Farah Gul Baqai

The woman who brought colour and joy in Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's life was Ruttie Dinshaw - Bombay's most beautiful and elegant lady in her times, who was known as the rose of Bombay.

Sir Petit Dinshaw, Ruttie's father, was a member of Bombay Legislative Council. His wife, Lady Petit, was a social worker and an active member of the Imperial Citizenship Association of Bombay.¹

Ruttie, an admirer of Jinnah, got the first opportunity to listen to his speech at Lucknow in 1916 - the year when he presided over the All India Muslim League session. In that year both the Congress and the League held their annual sessions at Lucknow and both bodies agreed on the constitutional reforms, known as Lucknow Pact". Ruttie was then sixteen, she was keen observer, alert, matter of fact, interested in politics, aristocratic. Miss Ruttie listened to Jinnah's speech, and appreciated the flow of his delivery and appropriate arguments. She also found Jinnah's personality appealing³.

Ruttie, had grown into a full woman. Pretty and precocious, she was brought up in an atmosphere of poetry. At the age of eleven her father presented to her a copy of the complete works of Lord Tennyson. The inscription on the book read: "To dear Ruttie from her loving Papa, 14th December 1911, the date of the birth of her younger brother Jamshed". By the time she met Jinnah she had devoured Shelly, Keats, Browning and a host of other poets, a number of plays and novels. Their impact on the impressionable Ruttie was inevitable. She became romantic. It is in that atmosphere that she met the hero of her dreams. She felt attracted to the tall, towering, handsome and

heroic Jinnah who had already etched for himself a place on the legal, social and political firmament.⁴

Jinnah had liking for Parsis because of their grace and respectable aloofness. He spent a good deal of his time with some Parsi companion. Sir Dinshaw Petit and Lady Petit were among his good friends. Though their Parsi Club was open only for their community people, Jinnah had the distinction of being invited there frequently as a guest of the Petits⁵.

Tall and handsome, an excellent conversationalist and entertaining wit, ever neat and well-dressed, and with a magnetic personality, Jinnah was a source of pride to any one as company and friend. Ruttie admired Jinnah's scintillating personality, and his ideas on women emancipation and political rights had a special appeal for her suffragette nature. But the two soon discovered that they had a common interest in life to which both were specially devoted. They were passionately fond of horse-riding, and often at early morning the two would go out horse-riding for miles, on the Choupatty Sands, away from the noise and din of the life of a big, busy city⁶.

Jinnah was a frequent visitor at Petits' house. In 1917 Mr. Jinnah was invited by the Petits to spend the two-month summer vacation with their family in Darjeeling. Their daughter Ruttie was also with them. That summer Ruttie was seventeen and Jinnah was forty. They shared the Mount Petits chateau within view of Mount Everest, perched 7,000 feet high in the idyllic "Town of thunderbolt -- Darjeeling -- where only the choicest tea plants and the silent snow clad mountain peaks and isolated trail witnessed the passionate glances of longing and love that passed between the two."

The story about Jinnah's marriage is extremely interesting, Sir Dinshaw Petit and Jinnah were great friends. The former was fond of latter and admired his stout hearted nationalism and also his impressive personality. Once Sir Dinshaw invited Jinnah to spend his holidays in Darjeeling. Ruttie the future Mrs. Jinnah was also there. Jinnah then went to Sir Dinsahw and asked him what his views were about intercommunal marriages. Sir Dinshaw fully off his guard, expressed his emphatic opinion that it would considerably help national integration and might ultimately prove to be the final solution to inter-communal antagonism. Thereupon Jinnah calmly told him that he wanted to marry his daughter. Sir Dinshaw was taken aback as Justice Chagla, who was then assisting Jinnah in his chambers, so vividly recalled, "He had not

realised personal repercussions. He was most indignant and refused to continence any such idea which appeared to him absurd and fantastic"8.

Jinnah urged for the marriage as eloquently and as forcefully, as he could but to no avail. His dream of spreading communal harmony and loving unity was thus rudely jolted. Sir Dinshaw never agreed, indeed, never spoke as a friend of such a bitter and rude awakening to what everyone in Bombay already knew. Nor would he sanction the marriage under any circumstances. First, he forbid Ruttie ever to see Jinnah again at least while she remained a minor. Then he sought legal remedies, filing an injunction to prevent their marriage once she came of age, based on the Parsi Marriage Act. But he was pitted against a barrister who rarely lost any case and would gladly have died before surrendering in this matter. Predictably, perhaps, Ruttie's, passionate devotion to her self-chosen husband came to be intensified, thanks to her father's adamant insistence that she never see him again. Juliet like, she would not be deterred by prejudice or the preference of her parents.

Silently, passionately, they waited. On her eighteenth birthday, with only the sari she was wearing and a pet dog under each arm, a defiant Ruttie walked out of her millionaire father's mansion and went off to marry Jinnah¹⁰. Law could no longer stand in the way of love. The injunction of the court by the efflux of time, automatically stood dissolved and as there was no impediment of any kind whatsoever, Jinnah and Ruttie were married.

Here reference may be made of inter-communal marriages' mode. Asif Ali, Humayun Kabir and a number of other nationalist Muslims contracted inter-communal marriages through the mode popularly called the Civil Marriage Act. Mr. Jinnah chose not to have a civil marriage as under the special marriage Act such marriages could be contracted between persons neither of whom professed to belong to Islam or to the Parsi, or Hindu religion under the schedule to the said Act. Separate declarations on Oath and solemn affirmation had to be made by the bridegroom and the bride that he or she does not profess any of the above religions¹¹.

According to Sharif-al-Mujahid *Quaid-i-Azam and His Times* Ruttie embraced Islam on 18 April, 1918 at the City's Jamia Masjid at the hands of Maulana Nizam Khajandi¹². Maulvi Sharif Devji, who was a great scholar of *Shia* sect., performed the rites of *nikah* (marriage engagement). She was given a Muslim name, Maryam¹³.

Maulvi Sharif Devji arranged an *Isna Ashairi Kazi* and the *Nikahnama* was duly signed. According to Raja Sahib of Mahmmudabad, his father signed the marriage contract on Mr. Jinnah's behalf while Maulana Muhammad Hasan Najafi for Mrs. Jinnah Mr. Rizwan Ahmad recalls that the *Nikanamah* reveals that Hazrat Shariat Madar Agai, Haji Shaikh Abdul Hasham Najafi and Mirza Muhammad Ali Khan, the Mahrajkumar of Mahmudabad, were the *vakils* of the bridegroom, Sharif Davji and Ghulam Ali were the vakils of the bride and Omar Sobhani was the witness. The *Nikah* register gives only a brief summary under Entry No. 118. According to it the *Mehar* was Rs. 1001 and that Quaid-e-Azam also gifted to Rattie bai a sum of Rs. 1,25,000 ¹⁴.

After marriage Jinnah had no separate existence away from his wife. He found in her a great source of inspiration. His personal, political and social life was always with Ruttie. She was much younger than him, but she looked after him and made his life pleasant, carefree and worth living 15.

Ruttie had an aptitude for internal decoration, and with her aesthetic sense she decorated the Jinnah home. She purchased a number of objects of art and antiques to create a classic atmosphere. The husband was happy and he did not mind the expenses that such transformation necessarily involves. "She was the flower of Bombay, lively, witty and full of ideas". 16

Ruttie was a gay and vivacious, socialite, she was also ardent, quick-tongued, and Indian Nationalist. 17 In 1918, she went to Simla where Jinnah had to attend the sessions of the Indian Legislative Assembly. She and Jinnah were invited on at the dinner at the Viceroy's Lodge. When introduced to Lord Chelmsford, she did not follow the British customs of curtseying to the Viceroy. Instead, she followed the Indian customs and folded here hands after shaking hands with the Viceroy. Immediately after the dinner, the A.D.C. took Ruttie to talk to the Viceroy. Lord Chelmsford pompously told her. "Mrs. Jinnah, your husband has a great political future, you must not spoil it. In Rome you must do what the Roman's do". Mrs. Jinnah retorted quickly, "That is exactly what I did, your Excellency. In India I greeted you in the Indian way". That was the first and last time she met Lord Chelmsford. 18 After marriage, their life became hectic, apart from his legal and political engagements Jinnah was having encounters with Lord Willingdon, the then Governor of Bombay. On 10 December

1918, the meeting convened by the Sharif of Bombay was to be held at the Town Hall, Bombay, to vote a citizen's address to Lord Willingdon on his retirement. Jinnah and hundreds of his followers occupied the hall in time and remained there until the police broke up the meeting in confusion. Ruttie was at the steps of the Town Hall where thousands of people had assembled to join the demonstrations. She stood bravely there, Inspite of police rowdyism. Both Jinnah and Ruttie received injuries. The day was won and the address to Lord Willingdon was not voted. To celebrate the victory, a one-rupee fund was started by the citizens of Bombay at the instance of B.D. Lam, solicitor, and People Jinnah Memorial Hall was built in the Congress House compound. After independence it is referred to as P.J. Hall. Few Indians now remember that it was created in honour of Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

In May 1919, Mr. Jinnah went to England to give evidence before the Joint Selection Committee on the Montague Bill. Ruttie went with him. There on 14/15 August just after midnight their only daughter, Dina, was born.²⁰ The date coincides with the date of the independence of India and Pakistan.

For a couple of years the Jinnahs were quite close to Gandhi. In his diary, Mahadev Desai, Private Secretary to Gandhi makes references to meetings between Gandhi and Ruttie. In the summer of 1919 the Jinnahs were in London. On 28 June 1919 Mahatma Gandhi wrote to the Quaid-i-Azam, "Pray tell Mrs. Jinnah that I shall expect her on her return to join the hand-spinning class that Mrs. Banker senior and Mrs. Ramabai, a Punjabi lady, are conducting. I hope you will both keep well during your stay". On 30 April 1920 Gandhi wrote to Mrs. Jinnah to coax Jinnah to learn Hindustani or Gujrati, "if I were you, I should begin to talk to him in Gujrati or Hindustani. There is not much danger of your forgetting your English or your misunderstanding each other. Is there? Will you do it? Yes, I could ask this even for the love you bear me". Gandhi asked Ruttie to get Mr. Jinnah agree to boycott of all British goods. Ruttie thought it was neither politically wise nor was it practicable.

Differences between Gandhi and Quaid-i-Azam cropped up at the Calcutta session of Congress, held in September 1920. Subsequently; under the chairmanship of Mr. Gandhi, the constitution of the Home Rule League was unconstitutionally changed. The parting came at the famous Nagpur session of the Congress held in December 1920 when under Gandhi's guidance the delegates voted for a change in the

Congress creed. Mr. Jinnah protested against Gandhi's extreme measures. According to the correspondent of The Times of India, "Then Mr. Jinnah with the usual smile on his face mounted the platform with an ease suggestive of self-confidence and the conviction of the man, and opposed in an argumentative, lucid and clear style the change of creed. He treated with contempt the jeering of the mob and their dictation and ended by appealing to Gandhi to cry halt". Ruttie was present at the session and stood by the Quaid-i-Azam. After the Congress session on 3 January 1921, the Jinnah's returned to Bombay by train. Maulana Shaukat Ali was also in the train, What happened at Akola may be recalled from the letter entitled 'Non-cooperation in practice' which appeared in the Times of India under the initials R. (Probably Ruttie and written by Jinnah): "At Akola Mr. Shaukat Ali delivered a short lecture to those who had assembled on the platform and at the end of lecture he incited them to hoot at Mr. Jinnah who was seated in the first class compartment with cries of 'Shame'. Sir: this sort of thing is the negation of non-corporation of which non-violence is the essence."21

The wives of the Governors and the Viceroys were rather envious of Ruttie's dress and ornaments. Once Ruttie was wearing a low-cut dress which just came in fashion, at a party at the Bombay Government House. While they were seated at the dining table, Lady Willingdon asked an A.D.C. to bring a wrap for Mrs. Jinnah, in case she felt cold. Jinnah is said to have risen, and said, "when Mrs. Jinnah feels cold. She will say so, and ask for a wrap herself". Then he led his wife from the dining-room; and from that time, he refused to go to the Government House again. 22

Alice the consort of Earl Reading, the Viceroy of India, in one of her letters wrote. There is a young lawyer from Bombay called Jinnah. Popular opinion say he is an Indian Lloyd George. He came to lunch with his wife., Very pretty, a complex minx. A light dress of brocade cut to waist back and front, no sleeves and over it her head flowered shiffon as a sari.²³

In another letter, she said, "her attire was a liberty Scarf, a jewelled bandeau and an emerald necklace. She is extremely pretty, fascinating, terribly made up. All the men raved about her, the women sniffed"²⁴.

Once Ruttie was sitting next to Lord Reading at Lunch in New Delhi. Lord Reading was moaning and groaning. He said to her: "Mrs.

Jinnah, how I wish I could go to Germany. I very much want to go there. But I cannot go there? "Mrs. Jinnah asked: "Your Excellency, why can't you go there? "Reading replied: "The Germans do not like us, the British, so I can't go". Ruttie quickly asked "How then did you come to India? "Reading immediately changed the subject.²⁵

Jinnah was on friendly terms with Lord Reading, who had respect for his talent, integrity and devotion to public duty. A story goes that Lord Reading tried to tempt Jinnah at first with a judgeship of the High Court, and then with the offer of being the Law Minister in the Viceroy's Cabinet. He promptly turned down both offers. Later on, Lord Reading sounded him if he would accept knighthood in the next Honour's List. The Quaid was not a person who could be purchased, or be a henchman of the British. He is reported to have said, "I prefer to be plain Mr. Jinnah than Sir Muhammad Ali Jinnah". At a social function, Lord Reading asked Mrs. Jinnah if she would not like to be addressed as "Lady Jinnah". The lady dashed forth her reply; "If my husband accepts knighthood, I will take a separation from him.²⁶

Ruttie's personality was prismatic. She was a woman of great sensivity, intelligence and charm. Her social and political conscience found expression in varied field activities and interest. She was a connoisseur of clothes and curios. Apart from jade and jewels, her hobby was to collect the first edition of literary books.²⁷

Ruttie had the reputation of being one of the best dressed women of Bombay. Her favourite tailor had a smart fashion shop on Hornby Road, opposite the University Building, known by the name of its European owner, Emile Windgrove. Once she had gone to her tailor to try out a new dress she had ordered, and as soon as she stepped out, a poignant incident greeted her. She saw a ghatan (Mahratta) old woman coming towards her, her legs tottering under the staggering weight of a big basket of bananas that she was carrying on her shoulders. The fruit-seller put the basket down with difficulty on the footpath outside Emile's shop, and requested Mrs. Jinnah to buy some fruit from her. Just then a white-skinned police officer appeared on the scene, and was annoyed to see some one squat outside a fashion shop on Hornby Road, which was the "shopping preserve" of the Europeans and the rich in those days. Without ceremony, he muttered a curse under his breath.

"You...Get out from here", and he continued to rebuke her in Hindustani that he had learnt in the Bombay lock-up. "Get away, if you have any respect for your body". The bananas scattered about her on the ground, the poor woman looked appealingly into the eyes of the police officer, which were eloquent with anger, Mrs. Jinnah jumped into the foray, faced the officer and said, "you have no business to behave like this with the public. You better collect all the bananas; put them in her basket and let her go. Otherwise, I will make you regret this day". The puzzled officer looked at this unknown, but attractive young lady, who spoke with the voice of authority; he hastily made amends with the fruit-vendor, and helped to put the basket on her head again.

Mrs. Jinnah walked to the women and put a five rupee note in her hand. Like her husband she championed the cause of the weak; she stood up against oppression. Mrs. Jinnah was concerned about the children in the brothel area. She, her husband and friends toured the area, collected first-hand knowledge about the living condition of the children there. They found that children were suffering from venereal diseases. They decided that children should not be made the victim of cruelties and inhumanities of circumstances. They took some practical steps; they opened a children home, and their friend, Miss Kathleen Davis, took charge to look after the welfare of children under 18. Through legal means, they worked to pass a Children's Act by the Bombay Legislative Council, the Act was enforced in May 1927, to protect children from the immoral trade. By 1928 due to their sincere efforts not a single child was to be found in the Bombay brothel area. 29

Ruttie was fond of consulting astrologers and palmists. Her interest was aroused by an incident which had happened after her marriage. Mr. Jinnah and she were in Delhi, happy, contented and laughing. She met an Irish lady named Mrs. Harker, who had reportedly possessed a second sight. As she saw this beautiful young woman so happy and contented, she turned to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and said with a sad face, "My dear! I see a dreadful sight, I see this beautiful child dead before my eyes, dead ten years hence on her birthday". ³⁰

By 1925 Ruttie came under the influence of Mrs. Annie Besant, Mrs. James Cousins, Mrs, Dorothy Jinarjadas, J. Krishnamurti and Kanji Dwarkadas. She was propelled towards the study of the so-called spiritual phenomenon message through dreams, spirits, communication, telepathy, medium, clairvoyance and theosophy. She read books like *Towards Stars*, Secret Doctrine and the *Spirit of Irene*.

The last book describes the tracing of a murder through spirits and bringing the culprits to justice ultimately. On 12 April 1925 Ruttie wrote to Kanji Dwarkadas about spiritualism and said, "I am slowly but sincerely drawing J's interest into the matter and by alternate bullying and coaxing, I got him read the book *The Spirit of Irene*. However, I had to admit that it was remarkable and irrefutable. I was not able to find any flaw in the case. Ruttie used to call Jinnah "J". Though Jinnah was throughout sceptical of the business of magnetising and thought transference and used to laugh at Ruttie, he was somewhat relieved when Ruttie practically gave up her fruitless and dangerous pursuits. ³¹

Separation Between Ruttie and Jinnah

Jinnah and Ruttie loved and respected each other but Jinnah's over work alienated her. Jinnah provided her with all the comforts of life and allowed her to lead her life in her own royal style. She was a young, dreamy, romantic, idealistic person, desiring Jinnah to pay her full attention which was impossible for Jinnah, as he was engrossed with the demands of his legal profession. He was concerned with the future and fate of Muslims of India as well. His beautiful wife understood his liabilities but her romantic nature could not accept it.

In January 1928 Ruttie and Mr. Jinnah separated. Jinnah went to England on 3 April 1928. Ruttie followed a week later on 10 April. Later she went to Paris and fell ill. Dewan Chaman Lal a common friend of the Jinnah's, who was leading the Indian workers' delegation to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conference at Geneva went to Paris to see Ruttie at Champs Elysees clinic. She was lying in bed, with a temperature of 106F° degree. She could barely move. She held a volume of Oscar Wild poems in her hand and she asked Chamanlal to read the following lines:

And down the long silent street The dawn, with silver-sandalled feet, Crept like a frightened girl

When Chamanlal looked upon her Ruttie was in coma. He hurried out and brought a doctor. Diwan Chamanlal also telephoned London for Mr. Jinnah who was in Dublin at that time. A message was relayed to him in Dublin and Jinnah rushed to Paris. Diwan Chaman recalls in his memoirs:

"At the George V, where he stayed, he said to me, 'But the lady Petit (his mother-in-law) tells me Ruttie is better'. I said, "I have just come from the clinic and it seems to me she, with a temperature of 106F° degree, is dying". He sat still for a couple of minutes, struggling with himself and asked me to telephone the clinic which I did. He spoke to the nurse in charge who confirmed what I had told him. Thumping the arm of his chair he said: "Come, let us go. We must save her." I left him at the clinic for nearly three hours, waiting at a nearby cafe and when he returned, the anxiety had vanished from his face. He had arranged for a new clinic and a new medical adviser.³²

Jinnah stayed with her in the nursing home for over a month and looked after and nursed her. Later Ruttie told Kanji Dwarkadas, he ate the same food as she did at the nursing home. They returned to India separately, she with her mother, but she was very ill and Kanji saw her practically every day between the middle of October right till her death on 20 February, 1929, except for the few days during the Christmas week, when Mrs. Besant called him (Kanji Dwarkadas) to Calcutta to attend the All Party Conference to discuss the Nehru (Motilal) Report. He did not want to go to Calcutta as he did not like to leave Ruttie alone - but the telegram from Mrs. Besant was a "command" and he obeyed. 33

Jinnah Bombay practice continued to prosper, demanding and receiving more and more of his time and attention, evening as well as days and often seven days a week. The law was an exacting mistress, as Ruttie soon learned. What little free time was left to him was consumed by politics. "Mercurial, dashing, impulsive and lovely lonely young Ruttie found herself daily with more time than she could possibly devise ways to spend.³⁴

Chagla has recorded in his memories, "I must say in fairness to Jinnah that no husband could have treated his wife more generously than he did. He treated her wonderfully well and paid without a murmur all the bills which were necessitated by the luxurious life she led.³⁵

Ruttie and Jinnah had developed some sort of misunderstanding in Paris. They left Paris separately, the deep bond of love still existed between them. From Marseilles she wrote to Jinnah, saying that she loved him with all the tenderness of her heart without lust, and requested him to remember her as the flower he plucked and not the flower he treaded upon. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Chagla, and Kanji

Dwarkadas used to visit her. Dr. Masina and Nawab Ismail Khan were trying for a rapproachement between her and Jinnah.³⁷

In his book *Ruttie Jinnah: The Story of Great Friendship*, Kanji Dwarkadas writes that throughout January and February 1929, Ruttie continued to be ill and this depressed her. She hardly ever went out except for short walks with him. Every evening Jinnah came to see Ruttie, Jinnah and she kept on talking of old times. They were getting reconciled to each other. By the middle of February, Jinnah had to go to Delhi for the Assembly Budget Session, leaving his sick wife alone. Jinnah loved her passionately although the unbending Jinnah found it difficult to communicate with his mercurial, blithe-spirited wife. Jinnah's dream collapsed in 1929, when the beautiful wife he loved, but failed to understand, left him, on her birthday i.e., 20 February 1929. She died of an overdose of morphine, which she had been taking to ease the pain of chronic colitis. ³⁹

The funeral was held at Bombay's Muslim Cemetery (Arambagh) on 22 February. Kanji met Jinnah at Grant Road Station and drove him there, trying to convince him "that Ruttie would have liked to be cremated", but "she was buried under Muslim rites". It was a painfully slow ritual. Jinnah sat silently through all of its five hours. Then, as Ruttie body was being lowered into the grave, Jinnah, as the nearest relative, was the first to throw the earth on the grave and he broke down suddenly and sobbed and wept like a child for minutes together. Chagla was also there, and he too recalled that "there were actually tears in his eyes", adding that "that was the only time when I found Jinnah betraying some shadows of human weaknesses". 40

Conclusion

The biography of Ruttie-Jinnah is a story of a young girl, who started her practical life much earlier than her age. She was loved, cared for and pampered like any rich girl in an Indian environment. The love and care of her parents made her bold, rebellious and egoistic. She left her parents house at the young age of 18 to marry Jinnah. On his part, Jinnah loved her as any honourable man would have loved his wife. He gave her full liberty to lead the sort of life as she aspired to. She bought expensive stylish dresses, decorated the house, spent money as she felt like and met people that she liked with no checks or hindrances. She enjoyed fully his confidence and faith. The conflict in her life began when she came close the theosophical

philosophy. She got interested in contacting spirits. From her letters to Kanji Dwarkadas it appears that she was not capable of handling dead people and lost spirits. And in her pursuit to solace the spirit who died in some distress, she lost her own peace and tranquillity. And in her eagerness to claim a spirit she had sleepless nights, Jinnah tried to get her out of these dangerous pursuits, but she never really came out of it completely. She got interested in it because of her adventurous nature, but she was too young to handle it adroitly. Jinnah could not be blamed for her troubles because he tried to do what he could like a gentleman, and he was not like a traditional husband to stifle his wife's interests. He was extremely liberal and believed passionately in woman emancipation.

Ruttie was not an ordinary woman. She lived her life with passion, with her own view of world and things. She was romantic, idealistic, lovely, vivacious, soft-hearted. She wanted to improve things, make life better, meaningful and encouraging and she tried her best to make life bearable for others. Her love for animals indicated that she was a very amicable and friendly person. But the problem with her was that she got lost. The beautiful, dainty, well-dressed lady lost her way in the wilderness of theosophical world.

She was meant to live in the poetic world — dreaming, doing some philanthropic work, enjoying good company, taking care of her pet animals. Somehow she stepped on the wrong ladder of life, which was not meant for her. It was criminal negligence of some of her close friends who encouraged her to participate in the theosophical society meetings, to ask her to educate her daughter in Theosophical School at Adyar. For such tasks, a romantic, person's life is not meant. For them living itself is quite a test. For real life is not as romantic as romantic natured people themselves are and conceive it to be.

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