



To mark fifty years of the establishment of Pakistan, PTV aired a serial, *Jinnah Say Quaid* on the life of Quaid-e-Azam and his struggle for the division of India into two independent states. Though it was a mini serial, yet it got good reviews from the public, despite the presence of several novices in the lead roles. Sheharyar Jehangir took up the role of Quaid, the most illustrious figure in the history, while Nageen Shah was chosen to play the part of Rutti Jinnah, Quaid's life partner. As a person, I found Nageen like a happy-go-lucky, sixteen-year old, showing no false airs about herself.

# CAMEO— NAGEEN SHAH

Interview by Hasina Habib Sajun



# When I read the copy of the original letter that Ruttie wrote for the Quaid, which he got after her death, I cried. My heart went out for her, it was such a sad life for her.

**Haseena Sajun:** The search for the right person to play the part was on for quite sometime. How were you chosen?

**Nageen Shah:** I didn't know anything about this, until one of my teacher Mrs. Salma Baig asked me if I'd be interested to audition for a role. She thought I would be just right for the role and told me to go and see her husband, Mr. Obaidullah Baig.

**HS:** What was your family's reaction when they got to know about this?

**NS:** Not much . . . but my mother accompanied me when I went to see Mr. Obaidullah Baig and the moment he saw me, he thought that I was just right for the part. He then immediately told me to contact Mohsin Ali *sahib*.

**HS:** Now that must have caused some tension at home!

**NS:** No, not really, Everyone was quite cool about it. Only after Mohsin Ali offered me the role, that it hit them that I would be appearing on television.

**HS:** Did you have any experience of acting before you took up such a major project?

**NS:** Acting no . . . never . . . but I did participate in singing and dancing competitions at school.

**HS:** With no experience, weren't you doubtful that you won't be able to memorise the dialogues?

**NS:** Thesedays in school we are doing a play of Shakespeare, Macbeth, and I know the entire play by heart, so memorising the dialogues didn't bother me that much. Though my little command of Urdu did worry me. But luckily those people showed a lot of faith in me, more than I could ever ask for.

**HS:** And you did it pretty smoothly it seems!!

**NS:** Mohsin uncle and the others briefed me about the mood of the play and what sort of emoting was required of me. Combined with that, I was allowed to adlib some and use English words when I just couldn't pronounce the difficult words of Urdu.

**HS:** Did you practice your lines in front of the mirror?

**NS:** Oh no, nothing like that. Actually the atmosphere on the sets was most friendly, we all felt like a family. And I did not have to practice much but what I really dreaded was wearing a sari. Since I was wearing it for the first time so I had to practice a lot, how to walk in it and face the camera at the same time.

**HS:** And I guess playing the part of Ruttie wasn't all that tough since Pakistan history is a compulsory subject in school?

**NS:** Memorising the events of history for the Social Studies Paper is very different from knowing, feeling and portraying the emotions of real-life person.

**HS:** You did manage to fit into Ruttie Jinnah's role of a sixteen year old girl who fell in love with the Quaid and remained a very supportive wife till her death?

**NS:** I am really lucky to have done such a great part. An aunt of mine gave me a book about Ruttie Jinnah's wife, just so that I could have all information about her. You know with school work and shooting at weekends there was no way I could have gotten through the book.

**HS:** Now some questions about you . . . how old are you what about studies?

**NS:** I am sixteen and will appear for my 'O' levels this year.

**HS:** And what after that?

**NS:** I intend to study Law after my A Levels.

TVT/MARCH 1998

**HS:** If you get other interesting offers, would you take them up?

**NS:** Acting is very time consuming, even though most of it was done over the weekend, what with my school, tests and studies. But I would be happy to do something good and interesting if anything of that sort comes along.

**HS:** Were there many delays in the recordings?

**NS:** For one reason or the other, it used to take a lot of time. Let's say we used to go at one in the afternoon and the recordings continued till one in the morning.

**HS:** So were the refreshments on the house?

**NS:** Yes but only a couple of times. Then at times my mom used to get drinks and *samosas* for us.

**HS:** So how would you sum up your debut experience on television?

**NS:** I felt awed and humbled at the same time to have portrayed this great lady. When I read the copy of the original letter that Ruttie wrote for the Quaid, which he got after her death, I cried. My heart went out for her, it was such a sad life for her. She was so young when she died.

## FAVOURITE SCENE IN FAVOURITE VIDEO

### FARHAN ALI AGHA

"Just recently, I saw *My Best Friend's Wedding* starring Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney and Cameron Diaz. The story revolves around three people, two of which are best friends while the third one comes later. Both Julia and Dermot decide that if they are unable to find a life partner till a certain time, then they will marry each other. Actually Julia is in love with Dermot but is not willing to come out with it in the open. When she finds out that Dermot is all set to marry Cameron, she tries all the tricks that she knows to stop the wedding. This angers Cameron and she runs away. This is my favourite scene in the movie because of its strong emotional impact. After this, both Julia and Dermot try to find Cameron."

### HUMAYUN JAMSHED

"Of all the movies I have seen, I think the movie *Message* stands out, as the way it has been done. The theme revolves around Islam and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) where the director, since he can't portray him, but still he has done such a realistically marvelous job that the movie has become a piece of art. There was this scene when some Muslims seek asylum in Christian country and the King, after seeking information about Islam embraces it. I found, that it was the most moving scene in the movie."

