory not only for her but also for the peoples of Pakistan. She was and still is one of the most loved, respected leaders, and one of the most admired women of all times. A legend in her own lifetime, she is famed for her excellent abilities and achievements. This defeat was basically the defeat of a weak and mi-principled opposition did not harm Fatima Jinnah's popularity that reached its zenith. It was another personal triumph as she had proved that she being old and frail lady could fight a political battle as well as any man. In her own right, she acquired a world renowned status, not only that of a great women in extraordinary times, but also as an institution to protect the rights and interests of the people. Her influence in this direction continued to be felt throughout her lifetime. She was undoubtedly a great lady with much of the intelligence, personality and iron will of the Quaid as well as a vision for Pakistan. Tumultuous receptions that she met everywhere she went during her election campaign, and the riots that took place during her funeral in Karachi in 1967 are an ample reflection of her popularity as *Madre-e- Millet*. She was a role model for politicians of Pakistan.

Let us seek guidance from her message to the nation on the eve of *Eid-ul-Azha*, in March 1967: "The immediate task before you is to face the problem and bring the country back on the fight path with the bugles of Quaid-i-Azam 's message. March forward under the banner of star and the crescent with unity in your ranks, faith in your mission and discipline. Fulfill your mission and a great sublime future awaits your enthusiasm and action. Remember, "cowards die many limes before death, the valiant never tastes death but once." This is the only course of action which suits any self-respecting people and certainly the Muslim nation."²⁷

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