

Tribute

Mrs. Dina Wadia: Jinnah's Estranged Daughter

The death of Dina Wadia in New York on Thursday, 2 November 2017, marks the end of a full life marginally liked to Pakistan, though she was the only child of its founder, Quaid-i-Azam, Mr. M.A. Jinnah. Dina was 98, having born on midnight August 14/15, 1919, exactly twenty-seven years before the birth of Pakistan. At the time of death she was surrounded by her immediate family members including her son Nusli N. Wadia and daughter Diana N. Wadia and other close family members. Her funeral took place on 3 November. Pakistan sent heartfelt condolences to the Wadia family and four messages along with four bouquets to the family signed by President Mamoon Hussain, Prime Minister Shahid Khan Abbasi, Foreign Minister Khwaja Asif and Ambassador Aziz Ahmed Chowdhary. Meantime, the chiefs of the three main political parties, PML-N, PPP and PTI and Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif condoled her death in their farewell messages.

Short in stature like her mother, Ratti, but sharp in tongue like the Quaid, Dina Wadia more often than not displayed the Jinnah in her than Ratti. When her marriage proposal to Neville Wadia was pleaded by Dina, according to Currim Chagla, then Jinnah's assistant and later India's Foreign Minister, Jinnah said that there were millions of Muslim boys in the subcontinent and asked Dina to choose one of them. Dina shot back that there were millions of Muslim girls in the subcontinent, then why did he marry Ratti, a Parsi girl. Startled by her aggressive but logical response, Jinnah however collected himself in good time and told her that Ratti had accepted Islam. After all 'you can't argue with a woman, can you?', Jinnah told Kanji Dwarkdas years ago.

Till Dina's marriage proposal surfaced, Dina had the best of relations with her father. However, she was often neglected by her mother (Ratti) when the latter was obsessed with theosophy or politics. Jinnah has often been accused of neglecting Ratti, but he was forced to busy himself in taking up more and more briefs, partly to pay for Ratti's extravagance. While Jinnah was studying the briefs for the next day's court proceedings, Ratti would come up asking him to take her to social gatherings. He could not possibly because he had to meet Ratti's

extravagance all the time. Hence, if Jinnah had to neglect Ratti perforce, Dina was deliberately or otherwise neglected by Ratti. She left Dina behind when she took a trip to visit the arch-Theopriestess Annie Basant at Adyar, Madras, and on her trip to Hyderabad (Deccan) to meet Sarojani Naidu's family. Her neglect forced Dina to depend more and more on Mrs. Dinshaw De Mille's family, Ratti's mother, and there she imbibed the Parsi ethos and cultural values. After Ratti Jinnah's death on 28 February 1929, Fatimah Jinnah who took over Jinnah's household also took care of Dina. During Jinnah's self-exile in London at Heathrow Heath, both Fatimah and Dina stayed with Jinnah. In 1932/33, Jinnah who had always been a great admirer of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk read his biography *The Gray Wolf* and liked it immensely. He tossed it on to Dina, recommending her to read it since it was good. Dina read it and began teasing Jinnah as the Gray Wolf. This indicates the sort of friendly relationship the father and daughter had while they were in England. They often went to theatres to see plays, to concerts and to picnics. As against her mother who considered herself a fairy that had been dropped by the clouds above, Dina, like Jinnah, had always had her feet on the ground. In her personal features, as well, she looked like Jinnah rather than Ratti. Ratti had a life long conflict with Lady Wellington, when at the Government House in Bombay in 1918, the latter asked one of her attendants to get Ratti a shawl to cover-up her low neckline lest she felt cold at dinner.

Dina came back to India when Jinnah returned from his exile, finally in 1935, and was lodged in Bombay. Because Fatimah Jinnah was in a sense jealous of Dina for her occupying such a crucial space in Jinnah's life, Dina had again to increasingly depend on her mother's family and her Parsi relatives. There she met Neville Wadia, an outstanding Parsi industrialist in Bombay and fell in love with him. On the other side, this Dina-Wadia relationship hurt Jinnah the most but Dina stood her ground. If Jinnah had deprived the Parsi community of a beauty queen, the *creme de la creme* of their community, the Parsi community in turn had deprived Jinnah of his only daughter. Who stood high in his calculations; this was poetic justice, to call the least. Finally, Dina married Wadia at All Saint's Church in 1938. Despite the hurt that Jinnah felt at Dina's decision, he yet plucked up enough courage and affection to send the couple a bouquet at their marriage ceremony.

This marriage lasted only for a few years but the couple had two issues – one son, Nusli, and one daughter, Diana. Nusli got the inheritance from Wadia upon his death and both Nusli and Diana lived with their mother, Dina. Except for some immediate years after the marriage, Dina had extremely affectionate relationship with her father.

She sent him a sympathetic note when Jinnah was attacked by a Khaksar in Bombay in 1943 and sent him communications off and on. Along with her children she met Jinnah at tea in Bombay in May/June 1946 and Jinnah spent some time with the children. When Nusli showed an interest in Jinnah's cap, Jinnah gifted it to him saying 'you can have it my boy'. Dina also congratulated Jinnah when Partition was accepted and Jinnah in turn asked her to come and live in Pakistan. Jinnah, it may be remembered loved to spend time with family and children, as he told a supporter years later.

However, Dina came to Pakistan only twice. First, she came on 12 September 1948, after Jinnah's death, and visited his grave along with Fatimah Jinnah. She was attired in a black sari and cried openly. She left Pakistan soon after. It has not been possible to trace out the day and date when she left Pakistan. Dina associated herself with the centenary celebration of Quaid-i-Azam's birth at the United Nations which was partly sponsored by UN Secretary General Dr. Kurt Waldheim. The celebrations were also participated in by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Iqbal A. Akhund.

Dina was invited to visit Pakistan several times but she resisted all the time if only because of her desire to acquire the Jinnah house at Bombay as her family property and a visit to Pakistan would jeopardise that claim. Of course, the Indian government refused to accede to Dina's request and the Jinnah house in Bombay continues to be under the Indian government.

Finally, she acceded to Pakistan's request for a visit at President Musharraf's invitation. She was invited to watch the India-Pakistan cricket match and visit Jinnah's mausoleum. She did come, along with Nusli Wadia and spent a busy time both at Lahore and at Karachi. She visited the Quaid's mausoleum and spent an hour at the Mazar. She placed bouquets both at Jinnah's grave and at Fatimah Jinnah's grave. 'May his dreams come true' was her message to Pakistan as she penned it down in the Mausoleum's visitor's book.

The TV channels and the newspapers focused attention on Dina's life and death in various segments and features. All said and done, the Pakistanis sole prayers are, wherever she be, may her soul rest in peace – R.I.P.