



Benazir Bhutto: A Lesson for Democracy

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ABSTRACT

Though Peoples of Pakistan spend much of their time in Martial Law Regimes either it was of 1958, 1969, 1977 or of 1999, the peoples of Pakistan believe that Pakistan is democratic country, among all Pakistani's one school of thought is of the opinion that it is the fault of the civilian government's which create a gap to induct the Army into the democratic affairs of the country, but, on other hand the second school of thought believe that there are some power seeker Generals who are always in search of the gap to grab the power and interrupt the civilian government to end their thrust to rule the country as compare to do their own duty. On other hand this school of thought also believe that democracy should be continued either in any form in Pakistan they are always struggling to encourage to work for democratic Pakistan, the prominent figure among all in Pakistan who raised the voice against the Martial Law regimes to raise their voice is Benazir Bhutto, without whom the democratic history of Pakistan is incomplete. Who set new trends to establish the rules in the democratic movement in Pakistan? The aim of the research paper is to look into the politics, policies and struggles to restore the democracy in Pakistan by Benazir Bhutto. It was her role, especially her role in MRD through which she fought against Zia regime and mobilized Pakistani nation to get rid of his dictatorship and restored the Democracy.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Dictatorship, Martial Law, Movement, Restoration.

1 INTRODUCTION

Benazir Bhutto was born in Karachi Pakistan on 21st of June 1953. She received her early education from Pakistan, got her graduation from Harvard University US and Post Graduate Diploma in Foreign Affairs from Oxford University UK. During her education abroad unfortunately Pakistan was facing crises like situations. One problem among others was raised in Pakistan that during general elections of 1970 which were held in Pakistan's both wings (eastern and western) in eastern wing of Pakistan Awami League of Shaikh Mujeeb-ur-Rahman won the majority of the seats and in western wing of Pakistan, Pakistan People's Party of Zulifqar Ali Bhutto got the majority of the seats and overall majority of the seats were taken by Awami League of Shaikh Mujeeb-ur-Rahman, but political powers refused to hand over the power to Shaikh Mujeeb-ur-Rahman of Awami League, in the result "On March 26, 1971, leaders of East Pakistan declared the province independent as Bangladesh (land of the Bengali's) and its independence was assured on December 16th, 1971". [1] Due to which Pakistan was divided and "Yahya Khan resigned and Zulifqar Ali Bhutto sworn in as the President of remaining portion of Pakistan and the first civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan on December 20th, 1971".[2]

After completion of her education her plan was to join foreign services or to open her own newspaper in Pakistan, but her father compelled her to join her hands in politics in this way she entered into politics. On other hand, "Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) did not accept the election results and accused the ruling party for rigging. They boycotted the elections of the provincial assemblies", [3] due to which country wide agitation was launched by PNA against Zulifqar Ali Bhutto's government. In this connection, Zulifqar Ali Bhutto contacted to the leaders of the PNA for the solutions of the crises. "Zulifqar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and PNA agreed to negotiations and many meetings were held between the leaders of both parties. Finally the dialogue between Bhutto and the PNA leaders nearly reached to conclusion. Bhutto also declared it in the press conference that the agreement would be signed next day. But the military never wanted to slip the opportunity of taking over the government, hence declared Martial Law before the next sunrise on 5th July 1977". [4] by his own promoted Army General named as Zia-ul-Haq through military que later on he was hanged on 4th of April 1979. 'Bhutto was hanged in a rigged trial organized by General Zia-ul-Haq, who took Islam more seriously. With the American patrons looking the other way, and with China and Saudi Arabia providing active support, Zia sought a third transformation, pursuing Islamization

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and nuclear weaponization', [5] which shows the International conspiracy against him. His death was the great shock for the whole country in general and Bhutto family particular; just after that Benazir Bhutto along with her family was put under house arrest at her home in Karachi.

2. MOVEMENT FOR RESTORATION FOR DEMOCRACY (MRD):

After some time when Benazir Bhutto was released from jail for a short period, she started planning to stand against dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq, she planned to make an alliance to get rid of dictatorship for which she started organizing different political parties for the MRD in Pakistan against the dictatorship of the Zia-ul-Haq, though it was really very difficult task for Benazir Bhutto and workers of PPP to shake hand with those parties which played an active role to topple the Zulifqar Ali Bhutto government and supported Zia-ul-Haq, but she was of the opinion that in the interest of Pakistan and in the interests of Democracy, we must be united to make an alliance, in which all the majority parties who were against Zulifqar Ali Bhutto during his own time were included, except Jamaat-e-Islami. "The first official meeting of the leaders for the formation of Alliance was held at 70 Clifton Karachi on 6th February 1981. The leaders were agreed and the alliance was formed and named MRD.

In this meeting following political parties attended and formed the alliance.

1. Pakistan People's Party
2. Pakistan Muslim League (Khawaja Khair- ud-din Group)
3. Pakistan Democratic Party
4. Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party
5. Pakistan National Party
6. National Awami Party
7. Quomi Mahaz-e-Azadi
8. Jamaat-i-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI)
9. Tahrik-i-Istiqlal (TI)
10. National Democratic Party

This alliance was unanimously gathered on the following four point program:

- A. **End of Martial Law;**
- B. **Restoration of the 1973 Constitution;**
- C. **Parliamentary elections; and**
- D. **Transfer of power to the public representatives" [6]**

"Just after the announcement of the movement against the Martial Law by Movement for Restoration of Democracy, Martial Law authority issued Provisional Constitutional Orders (PCO) and reduced the power of the Judiciary on 23rd March 1981, according to which the judiciary could no longer quash (cancel) detention orders of the Military courts, and stay flogging and execution on the basis of lack adequate evidence". [7] On other hand "Government propagated that it was the conspiracy of the PPP leadership against the army and Pakistan". [8]

Though all the parties were united against Zulifqar Ali Bhutto's government but this time except Jamaat-e-Islami all other parties were united on one platform. In this way this alliance was formed under the umbrella of Benazir Bhutto to restore the democracy in Pakistan

3.ROLE OF BENAZIR BHUTTO IN MRD:

As Zulifqar Ali Bhutto being the Chairman of PPP was arrested due to his absence Begum Nussrat Bhutto was made Chairperson of PPP, Begum Nussrat Bhutto was made acting Chairperson of the Party but after short spell of time due to her illness and un-bearing shock of her husband her daughter Benazir Bhutto was made the Co-Chairperson to assist her in the matters of the party because Benazir Bhutto was young and energetic at that time and she started the struggle against the dictatorship, during her struggle subsequently, she spent five years in detention, including ten months in solitary confinement; During this period she tried to bear the shock of her father's death, she remained in jail till 1981.

Some peoples were of the view that, due to the prolonged military rule (1977–1988), obliterated democratic norms, stifled democratic values, yet aspiration for democracy continues to persist. Soon after

starting the struggle she mobilized the masses to boost up Movement of Restoration for Democracy, Benazir Bhutto once again arrested and sent to jail, but, during this struggle consequently, including 10 months in detention, she remained about 5 years in the jail and which was not easy time for her because during this she also faced her father's death [9] suddenly under international pressure she was released in the year 1984 and she left Pakistan UK to work for MRD. She lived there for hardly two years, when her younger brother Shah Nawaz Bhutto was assassinated in France, she returned to Pakistan for burial of her brother and again she had to leave the country. During this time Zia-ul-Haq promised to hold election within ninety days, but with one or another reason he tried to postpone the general elections while giving different reasons, actually he wanted to make accountable Zulifqar Ali Bhutto and his party to whom he executed him in the year 1979. This event changed the whole political scenario; those situations compelled the PPP and some other parties to make their political alliance to end the rule of martial law and for the restoration of democracy in the country. This time Benazir Bhutto decided to fulfill duties and to continue the mission of her father, for this purpose she planned to come back to Pakistan, to pressurize military ruler for Restoration of Democracy in the country, due to this she came back to Pakistan on April 11th, 1986, "The carefree girl who first left home in 1969 to study at Harvard had now turned into a woman with an iron will, to fight the battle left incomplete by her father" [10]. It was her will to fulfill all the dreams of her father because of that she left all her own dream behind actually her ambition was to join Pakistan's foreign services, not to become a politician, she was of the opinion that, "her tendency was not towards politics, it was her father to whom she wanted to please by joining oxford union", [11] where she was warmly welcome by millions of her country men, this time Zia-ul-Haq had fear from Benazir Bhutto so he sought a third transformation, pursuing Islamization and Nuclear weaponization and also played a card of Islamization and announced for referendum in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto hoped for change for democracy in Pakistan but Zia-ul-Haq also made his clear intention that power would be transferred to only those persons which are religious minded, Zia-ul-Haq's so called democracy shunned down when on 14 August 1986 Benazir Bhutto was arrested at her home in Karachi, when she was just preparing to attend peaceful rallies on Pakistan's Independence day. She was given thirty days detention order and once again she was sent to jail. On other hand, except Jamaat-i-Islami, all the other political parties had already joined the MRD; they once again arose against the brutal killing of innocent peoples in lump sum and arrest of thousands of peoples by their own military. During movement General Zia was worried because he was thinking, if she came in power then what will be his position? So he always avoided to conduct the elections in Pakistan, once he replied, "It is Miss Bhutto's unnecessary impractical ambition and her attitude towards acquiring power which is objectionable." [12]

Unwillingly under International pressure and the pressure of MRD, Zia-ul-Haq had released Benazir Bhutto on 10th September 1986, but many peoples remained in jail. This struggle was intensified against Zia-ul-Haq by Pakistan People's Party along with other political parties under Benazir's guidance. "While PPP gained its full strength as single political institution in Pakistan, on other hand Zia-ul-Haq denied these facts, "Bhutto retaliated against this by saying that her party was speaking not out of vengeance, but for nation building." [13]

On other hand as a chairperson of PPP Begum Nussrat Bhutto appealed the citizen of Pakistan to join their hands against the martial law regime, which encouraged the moral of nation which was later on translated and then published in local languages like Sindhi and urdu, in response of the appeal thousands of Pakistan People's Party workers and others directly came to the roads and anti-government slogans were raised in which army interrupted and so many peoples were killed, tortured and thousands were put behind the bars by the Marshal Law Regime, official sources quotes that, "a summary of the casualty list, as available in official documents, was fifty killed and a hundred and fifty wounded. The actual figures may have been much higher." [14] Apart from that official statement, "number of the killed people was 61, while 200 hundred were injured. The arrested people were more than 4691." [15] On other hand Sindhi nationalists estimate that, "800 were killed, 2000 injured and thousands of people arrested". [16], Even though the movement was also supported by different unions, and it was first time when Sindhi *Waderas* (Landlords) opposed the military dictatorship, one of from main reasons was imposition of usher on the rich persons throughout the country, though on other hand some people believed it was not a strong reason, but, "these "*Waderas* has been pushed into the movement due to pressure from below i.e. the rural masses and the feeling of deprivation extends also to the affluent section of Sindhi society, particularly access to political power". [17] "The movement in Sindh had a spontaneous character as distinct from the rest of the country: It was more rural than urban. It involved more unplanned, leaderless and mob action than was the case in other provinces. There followed cases of shooting, arson and armed attacks on trains, police

stations, railway treasury, banks and various other government institutions.” [18] Ms.: Benazir Bhutto compared those blood shad situations of Sindh with the situation which were earlier created in East Pakistan in 1971. “The nationwide rebellion was not crushed by the guns and tanks of the army until the second week in October, leaving particular bitterness in the hearts of the Sindhi’s. 800 people were reportedly killed. Whole villages were erased and crops burned. Women reportedly were molested by the army, bringing back dark memories of the army’s rampage in Bangladesh twelve years before. In the ashes of fury, Sindhi nationalism was born. The move towards secession escalated in the other minority province as well. The fragile federation of Pakistan was strained to breaking point under the ruthlessness of Zia and six years of Martial Law.”[19]

It was also believed that leaders of the different Political Parties were on single plate form to lead the movement against military dictatorship, which shows the commitment of people and leadership towards the democracy in Pakistan. “The movement became popular in Sindh and succeeded to gain the mass support. It turned into a violent movement because of the crushing policy of the military. Army used Tear gas, *Lathi charge*, and gun firing against the demonstrators and the most important reason for the rise of the movement has been near total exclusion of Sindhi’s from the state elite”. [20] It was the result of the huge mass support in Sindh to the movement due to which, “American Defense Secretary, Casper Weinberger visited Pakistan in September 1983, while arguing after visit to Pakistan he was of the opinion that in this situation, we have to look at alternative.” [21]

After a long struggle of democratic forces in Pakistan General Zia announced the elections, through which he made Mr. Muhammad Khan Junejo as his Prime Minister, that step once again gone into the darkness when Zia-ul-Haq abolished the assemblies under article 58-2(b) on May 29th 1988, after that he announced that the new election will be held on November 16th 1988. [22] This news was the hope of democracy for the Benazir and other political parties but Zia-ul-Haq announced on 21st July, 1988 that the elections would be held purely on nonparty basis; the reason was that the PPP has popular support, there was a reason behind the elections on non-party basis, though Benazir herself was interested in taking part in the elections through independent looking proxies. She was of the view that no field should be left open for the dictators manipulate, but, at that time she was out of the country and had to depend much on the party leadership which were handling the matters inside Pakistan and they decided to boycott the polls because of the conducting on the non-party bases. She had to agree to the unanimous decision of her colleagues.[23] If we look into deep “General Muhammad Zia-ul- Haq preferred the non- party elections because he was well-aware of the fact that nonpolitical and non-committed people are easy to control as compare to political and affiliated peoples. So he wanted that elected member of assemblies had no political association as well as membership of any political party or loyalty to any political leader.” [24] Now Benazir went to the courts and she challenged the General Zia’s nonparty based election, because she was of the opinion that, “in this way the military rule of General Zia will come to an end and the democracy will be restored, she wrote, “Just as a flower cannot bloom in a desert, so political parties cannot flourish in a dictatorship.” [25] In July 1987 marriage, her marriage did not became problem in Benazir Bhutto’s political life, “while Pakistan People’s Party increased its strength as a political institution. Zia-ul-Haq consistently claimed the party was out of revenge, Benazir Bhutto retaliated against this by saying that her party was speaking not out of vengeance, but for nation building”.[26]

In the beginning the movement in the Sindh was as peaceful as it was in the other provinces of Pakistan, “It assumed violence when the army used state force to suppress it, the attitude of the military authority towards the people of Sindh was very harsh as compare to the other provinces, it was deliberately done by the authority to achieve their goal i.e. ‘divided and rule’ and regime was successful in its planning”. [27]

But slowly the Movement became stronger and “A large number of leaders and workers of PPP and MRD were arrested. But policy towards the public was different in Sindh and Punjab. This was the reason that the roads and streets of Punjab were not closed during the MRD movement. But in Sindh people were fighting with the army. They even did not allow Zia to land in Dadu.” [28]

After wards, a new strategy was planned by the leaders of MRD to start giving the voluntarily arrest by the political workers, which was going to start from August 14th 1983, “in shape of giving voluntarily arrests by the workers as a strategy and pursuit of its demands due to which Movement very soon gained very good momentum in the larger context of public activities. Professional organizations, Trade unions, Bar-councils, and the student unions all that supported Movement against the dictator rule in Pakistan, in which, ‘about a hundred labor leaders endorsed the Movement’s call in their meeting in Karachi’”. (Waseem,1994).

It was the Benazir Bhutto, for about thirty months she continued to mobilize world opinion for the restoration of democracy and violation of human rights by General Muhammad Zia-ul Haq. "Zia wanted to keep the Benazir away from contesting the election; the election date was suggested by keeping in the view the pregnancy of Benazir Bhutto, so that she may not be able for election campaign". (Bhola 1989) "However, the rule of Zia-ul-Haq ended abruptly on 17th August 1988, when his C-130 Aircraft exploded shortly after taking off from the Bahawalpur Airport. This disaster also claimed the lives of five Generals, five Brigadiers, one Squadron Leader, an American Ambassador and fourteen members of crew." (Saqib 2009-10) The report conformed the Zia's death in air crash came on T.V and Radio in the same evening, "C-130 exploded 10 minutes after it took off from Bahawalpur, 60 miles west of the Indian border, at about 4:30 P.M" (Sciolino 1988) "In 1988 Zia was killed in an airplane crash possibly caused by sabotage", (Muhammad 2008) whole Pakistan went into a state of shock, even those who disliked General Zia-ul-Haq immensely and had waited for such news, they did not know how to react.

Benazir only expressed, "life and death is in the hands of God". (The New York Times 1988) Though, for the purpose of keeping her away from power, a group of political parties formed Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (I.J.I) which included fundamentalists and Zia-ul-Haq's loyal, on the same night Chairman Senate Ghulam Ishaque Khan took reins of the country. He also announced November 16, 1988 the same date which was already planned for elections but he didn't clear that elections would be held on party basis or on non-party basis. Though the case filed by Benazir was in court against non-party based elections, and after the death of Zia the court passed the verdict that the elections will be held on party basis, in this way the "general elections to the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies were held on 16th November 1988 and 19th November 1988, respectively on Party Basis," (Saqib 2009-10) in which PPP got majority seats and being the Party's chairperson she was made Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Bhutto family is the only family in Pakistan, which sacrificed the whole family for the stable democratic system in Pakistan, "Goher Jamal argued that, "no ideology could succeed without sacrifices and Bhutto family had given historic sacrifices for democracy and they all would be long remembered". (Times 2008) Benazir Bhutto spent her whole life in fighting for the rights of common people, democracy, stable political system, foreign Policy and on 27th December 2007 she was assassinated, while returning from Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh, where she addressed the public gathering.

3. CONCLUSION

No doubt, in democracy the rights are given to the people, one of them is the right to vote, which make the rulers accountable towards people and this right gives the common people to participate in government but unfortunately in the history of Pakistan, the military dictators always used to imposed their will on the citizens of their country due to which the fundamental rights suffer. Pakistan is a democratic government, but unfortunately Pakistan has spent long time under martial law regimes and in the history of democracy the name of Benazir Bhutto would be remembered, the reason was Benazir Bhutto being a lady mobilized world opinion and fought for the peoples of Pakistan through the Democratic Movement against General Zia, during this period she started the movement.

After the Zia's death general election were held in Pakistan, through which PPP emerged as the largest party in National Assembly and she became Prime Minister on 2nd December 1988, she became the Prime Minister of Pakistan twice in 1988-90 and 1993-96. She struggled the whole life for the democracy because she knew that it is the only democratic government which provide people's participation in government, people participate in government through their elected representative, which they elect through their right to vote and this right to vote makes the representatives answerable towards common people and on other hand martial law is the opposite of democracy, in which political rights are suspended, generally without democracy the concept of good governance is meaningless, because democracy is the assurance of people's participation which is the key element of good governance. The central battle for the Democratic Movement became Sindh particularly but it was also supported by other provinces of the country, the rulers tried their best to stop the movement but unfortunately they failed to stop the peoples the situation became tense like civil war in the country

It can be argued that this was the second time in the history of South Asia which Sindhi peoples faced so many hindrances and came out from those hindrances successfully. This Democratic Movement became the strong challenge for the dictatorship in Pakistan. Though Movement initially was not successful to pressurized rulers of Pakistan but immediately one thing happened that Zia-ul-Haq made an announcement for holding of referendum for his face-saving, in which very small number of peoples cast their votes who

wanted Zia-ul-Haq like Jamaat-e-Islami who were against Zulifqar Ali Bhutto. It was the due to the movement he agreed upon to hold fresh elections in the year 1985 to make stable system in Pakistan.

It also can be argued that due to the movement peoples demands were accomplished and therefore it is also believed that MRD was the reaction of action taken by dictatorship in the country and through this movement peoples fought for their rights against Military Rulers. MRD became the power of tool for the nation because they have not been as active as they were seen earlier. It is also argued that this movement proved that Pakistani unarmed nation can do anything if their leader is strong.

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