

Fatima Jinnah's Concern for Women's Technical Education

RIAZ AHMAD

Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah is known for her contribution to the uplift of various segments of Pakistani society which is indicated through her speeches, statements, messages and addresses at different functions and institutions, delivered on various occasions. Her special concern was that women of Pakistan which formed 50 percent of the population should be moulded to play their role on various aspects of human life. An important aspect to which she felt attached, was the promotion of technical education in the country. Along with men, she desired women of Pakistan should equally contribute to the industrial development of Pakistan. This could be done by spreading technical education amongst the girls of Pakistan. For this purpose she delivered a number of speeches, addressed various institutions and established various industrial homes.

Interestingly she devoted herself, to the cause of the establishment of Women Industrial Homes and Institutions, waging a war against illiteracy, and the establishment of Polytechnic Institutes so that the girls of Pakistan could learn to work for self-development on a self-help basis. Inaugurating the Muslim Women Industrial Home at Karachi in February 1948, she said that in this Industrial Home widows will be provided training in different arts and crafts including sewing and embroidery so that they could live honourably by earning their livelihood and they were not dependent or become a burden on the government.¹ Addressing the prize distribution ceremony organised by the Muslim Ladies Technical and Industrial Institute, Karachi, on 19 August 1949, Fatima Jinnah strongly urged the ladies to come forward to acquire education and to work for physical and moral uplift which she considered very “essential for social development of society as a whole”.² In her speech at the Muslim Women Industrial Home, Karachi, on 2 June 1949, Fatima Jinnah said that “Muslim women are generally brought up to be helpless and dependent on the

Riaz Ahmad is Director at the National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research (NIHCR), Islamabad.

¹*Gulbang-i-Hayat*, Lahore: Ferozsons, p. 31.

²*Ibid.*, p.176.

male members of the family, who sometimes have to support quite a number of them which becomes an economic burden on the shoulder of one man".³ "If anything happens to the male member", she maintained, "women or orphan children become so helpless that they have no option but to go for begging to earn their livelihood." In her address to Muslim Women Technical and Industrial Institute, in March 1955 Mohtarma emphasised that "technical and industrial Institutions should be opened not only in big cities but also in every nook and corner of the country".⁴ She also pleaded for promotion of culture of "love for labour".⁵ On 2 December 1951 she performed the opening ceremony of the Salika Sewing Institute, Karachi. In her address, she emphasised the art of "Handicrafts Training". She also urged the girls to learn new ways of preparing modern and popular designs and urged them to avoid from bare imitation of old and worn-out designs.⁶ In her address to Muslim Ladies Technical Institute, Nanakwala, on 22 March 1952, she emphasised the need for waging a war against illiteracy. She pointed out that "a woman who has received academic education or training in art and craft was a great asset to her family and can contribute her share in raising the standards of living".⁷ She also performed an opening ceremony of the Industrial Home started by Bantwa Memon Khidmat Committee on 25 January 1953.⁸ In her inaugural address she emphasised the necessity of opening Industrial Homes for widows and others so that different kinds of handicrafts are taught to them in order to enable them to earn their livelihood. At the Pakistan Industrial Exhibition Karachi in January 1957,⁹ she suggested that such products as were prepared by the ladies of Pakistan should be projected by holding Industrial Exhibitions at all-Pakistan level so that people of the backward areas specially the women are encouraged to benefit from the skill and work of those areas who have excelled in technical education. She maintained that these exhibitions could also boost trade, commerce and industry in Pakistan as they constituted the "life-blood of a nation's existence". On this occasion she also quoted Quaid-i-Azam as having said, "if Pakistan is to play its proper role in the world to which its size, manpower and resources entitle it, it must develop industrial potential side by side with its agriculture and give its economy an industrial bias. By industrialising our State we shall decrease our

³Salahuddin Khan (ed.), *Speeches, Messages and Statements, of Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah (1948-1967)*, Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1976, p. 13.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶*Dawn* (Karachi), 3 December 1951: text available in Dr Riaz Ahmad (ed.), *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah: Unpublished Speeches, Messages, Statements and Interviews (1948-1967)*, Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003, pp. 26-27.

⁷Dr Riaz Ahmad, *Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah*, p. 43.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49 and *Fatima Jinnah Papers*, NAP, Islamabad, F. 209.

⁹Salahuddin Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.165-167.

dependence on the outside world for necessities of life, give more employment to our people and also increase the resources of the State".¹⁰

In the annual students day function of the Polytechnique Institute, Karachi, in March 1959 Mohtarma emphasised the role of technicians as being of very important nature in running our factories.¹¹ She was very happy to note that at the time Karachi Polytechnique Institute was established it was the best in Asia to fulfil the needs in various industrial fields which was helping a lot in building up "know-how" of its technical personnel. She emphasised the role of both craftsmen and labourers in the promotion of Pakistan's industry. In October 1961 Jinnah Polytechnique Institute was established in Karachi. Its opening ceremony was also performed by Madar-i-Millat.¹² As a matter of fact, this Institute was established by Anjuman Islamia, Karachi, for promotion of Technical and Industrial Education amongst boys. This effort of the Anjuman was termed by Madar-i-Millat an important effort devoted to the cause of industrial and economic development of the country.¹³ On 25 September 1962 Madar-i-Millat was the Chief Guest at Muslim Ladies Technical and Industrial Institute Karachi which arranged its 14th anniversary wherein certificates and diplomas to successful girl students were distributed by Madar-i-Millat.¹⁴ At this function 157 certificates and diplomas were distributed by her which related to the fields of sewing, cutting, tailoring, hand-knitting and embroidery work.¹⁵ Madar-i-Millat was happy to note that acquisition of technical training was aimed at all-round development for which she congratulated Mrs K. M. Minocher, Principal of Institute, and her staff for taking pains to train the ladies in various fields of technical education and handicrafts.¹⁶

These aspects of technical education were emphasised by Madar-i-Millat in order to make the ladies, specially widows and orphans, to earn their livelihood independently without becoming a burden on the male members of the household. She wanted to make them play an important role in the society which could not be possible without making the young ladies to earn their livelihood independently. If that kind of attitude was promoted, Fatima Jinnah pleaded, it would certainly help our society to get rid of ignorance, dependence and poverty, etc.

Thus the Madar-i-Millat shines forth as a great leader amongst men and women who devoted so much energy, interest and guidance for the promotion of technical education in the girls of Pakistan.¹⁷ Her concern was understandable

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.166.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 249.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 294-295.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Times of Karachi*, 27 September 1962: Reproduced in Dr Riaz Ahmad, *op.cit.*, pp.121-122.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁷Prof. Sharif al-Mujahid, 'Fatima Jinnah: The Voice of the People' in Fatima Jinnah Number of *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXIV, No.1, January-June 2003, Islamabad: NIHCR, pp.74-75, and Dr Riaz Ahmad (ed.) *Madar-i-Millat: Qaumi Akhbarat key Nazar Mein* (Urdu), Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003, pp. 87-91.

because herself being the dental doctor and a leading woman could understand the problems, challenges of the women in the Muslim society without letting them revolt against the established norms of the society. Her role was reformatory. It was through stages that she wanted Muslim women to adjust to the requirements of modern age.¹⁸

¹⁸For details see Dr Riaz Ahmad, *Fatima Jinnah on Technical Education*, Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003.