

Benazir Bhutto's Struggle for Democracy

Amir Ahmed Khuhro

*Ph.d student, Deptt: of Pol: science & Int: Relations, Bahuddin Zakrya University
Multan, Pakistan*

Ishtiaque Ahmed Choudhry

*Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Science, University of Sargodha
Sargodha, Pakistan*

Abstract

This paper is design to look into the Benazir Bhutto's charismatic personality through Internal Politics of Pakistan. Her role in MRD during the military dictatorship of General Zia can been analysis through this paper. As a political leader how she face and manage the crises and came out safely during the MRD and how she became the first lady Prime Minister of Pakistan has been analysed.

Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown by his own promoted General Zia-ul-Haq in a military coup against him during 1977. He was then executed after a short trial by Lahore high court. After that his whole family was put under house arrest from time to time in between 1977 to 1979 at Karachi. After that Nusrat wife of Zulfqar Ali Bhutto was made the acting chairperson of Pakistan Peoples Party, but due to the mental stress, it was too enormous for her to bear that burden, because of that Benazir Bhutto was made co-chairperson of her father's party in the year 1979, along with her mother. She spent five years in detention, including ten months in solitary confinement; she spent five years in detention. During this period she tried to bear the shock of her father's death. She remains in jail till 1981. The years from 1977 to 1981, were not easy for Benazir and her family. Being the co-chairperson of Pakistan Peoples Party, she started struggle for democratic government in Pakistan from jail at Karachi.

In February 1981 a political alliance named as 'Movement for Restoration of Democracy', popularly known as MRD, was formed by Pakistan Peoples Party, along with the other parties of Pakistan. During this time her mother who had not yet come out of shock of her husband's assassination was declared patient of lungs cancer in July 1981.

She had to be released on medical grounds and was allowed to go abroad for treatment in November 1982, but Benazir had to spend another year in detention. She was released for short time, as a trial case, during this time with the collaboration of other political parties against General Zia under the banner of MRD, she tried to start movement against General Zia but soon she was once again arrested. Very soon when she was send to jail once again General Zia took a summersault just two days before Independence Day in the year 1983, he announced non-party elections to be held in March 1985. He had reached the conclusion that if he conducted the polls on party basis, PPP surly will win the elections and take the revenge of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's murder.

Political parties announced boycott of the non-party elections, but Jammat-e- Islami supported General Zia's stance, in oppossion of the MRD. In the meanwhile, on 14th August 1983, the MRD launched its new movement, Benazir was in jail at that time, but she contributed her part from jail, she drafted an appeal in the name of Nusrat Bhutto, the chairperson of PPP, addressed to the people of Pakistan, to rise against the dictatorship of General Zia and the people of Pakistan arose. For the first time in the history the country, not only the big cities but the rural areas also joined agitation. This showed the concern of the masses for democracy.

He adopted all oppressive measures to crush the movement. Sindh province was in the forefront of the movement. The government admitted that in the first week of the movement, about two thousand peoples were arrested, 189 were killed and 126 were injured. The political impact of the MRD snatched all the cards of the game from General Zia.

Benazir Bhutto was then released in 1984, under the international pressure, soon after being released from jail, she left for the UK. Her mother was living in Geneva. She wanted her to live with her in Switzerland; Benazir Bhutto refused her mother to go there. Actually, she wanted to make London the base camp against Military dictatorship of Pakistan. In this regard many other Pakistani who was living in UK joined hands with Benazir Bhutto against General Zia.

In December 1984, General Zia announced a referendum on the issue of Islamization which actually helped him to get more grip on politics for five more years. MRD boycotted the referendum. When the pressure enhanced on him, he again announced for the elections in the fall of the 1984, on non-party basis, once again political parties decided to boycott.

Benazir Bhutto herself was interested that we must take part in non-party basis polls as independent candidates. She was of the view that, no field should be left open for the dictators manipulate. She was out of the country and had much depended on the leadership which were handling the matters inside Pakistan. "They decided to boycott the polls because of their being conducted on non-party basis. She had to agree to the unanimous decision of her colleagues".⁽¹⁾

General Zia changed the whole spirit of the 1977 constitution. On March 02, 1985, he announce the revival of the 1973 constitution under order 'RCO 1985', and with this, the supremacy of judicial review was set aside by an executive decree. RCO was formally brought into force from March 10, 1985. The most important change was made in article 6 of Para I, through which Army could not be implicated under this article, and the powers of the President were too much enhanced on the cost of that of the Prime Minister.

Benazir Bhutto lived for two years in London, during this time in July 1985 her youngest brother Shahnawaz was poisoned to death in France. She accompanied the dead body to Pakistan to bury him, in her family's ancestral graveyard, after burial she was detained by the government and was released at last in November 1985; because she had to testify in a French court in connection with her brother's death.

Now General Zia played another trick, he announced the lifting of Marshal Law by December 30, 1985. MRD took impression that General Zia is now tired; it was now decided to started campaign against Marshal Law on December 14, 1985. As the result of this campaign many workers of the MRD were put into jails and were tortured. MRD demanded mid term elections. In the meantime General Zia announced that Pakistan is not capable for democracy, so it must follow the line of Islamization. Now Benazir Bhutto finally decided to launch her final assault against the Marshal Law, irrespective of the consequences. In this backdrop, she decided to return to Pakistan on 10th April 1986, for this purpose her co-politician in Pakistan worked very hard to make her arrival a success. On her return back electronic as well as print media, gave her full coverage. Media correspondents specially travelled along with her on board from UK to Pakistan.

Benazir Bhutto landed in Lahore; she was warmly welcomed by millions of peoples there, which was the beginning of an end for General Zia ul Haq. Lubna Rafique writes," 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."⁽²⁾ Time was running very fast, she addressed so many rallies in Pakistan. Everywhere peoples demanded for fresh poles and transfer of power to the genuine representatives of the people. International media along with influential political forums supported democratic rule in Pakistan. In the mean time on August 14, 1986 Benazir Bhutto was arrested.

All the political parties of Pakistan (except Jamaat-e-Islami) joined hands in MRD, and rose against Marshal Law regime. General Zia killed and arrested thousands of innocent peoples of Pakistan through army. During MRD Gen. Zia-ul-Haq was very much disturbed because he thought that if he hold elections on Party basis the surly Pakistan Peoples Party will win which means his end. So he

always tried to avoid elections, once Gen. Zia-ul-Haq replied to a newsman, “It is Miss Bhutto’s unnecessary impractical ambition and her attitude towards acquiring power which is objectionable.”⁽³⁾

Through the MRD and international pressure, General Zia-ul-Haq again released Benazir Bhutto on September 10, 1986, from jail. Many of her people still remained in jail. Struggle against Gen. Zia-ul-Haq was intensified by Pakistan Peoples Party along with other political parties within and outside of MRD under the guidance of Benazir Bhutto.

In July 1987 Benazir Bhutto got arranged married. Her marriage never posed a problem for her political campaign. She continuously worked for her party to strengthen it. Lubna Rafique writes, “While Pakistan Peoples Party increased its strength as a political institution. Gen. Zia consistently claimed the party was out for revenge. Bhutto retaliated against this by saying that her party was speaking not out of vengeance, but for nation building”⁽⁴⁾.

General Zia-ul-Haq took a positive step by making Mohammad Khan Junejo as Prime Minister, but due to misunderstanding with him, he dismissed his government as well as the National and all the Provincial Assemblies on May 29, 1988 under the amended constitution and article 58-(2) (b) and announced the November 16, 1988 as fresh and new election day.

The news of elections, became the jubilant for Benazir Bhutto and her supporters, but on July 21, 1988, he announced that the elections which will be scheduled to be held on November 16, 1988, would take place purely on non-party basis, P.L Bholla writes, “The date was fixed keeping in the view the advance stage of Ms: Bhutto’s pregnancy, so that she might no be able to campaign for election⁽⁵⁾, but after listening the news regarding non-party, Benazir Bhutto turned to the courts and challenged the order of elections on non-party basis.

She was confident that there would be justice in the court and dictatorship will come to an end and democracy will rise, that’s why she wrote, “Just as flower can not bloom in a desert, political parties can not flourish in a dictatorship. That the political parties have managed to survive and flourish despite their lives for democracy...we are the conscience of the country...”⁽⁶⁾.

On August 17, 1988, General Zia while returning back near from Bahawalpur, where he had gone to witness demonstration of the US made M 1 Abrams tanks, along with other thirty top ranking companions, died in an air crash. Whole country went into shock of his sudden death, because he held two most important key posts of Pakistan, the Army Chief and the President of Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto reacted as, “Life and death is in the hands of Allah”⁽⁷⁾

It was Benazir Bhutto, who mobilised the world opinion, for about thirty month period; against General Zia’s violation of human rights in Pakistan and for restoration of democracy in Pakistan. Though General Zia tried his best to keep Benazir Bhutto away from contesting elections, but he failed to do so.

After the death of General Zia, it was possibility that Army might take control and impose Marshal Law once again, the other option was that the constitutional path should be followed through which Chairman Senate Ghulam Ishaque Khan should be appointed as an acting President of Pakistan. In this way he was made the acting President. He announces the same date for elections as it was already planed on November 16, 1988, but he did not make it clear weather they should be on party basis or on non-party basis.

During this time, she was passed through times of a woman’s life. She was expecting her first baby, by middle of October 1988. But due to the heavy work load, expected delivery date regressed by around four weeks and she gave birth to her first child, a son, Bilawal Ali Zardari, on September, 21, 1988, in Karachi.

Benazir Bhutto was unaware from the delaying tactics of General Zia. She started her political campaign on October 30, 1988, in which she covered whole of Pakistan with in a short period of two weeks.

On other hand, the case against the non-party basis was in the court, which was already been filed by Benazir Bhutto. After the death of Gen. Zia-UL-Haq, court passed their verdict on the petition that the government must hold election on party basis.

So, on November 16, 1988 general elections held, in which Pakistan Peoples Party emerged as the single largest party in the National Assembly.

On very next day, in the capacity of being the leader of the largest elected party of the country, President Ghulam Ishaque Khan nominated Benazir Bhutto as the next Prime Minister of Pakistan. In this way she took the oath of office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan on, December 2, 1988. With this she became the first head of government in Muslim world and became the youngest Prime Ministers in the world.

Conclusion

After the coup of 1977, Benazir Bhutto herself witnessed the political assassination of her father. After the death of ZA Bhutto, she faced many problems. She was compelled to joined national politics to achieve her father's political goals and objectives. One can judge that through the MRD how she mobilized the Pakistani masses against General Zia-ul-Haq. One can judge her traits as a political personality.

References

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This paper is design to look into the Benazir Bhutto's charismatic personality through Internal Politics of Pakistan. Her role in MRD during the military dictatorship of General Zia can been analysis through this paper. As a political leader how she face and manage the crises and came out safely during the MRD and how she became the first lady Prime Minister of Pakistan has been analysed. Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was overthrown by his own promoted General Zia-ul-Haq in a military coup against him during 1977. He was then executed after a short trial by Lahore high court. After t The Minister observed that Benazir Bhutto fought for the restoration of democracy and the peopleâ€™s right to rule till her last breath and the void created by her death in the politics of Pakistan would never be filled. Share. Tweet.Â E-paper - Nawaiwaqt. POLLMORE. Do you support the Punjab Chief Ministerâ€™s directions for his cabinet to submit performance reports of their departments? Yes. No. Department of Political Science. Benazir bhutto: Her political struggle in pakistan. A. Thesis Presented. by. KIMIE SEKINE. Approved as to style and content by: LÂ badly. Another challenge Bhutto had to face was the complaint that democracy was. non-existent in her party. It was criticized that the. PPP. leadership was â€˜addictedâ€™ to a dictatorial style of decision-making. Some. party leaders accused her of autocratic tendencies.