

**RESEARCH PAPER****Revisiting Benazir Bhutto and her Contribution to Restore Democracy in Pakistan****Dr. Muhammad Azeem**

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Corresponding Author azeem.arch@pu.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this study is to explore, investigate and analyze the struggle of Benazir Bhutto to restore democracy in Pakistan. Benazir was the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a legendary political leader and Prime Minister of Pakistan who was not only deposed from power in 1977 but was also hanged by the military ruler, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, in 1979. She chose her father's path, started her political career and launched a resistance movement (MRD) against an autocratic ruler Gen. Zia and forced him to restore democracy. She was the first Muslim woman in the Muslim world who, by dint of her sheer leadership qualities, rose to the office of Prime Minister twice (1988 and 1993) which is the highest seat of executive office in a democratic system. She had to pass a thorny path of forcing the military dictator to restore democracy in Pakistan.

Keywords: Alliance, Democracy, Democratic Parties, Dictatorship, Martial Law, Military, Movement, MRD, Restoration**Introduction**

The word Democracy comes from Greek which means rule by the elected people or representatives. Democracy is a best form of government ever preserved or created by contemporary-day civilization. Moreover, there are some key factors regarding true democracy i.e. free & fair elections, role of judiciary, media, political parties, religious tolerance and education. Pakistan has the experience of democratic as well as authoritative forms of Govt. since its inception. Furthermore, lack of in time free & fair elections, martial laws, imbalance of power, civil military relations, gap between general public and political elite, vindictive politics of opposition are the key obstacles and hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan. (Fareed, et. al. 2019; Fozia, 2018). In these circumstances, for female leadership, to counter the undemocratic forces and to steer relentless struggle for the restoration of democracy, in Pakistan, was a gigantic task which was undertaken by Benazir Bhutto's resilient and fearless personality. Benazir Bhutto, excessively driven by the sense of destiny, a sheer product of peculiar circumstances, managed to usher the era of her political thrust, contributed significantly, to push the ouster of challenging forces for democracy like Gen. Zia led military dictatorship, and became the symbol of democratic struggle for the restoration of democracy. (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Although, failure of democracy in Pakistan was caused by inherited colonial institutions and coercive methods were used to suppress the democratic structure of the country, yet the emergence of Benazir Bhutto to restore democracy and her political efforts to knock down military dictatorship is a topic of open debate among researchers and scholars (Badar, 2019).

Literature Review

Muhammad Ali Sheikh provides biographical sketch of Benazir Bhutto; her family history, childhood and various challenges which she faced during her political career. He also elaborates different hurdles which she faced during Zia led regime. The author has given shorter views about her struggle to restore democracy in Pakistan (Sheikh, 2000).

Shyam Bhatia focuses on her childhood, her exile and hectic days during Zia led regime, her married life as well as her assassination. The author has slightly touched her struggle for restoration of democracy in Pakistan through the platform of MRD (Bhattia, 2008).

Corinne J. Nadden provides the detail about Benazir Bhutto's early life, her educational career and her father's political legacy. The author presented the details about different events from her exile till her death. However, during the written work on Benazir Bhutto, the author has overlooked the efforts rendered by her to restore democracy in Pakistan (Naden, 2011).

Mercedes Padrino in his biographical sketch on Benazir Bhutto throws light on her childhood, her foreign education and the days of her imprisonment by Gen. Zia. The author has given shorter views on her struggle for restoration of Democracy in Pakistan (Padrino, 2004).

Lawrence Ziring has presented a very comprehensive as well as in detail views on political history of Pakistan. His work is comprehensively focusing on the cause and insight of Benazir Bhutto; specifically highlighting the political struggle and her role as an opposition leader, however, there is a lack of sufficient details and comprehensive analysis regarding the efforts rendered by Benazir Bhutto for restoration of Democracy in Pakistan (Ziring, 2011).

I. H. Malik focuses on the function of significant ruling class to formulate the state of Pakistan like incorporating the military, feudal, bureaucracy while concluding the efforts of authority, ideology, endeavors and ethnicity to narrate the political matter of Pakistan state, gender and civilization. However, the discussion of different communal groups, authority, and state is undertaken while ignoring Benazir Bhutto's contribution to restore democracy in Pakistan (Malik, 1997).

Material and Methods

This research has been conducted by implying the historical, descriptive and analytical methods. The data was collected from primary and secondary sources with the help of documents, books, research articles and other literature. On the basis of collection of data, the study has been analyzed thoroughly.

Results and Discussion

Benazir Bhutto contributed significantly; for democratic revival, worked for civilian supremacy and rendered utmost services for the progress, prosperity and amelioration of the plight of female gender in Pakistan. Although, she was born in a prominent political family and upheld the political thoughts, beliefs and legacy of her father Z.A. Bhutto, yet, her political idealism, democratic and social policies transformed her into a courageous, shrewd and famous politician. The imprisonment of Z.A. Bhutto and his subsequent execution brought Benazir Bhutto into the center stage of politics in Pakistan. Although, she succeeded her father as head of the PPP, yet, her captivating presence transformed her into a visionary and competent politician among her contemporaries. The endurance, valor and courage were such main characteristics of her personality that she faced during military suppression that was unleashed by Zia led regime. However, she neither succumbed to all odds and challenges during and after military rule in Pakistan (Sardar, 2018)

Zulfikar Bhutto contributed for the political training, grooming and patronage of young Benazir when he was dominating the political scene of Pakistan (Sardar, 2018). However, the political circumstances and changing political dynamics never permitted Z.A. Bhutto to ensure a full political patronage to his daughter. When Benazir Bhutto was passing

through her initial stages of political maturity, Z.A. Bhutto confronted to a military coup, in 1977, under the patronage of the then Army Chief Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. However, Gen. Zia ousted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government on 5th July 1977 and announced to hold elections within the time span of three months (Suvorova, 2015, p. 13 & Zakriya, 1990). However, Gen. Zia did not fulfill his promise of holding elections and Z.A. Bhutto was charged, with the murder of father of dissident political leader Ahmad Raza Kasoori (Sheikh, 2000) Z.A. Bhutto, after facing a court trial in the murder case of the father of Ahmad Raza Kasoori, was hanged on 4th April, 1979 (Yaseen, et. al., 2021; Bhutto, 2007.)

In these circumstances, Benazir Bhutto not only faced different political challenges but also remained committed and showed political dexterity. The death of her father and challenges infused different personality skills and political traits in Benazir Bhutto. Therefore, in different circumstances and in difficult challenges, she proved herself as a resolute and committed leader who patronized the political activities of her party and upheld the political legacy of her father and became a famous political leader (Ahsan, 2018).

Emergence of Benazir Bhutto as a Political Leader

Several factors led towards the emergence of Benazir Bhutto as a political leader. Further, Benazir Bhutto inherited political legacy from her Bhutto family, learnt from the chiseled experience of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and groomed as a student from Redcliff and Oxford (Shafqat, 1996, p.655-672). Therefore, after the death of Z.A. Bhutto, she could not keep herself away from political activities in Pakistan (Corinne J. Naden, 2010, p.45-46). Benazir Bhutto achieved leadership qualities, political maturity and political personality exposure from her father (Sardar, 2018). During this exposure, experience as well as chiseled political views, Benazir Bhutto took over the leadership of PPP. As a result of this political responsibility, Pakistani people associated hopes, aspirations and expectations from Benazir Bhutto's leadership (Chaudhary, 2018). In fact, Zia led regime, lack of democratic culture as well as absence of leadership perturbed Pakistani people (Aitzaz Ahsan, 16th August, 2018). The people of Pakistan desired that Benazir Bhutto's leadership should be the harbinger of prosperity, amelioration of common man and to ensure the provision of basic necessities of life (Zikriya, p-4). Therefore, leadership vacuum, in the political arena, was filled up by Benazir Bhutto, in the corridor of politics, on the platform of PPP; to steer the boat of Pakistani masses towards the shore of development and economic prosperity; by responding to the socio-economic, political and domestic challenges (Ahsan, 2018).

The political career of Benazir was started after the execution of her father, when she assumed the responsibilities as a co-chairperson of PPP. In those days, the state of politics of Pakistan was topsy-turvy and political conditions were difficult, for her, to handle and to respond while fulfilling the unfinished agenda of her father Z.A. Bhutto. This is a fact that Z.A. Bhutto possessed more nationalistic inclinations and he inculcated this consciousness in Pakistani people as well (Chaudhary, 2018). In those days, the existence of Gen. Zia in the corridor of power demonstrated revengeful and oppressive approach towards Bhutto's family (Ahsan, 2018). On the other hand, Z.A. Bhutto's martyrdom developed sympathy in public as well as enhanced the political credential of Benazir Bhutto. Therefore, she demonstrated practical approach, de-radicalized the Pakistan Peoples' Party and worked enthusiastically as a Co-Chairperson (Pakistan Observer, December, 2017).

After assuming the leadership of Pakistan Peoples' Party, Benazir Bhutto proved that she was not only the choice of millions of people of Pakistan but also, in spite of existence of harassment, imprisonment and exile, she remained undaunted and fearless in her determination while putting Pakistan towards the path of democracy under the existing shadows of dictatorship (Bhutto, p. 260).

Benazir Bhutto's Struggle and Sacrifices for Democracy in Pakistan

After taking over the political legacy of her father, Benazir Bhutto started to make an alliance rapidly with existing pro-democratic political forces i.e. Pakistan Democratic Party, Muslim League (Khawaja Khairud Din Group), National Pakistan Party, Mazdoor Kisan Party, Qaumi Mahaze Azadi, Awami National Party, Tahrik-e-Istiqlal (TI), Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI) and National Democratic Party (Laeq, 2001, p.-355). PPP escorted an alliance strategy with Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1981 which gave birth to the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) (Khuhro, 2009, p. 162-165) Initially, the Movement for Restoration of Democracy was started with full fervor, devotion and purposefully.

Gen. Zia announced Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) on March 24, 1981, for validating martial law since 1977, achieved constitutional powers; and suspended the constitution of 1973 as well as powers of Parliament. Besides this, judicial powers were minimized, alongside, martial law, decisions of special tribunal as well as military court punishment were permitted to be challenged in supreme judiciary only. In the meantime, PCO's promulgation proved as a validated stamp which created justification and legitimation all actions of martial law regime. Therefore, after the PCO, all the judges were offered to take fresh oath under PCO whereas the judges have already taken oath under 1973 constitution. In this situation, three judges of Apex Court, Justice Fakharud Din G. Ibrahim, Justice Durab Patel and Justice Mushtaq Hussain as well as some judges of High Court did not take oath under PCO (Waseem, 1994, p. 375-76).

Gen. Zia wanted to crackdown MRD and to suppress political activities of PPP. Therefore, from 1981 till 1983, Benazir Bhutto was also confined with other political leaders and workers of MRD (Waseem, 1994, p. 375-76). During this era, Benazir Bhutto remained in prison and the Movement was led by Nusrat Bhutto (Ahsan, 2018). However, in 1983, MRD started a new campaign for the restoration of Constitution of 1973. MRD also demanded the transfer of power to public representative after holding new elections under 1973 constitution. Moreover, martial law regime crushed the MRD brutally and tried to isolate PPP (Bhutto, 1989, p.22).

Nusrat Bhutto, mother of Benazir, was still in shock of Z.A. Bhutto's assassination and also faced disease of lungs cancer. On medical grounds, Nusrat Bhutto was permitted to travel abroad to seek treatment of her lungs cancer. Benazir Bhutto faced another detention for one year. Later, Gen. Zia ordered to release Benazir Bhutto as a trial case. However, she, once again, started to work against Zia led military regime with different political parties, to restore democracy. Thus, Benazir was arrested and sent to jail again. Gen. Zia disclosed his intentions; for holding elections in 1985, on non-party basis. Zia was aware of this fact that party based elections can lead towards the PPP victory and he can face the revenge of Z.A. Bhutto's death.

In this situation, Jamat-i-Islami vehemently opposed MRD and supported Gen. Zia's stance and the political parties boycotted non-party based elections except Jamat-i-Islami. Moreover, MRD expressed its new momentum on August 14, 1983, Benazir Bhutto tried to contribute her efforts from jail and appealed to the public to move forward; to launch a campaign against Gen. Zia led regime. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto's efforts infused a new spirit of political consciousness in people of Pakistan to restore democracy (Khuhro, 2009, p. 162-165).

People participated in the agitation against Zia's military regime, on the request of Benazir Bhutto for revival of democracy from far flung areas of Pakistan. Thus, this movement of the people formed itself a shape of agitation against Zia led military regime. As a result of people's participation for democratic revival, government itself admitted that during the first week of the movement, thousands of people were arrested and almost 189 were killed and 126 were injured.

With the passage of time, Zia led regime used different tactics to suppress the MRD activities. However, it gained momentum and conveyed a serious message to Gen. Zia for revival of democracy. Gen. Zia also tried to use all his tactics to suppress MRD activities across Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto was released from jail because of excessive international pressure in 1984 and she departed for UK where she started the PPP membership campaign at London (Khuhro, 2009, p. 162-165).

Benazir Bhutto rendered different efforts to mobilize the world opinion against Gen. Zia who got to validate his election through referendum, justify his action of Martial Law for 8 years and he passed 8th amendment (Mercedes Padrino, 55-56). However, Benazir Bhutto, returned to Pakistan, organized the people and worked to restore democracy. Furthermore, Benazir Bhutto's emotional resonance, crowd pulling power and resilience transformed her into a competent leader (Khuhro, 2009, p. 162-165). She returned to Pakistan on 10th April 1986 and received tremendous welcome procession at Lahore Airport (Zakriya, 1990, p. 4). It was an unprecedented reception and she was warmly welcomed and received by millions of people from all over the country which shook the foundations of Zia regime. Benazir Bhutto while addressing the huge gathering at Iqbal Park, Lahore expressed that gloomy period over Pakistan will be ended soon and the naissance of dawn of joy, hope and aspiration will be brought soon for the poor masses of the country. Meanwhile, the presence of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan kept on drawing huge crowds to support her campaign for fresh elections. Not only this, she also declared Zia as dictator and usurper as well (Dawn, October, 2015).

Benazir Bhutto upheld the inherited charisma of her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, started to lead PPP and became the key political figure of the opposition. During the first phase of her campaign, Benazir was relying on her own charisma as well as Pakistan Peoples Party's popularity. However, it was difficult, for her to force the regime for holding elections (Chaudhary, 2018). Therefore, Benazir sought, cooperation from other political parties in order to start joint struggle. In this way, an ultimatum was given to Zia regime, if the elections will not be held by 20th of September 1986; a peaceful campaign would be launched. However, the campaign was ushered before the arrival of deadline and government ordered for a crackdown on opposition parties. On the other hand, MRDs public rally at Lahore received ban on 14th of August 1986 and MRD leaders were put behind the bars. However, Benazir's efforts and struggle for restoration of democracy was becoming defused. By the end of that year, Benazir Bhutto disclosed her political strategy that they are not in a hurry to overthrow the regime (Viewpoint, 1987, p.15).

Benazir Bhutto demonstrated good leadership qualities, alongside popular image which was associated with the popularity of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; therefore, the people of Pakistan possessed deep emotional attachment to her because of their love for late Z.A. Bhutto (Mahmud, 1990, p. 148). In 1988, various developments, at external and internal fronts smoothened the way for holding elections in Pakistan. On the other hand, President Zia as well as Prime Minister Junejo developed some differences on several key issues of national interest; emerging from Junejo's general bashing, proposals to minimize defense expenditure and variation of approach on Geneva accords over Afghan issue (Akhund, 2000, p. 14).

On 29th of May 1988, Junejo was out of the country in connection with official foreign tour. In his absence, Gen. Zia dismissed Junejo's premiership by dissolving National Assembly (Khuhro, 2009, p. 162-165). On 20th July 1988, General Zia announced the date for holding elections i.e. 16th November 1988, for National Assembly on non-party basis (Akhund, 2000, p. 17). Zia fixed the date of elections in November 1988 keeping in view the advance stage of pregnancy of Benazir Bhutto (Zakriya, 1990, p. 10).

Zia tactfully planned the aforesaid date to ouster Benazir Bhutto from election campaign (Bhola, P. 19). On the other hand, Junejo's dismissal, by the then President Zia led

the country towards political crisis and uncertainty. However, Zia's program of holding elections on non-party basis was resented by the politicians and the public at large as well. At that juncture, opposition threatened for launching a campaign in favor of party based elections. For that reason, on August 17, 1988, Benazir Bhutto, the then Co-Chairperson of PPP; filed a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan to seek a direction to the then government; for holding 16th November polls on party basis (Guardian, August, 1990). Later, the Apex Court has given the verdict to conduct elections on party basis.

On August, 17, 1988, the military led regime of Gen. Zia was ended abruptly, when he along with other military officers, American Ambassador and members of Crew died in a plane crash (Zakriya, 1990, p. 10). After the death of Zia, many political changes occurred in Pakistan, leading to the separation of the office of President and the Army Chief. Further, the newly appointed Army Chief was not willing to intervene in politics and issued different statements from August to November 1988; for supporting general elections and transferring of power to the public elected representatives (Rizvi, 2011, p. 7). Military wanted to restore democracy for many reasons; in order to exhibit a sense of professionalism, discipline and to minimize its political role as well as to ensure the general elections date which was announced by Gen. Zia in 1988. Senior military commanders also wanted to restore the honor of the constitution which was put in abysmal during Zia's 11 years rule.

Political parties, activists, supporters of the constitution were wishing strongly the peaceful and smooth transfer of power to the public elected representatives. Ghulam Ishaq (1915-2006) became Acting President and head of the Care Taker government (Khuhro, 2009, p. 162-165). Ghulam Ishaq Khan not only recognized the legitimacy of existing crisis but also facilitated the way for holding election in November 1988. In these elections, Benazir emerged as confrontational leader, who resisted dictatorship as well as worked to restore democracy (Shafqat, 655-672. PPP emerged as the principal winner party having 93 seats whereas the IJI got 2nd position and 54 seats in these elections and *Mohajir Qaumi Movement* secured 13 seats respectively (Zakriya, 1990, 11-12).

Barrister Ch. Aitzaz Ahsan, Minister of Interior, Law and Justice during Benazir Bhutto's first tenure (1988-90) expressed during an interview by the researcher that the interim government, military and controlled media made every effort to keep Pakistan Peoples' Party aloof from victory but in vain (Aitzaz Ahsan, 16th August, 2018). On 2nd December, 1988, Benazir took oath as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The arrival of Benazir Bhutto in the corridor of power, as an elected Prime Minister, ushered a new civilian era of rule in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto was impressed by different political influences during her political career. She also hated Gen. Zia who hanged Z.A. Bhutto and was behind the torture of Bhutto family for 11 years. The formative years of Benazir Bhutto, were spent in Europe, in the West and the United States which influenced her and she was inspired by John F. Kennedy in politics, education in Harvard University and her own interest in foreign affairs. Therefore, these various influences were reflected through her maiden speech in the Parliament. In her first address in National Assembly, she condemned the constitutional amendment of 1985 and promised to restore 1973 constitution in its original shape (N.A. Debate, December, 1988). She rejected Zia's policy and castigated his autocratic rule. (Majumdar, 1998, 635).

Conclusion

Although failure of democracy in Pakistan has been caused through several factors, yet, coercive methods, too, have been to suppress the democratic structure of the country. At that critical juncture, Benazir Bhutto was a woman who proved her strong personality

and leadership qualities in politically challenging environment; that was being experienced during the arbitrary rule of Zia who was always favoring undemocratic forces. However, she worked steadfastly for the revival of democracy, supremacy of Parliament and strengthened democracy. She also worked hard for the success of the mission of her father while focusing on the political objectives that was envisaged by her party. As a female, she faced imprisonment, exile and suppression politically by the then military ruler, Gen. Zia. However, she did not care about any kind of revengeful strategy of Zia led regime. She emerged as a politician, made efforts to revive democracy when, even, male political leaders were not doing courageous politics and were living in compromises. Benazir's personality was the mixture of cosmopolitan experience, worldly exposure, democratic values and aptitude to accept political challenges.

Recommendations

No stone was left unturned to eliminate democracy, to suppress political parties and political process by Gen. Zia-ul Haq and his successors but Benazir did not lose heart and forced Zia to restore democracy where she found the opportunity of becoming first lady Prime Minister of Pakistan. In nutshell, for the success of democracy in Pakistan, the key obstacles, impediments and hurdles i.e. lack of in time free & fair elections, martial laws, imbalance of power, vindictive politics of opposition should be weeded out immediately.

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