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Islam, Pakistan and Women Leadership: A Case Study of Benazir Bhutto

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to understand the women leadership traits and revisit and re-evaluate the leadership qualities of Benazir Bhutto as a female political leader, Party head and the Prime Minister. Therefore, the underlying hypothesis of this study is that Benazir Bhutto emerged from a crucial situation when her father was hanged which created leadership void in the country. She filled that political gap and led the political party and country with such qualities which may be described as charismatic. In Islamic country of Pakistan, the female leadership traits of Benazir Bhutto were considered as an unusual characteristic for a women political leader. While analyzing her leadership traits, this study argues that, by dint of her sheer qualities, Benazir Bhutto stamped her name on the politics of Pakistan, the Muslim world and indeed in global politics. Therefore, the study explores, investigates and analyses the phenomenon of women leadership while specifically focusing on Benazir Bhutto's works for the women development in Pakistan. As a Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto took several steps and measures to ameliorate the plight of woman. The study is an endeavor to find out the following answers: How did Benazir Bhutto resist against the military ruler; what were challenges and response of a female leader in Pakistan; what steps did she take for women's empowerment; how did these efforts led towards the socio-cultural, economic and political empowerment of women.

Keywords: *Islam, Pakistan, Women Leadership, Benazir Bhutto*

Islam, Pakistan, Women Leadership and Benazir Bhutto

The emergence of Benazir Bhutto, as a female political leader, is not the result or contribution of any feministic movement or theory or practice. It is learnt that men's interpretation of Islamic teachings restricted different opportunities for women. However, Islam, as a religion, since its very inception, does not restrict women's education and socialization. Islam, as a religion, has taught and advocated progressive approach towards women. (Bhutto, 2008, p. 34) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, therefore, during his political career, perceived leadership qualities of Benazir Bhutto and tried to groom her on modern grounds; facilitating modern education, accompanied her in different foreign tours (The Nation, December 29, 2017) and inspired her from different readings related to global political leadership. (Bhatia, 2008, p. 14) Therefore, the political leadership of Benazir Bhutto as a female is a symbol of progressive society and the height of glory for a woman as Jinnah (1876-1948) used to utter his famous words that:

“Social status of women must be raised. Further, Jinnah stated that no nation can touch the height of glory and progress without the contribution, status and equal role of women with men.” (Suvorova, 2015, p.3)

Therefore, Jinnah’s vision about women’s social equality and political participation was progressive and indispensable for the prosperity of any nation. (Suvorova, 2015, p.3) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also focused to instill courage, leadership qualities and political consciousness in Benazir Bhutto. (Sheikh, 2000, p. 32)

There are number of factors led towards the leadership of Benazir Bhutto. Her family was connected with politics, the execution of her father Z.A. Bhutto, her prison experience, her grooming as a student in Oxford and Redcliff, contributed for her leadership qualities. She was also groomed by her charismatic father and after his death in 1979; she became the hope of PPP supporters and lovers. (Shafqat, 1996, 655-672) Therefore, she assumed the responsibilities as co-chairperson of PPP and ushered her political career. In those days, the state of politics, in Pakistan was difficult and it was a challenge for Benazir Bhutto to respond as well as handle; to fulfill leadership vacuum. (Ziring, 1991, 178-189) Gen. Zia was revengeful, oppressive and suppressive towards Bhutto family. The execution of Zulfikar Bhutto developed sympathy as well as Benazir’s political credential. Therefore, her leadership as a woman, required a practical approach, made utmost effort to revitalize the PPP and contributed with great zeal as a Co-chairperson of the party. (Observer, December 27, 2017)

After becoming the leader of PPP, Benazir Bhutto proved herself as a choice of millions of Pakistanis who did not care of her gender. Although, her gender contributed for public welfare, therefore, after the death of her father, Pakistani people associated hopes with her. As a woman, Benazir Bhutto was determined, fearless, undaunted and steered the Pakistani public political boat towards the shore of democracy and challenged the existing shadow of dictatorship. (Bhutto, 2008, p. 260). In these kinds of challenges, the personality of Benazir Bhutto demonstrated will power, strong leadership and political acumen. She was victorious in many fields because of her brave personality and transformed the challenging political circumstances in her favor. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto supported parliamentary supremacy, advocated for fundamental human rights and focused to enhance economic opportunities for women. Therefore, her political career, as a woman, was against suppression, focused to ensure justice and to remove prejudices against woman. She was the woman who proved her strong personality and leadership qualities while challenging the arbitrary rule of Zia and always pushed the undemocratic forces; for the revival, supremacy and strengthening of democracy. (Dawn, December 28, 2010)

The autocratic rule of Zia and his style of governance tried to create fear in the mind of Benazir Bhutto through political harassment and imprisonment. As a woman, she did not care about cruel and revengeful strategy of Zia against her and relied on her political capabilities and leadership skills. During the days of Zia in the corridor of power, as a military ruler, Benazir Bhutto refused to bow in front of him and did not accept any proposal that was floated by Zia for the longevity of his rule. Even, Gen. Zia imprisoned her many times and tortured her at different occasions. (Dawn, December 27, 2017)

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During her early days in politics, Zia led regime branded her as a westernized woman; against the basic teachings of Islam, however, in 1986, upon her arrival in Pakistan, she received wholehearted welcome by people everywhere and she visited in far flung areas of Pakistan. (Dawn, October 4, 2015) In Peshawar, women and men came out from their homes and tried to catch the glimpse of Benazir Bhutto and to hear her words for the welfare of the people. Even, to convince the Peshawar male dominated population, Benazir addressed a huge gathering at Peshawar by stating that:

“People think, being woman, I am weak, however, as a Muslim woman, I can be proud on the heritage of Muslim woman. She expressed that she had the patience and perseverance of Bibi Khadija; wife of Hazrat Muhammad, Holy Prophet (PBUH). She also expressed her perseverance like Bibi Zainab; the daughter of Hazrat Ali and sister of Imam Hussain (R.A). Benazir Bhutto also mentioned that she possessed the courage like Bibi Ayesha, who was the youngest wife of Holy Prophet (PBUH) who rode a camel in battlefield while heading the Muslim army. She also demonstrated her political and blood association; as a daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. She said to the people that she is also the sister of Pakistani people as well. Further, she also said that her opponents should take the challenge to beat her in democratic elections rather than presenting a needless criticism on her political career, intentions and capabilities.” (Zakriya, 1989, 6)

Benazir Bhutto, as a woman political leader, continued her campaign against military dictatorship and advocated fearlessly for the peaceful transfer of power from military led regime towards democratically elected government; through free and fair elections. Further, Benazir Bhutto injected a new spirit and vision in general public for street politics and infused courage in public through her leadership qualities. For this purpose, various campaigns, marches, processions and speeches unfold her competencies as a female leader and shook the very roots of decade long military led regime of Zia. (Viewpoint, 1987, 15)

On the one hand, powerful military regime was suppressing even male political leadership activities. Mostly, Pakistani politicians associated themselves with the military rulers to gain short term political benefits. On the other hand, Benazir Bhutto, as a female, exhibited perseverance to Mullahs (Religious Scholars) and explained the unjustified measures; took by Zia against women that deprived female gender from their fundamental rights; which were declared by Islam as well. The bureaucrats, the Law Enforcement Agencies and politicians of Zia’s establishment opposed Benazir with the support of Jamaat-e-Islami. To explain it further, opposition parties, fundamental Islamic organizations and the religious scholars did not approve the leadership of Benazir Bhutto because of gender bias and existence of fearless, courageous and visionary leadership of Benazir Bhutto. (Zakriya, 1989, 6).

Benazir Bhutto, as a woman leader did not care about criticism and demonstrated zeal for restoration of democracy in Pakistan. She did not consider her gender as weak proposition for religious opinion, establishment of unfavorable views and did not wait for any nod from corridor of power that was previously performed by Pakistani politicians. She stood against undemocratic forces with dedication and exhibited perseverance for the democracy; removed gender based prejudices and

became the symbol of leadership that gave a vision, courage and self-recognition to other females.

Keeping in view the leadership qualities of Benazir Bhutto, Gen. Zia and his allies realized that she can only be kept aloof from becoming a famous leader; by using Islam against her. However, on 29th of May 1988, Gen. Zia dismissed his handpicked parliament and the then Prime Minister Junejo sent home and gave a call for general elections; that was unexpected and took to surprise many people. (Khuhro, 2009, 162-165) People of Pakistan became jubilant and expected that new era of democracy is going to start. Zia, on the other hand, was feeling desperate and floated Shariah card to check the popularity of Benazir Bhutto as a political leader. (Zakriya, 1989, 9) Zia was trying to become sagacious enough to tackle the popularity of Benazir Bhutto and to change the mind of the people for elected democracy. Zia and his allies realized that religious weapon can be helpful to debar Benazir Bhutto from becoming popular political leader. Benazir Bhutto, in her autobiography has maintained;

“It was common perception among general public and politicians that Zia choose the time of latest exploitation of Islam to counter her leadership and popularity. The Urdu Press also expressed its speculations that Zia intended to interpret Islamic bigots and tried to prevent Benazir Bhutto from contesting elections. He wanted to disqualify Benazir Bhutto as a leader that belonged to victorious party; in National Assembly.” (Bhutto, 305)

It was common observations that Zia was nervous and was not sure about his future position. However, he used his last card of Islam to turn the people against Benazir Bhutto; as a woman and to keep her aloof from becoming the head of government in Pakistan. During an interview with Newsweek, Zia commented:

“Nobody could stop Benazir Bhutto from becoming head of the state if people choose her. Zia was also considering that present popularity should not be used by Benazir Bhutto to become Prime Minister.” (Zakriya, 1989, 9)

Benazir challenged Zia’s Voter Registration Act in the Supreme Court of Pakistan; that enabled Election Commission of Pakistan to debar any political party from taking part in election on the basis of vague grounds that the party was against Islam. Therefore, this act was specifically directed to debar Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan Peoples’ Party from elections. The Supreme Court, with its decision, upheld Benazir Bhutto’s plea and ordered; that no party, can be debarred from elections and elections should be conducted on party basis. Thereafter, Benazir Bhutto visited different areas of Pakistan and received massive turn outs in spite of scorching heat; people welcomed her and were excited. On the other hand, rumours were being floated that she was on the family way. When someone inquired from her about her coming child; she replied that if I am even then so what? There is too much at stake to rest. (Bhutto, 306-307) In fact, after the dissolution of Assemblies as well as the announcement of new election date, was fixed on November 16, 1988 on non-party basis. P.L. Bholla also stated that the fixation of elections date was done to refrain Benazir Bhutto from election campaign because of her pregnancy and expected delivery date. (Bholla, 1989, 19)

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However, Benazir Bhutto was brave and hardworking lady whose leadership qualities exposed and she, in spite of unfavorable physical conditions; headed her party, took part in election campaign and won the elections of 1988.

As far as the elections were concerned, on 16th November 1988, the general elections were held in Pakistan and PPP became the victorious party with majority seats in National Assembly. (Zakriya, 1989, 11-12) At that juncture, Benazir Bhutto demonstrated determinism and contributed significantly, as a woman for the polls. On the other hand, Pakistani woman, from all walks of life extended their help and participation and even cast vote in favor of Benazir Bhutto. (Shafqat, 1996, 655-672) Therefore, the existence of Benazir Bhutto, as a woman, in mainstream politics of Pakistan, worked as an inspirational leadership that led to the participation and strong contribution of women in Pakistan that was previously never seen in Pakistan politics. (Rafique, 1994, 82-84)

On 2nd of December 1988, the assumption of power by Benazir Bhutto as a first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan was not only an epoch making event in politics but it also transformed the history of Muslim politics that a lady became the Prime Minister of a Muslim state where even mullahs were quite blatant to state that a woman cannot become the head of government; by unleashing fatwas against woman leadership. (Dharamdasani, 1989, 96) After becoming Prime Minister, she herself stated that; I did not choose this life; however, this life chose me. These words unfold that circumstances of her life compelled her to become the leader of Pakistan and to steer its boat towards progress and prosperity and to fulfill the unfinished agenda of her father on the platform of PPP. (Bhutto, 8)

Benazir Bhutto was the first Muslim head of the government as a woman. ((Suvorova, 2015, p.15) Further, she was the first one, as a lady who was politically elected through democratic process in modern time. Globally, she inspired millions, as a lady and introduced different laws for ameliorating the plight of woman as a Prime Minister as well. She possessed charming personality and political intellect that convinced to her toughest opponents as well. She continued, as a woman leader, to inspire and to motivate woman in Pakistan and abroad. She proved, as a leader, a symbol of hope for many people around the globe. (Herald, November, 30, 2017)

Anatol Lieven, a foreign journalist remarked that:

“Indira Gandhi of India, Margaret Thatcher belonging to British, Golda Meir of Israel or even Bandranaike belonging to Sri Lanka went out their ways as women. However, it was Benazir Bhutto who got her success; in spite of all those hurdles; that a traditional Islamic society left and created in her path.” (The Times, London, July 7, 1989)

On 27th February 1989, almost 500 religious scholars of Islam, belonging to various parts of Pakistan; representing Sunni, Ahl-i-Hadith as well as Deobandis, met at United Ulema Convention in Rawalpindi. These Ulemas, unleashed unanimous resolution, called upon the people to reject the leadership of Benazir Bhutto; because of her gender. However, Shia scholar, Allama Sajid Ali Naqvi, the then Chief of Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqah-i-Jaffria floated his opinion that Shias did not oppose woman rule and even advised other Ulemas to avoid from upsetting political equilibrium and giving controversial statements. At that juncture, intellectuals as well as feminists retaliated massively against Ulemas and asked them that Islam does not

permit Ulemas to debacle political system of Islamic state. In Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto was well entrenched in politics. However, her opponents used different methods and adopted different tactics and challenged her appointment as Prime Minister of Pakistan. (Zakriya, 1989, 12-13)

It is evident from the character and political response of Benazir Bhutto as a woman to her detractors and opponents and responded to Ulama's Conference; when she received a great welcome and reception at All Pakistan Women Association that was held on 1st of March 1989 in Karachi.

“At this juncture, Benazir Bhutto defended herself with the strong arguments and referred the Ulemas' (Religious Scholars) to recall the stand that was taken in favor of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah in 1960; that permitted her as to become the head of the state. She, even, challenged them by stating that; either they were right at that time or now. She expressed that these Ulemas at least spoke lie either now or then. Therefore, she not only challenged, the Ulemas' statements against woman leadership but also put under question the credibility of Ulemas'. Even, in 1973 constitution, Jamaat-i-Islami and Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam declared that a woman could be the head of the government. She inquired that why had the Ulemas' changed their opinion now. She also criticized 1985 Martial Law that was passed by Parliament under the martial law regime; drawn up by fundamentalist; decided in the constitution that a woman could be; head of the government. It was regrettable for her that they change their mind and exploited even Islam to keep her aloof from leadership as well as to become the head of the Islamic state. Constitution of Pakistan also states that men and women, on this earth are the agents of Allah as well as trustees of Allah's sovereignty in this world. Men and women, as accepted by constitution of Pakistan, as an agent of Allah, elected Benazir Bhutto through the expression of their opinion in the general elections of 1988. However, she asked the Ulemas to recall that if the expression of will of people of Pakistan is not the will of trustees of Allah then these dear Ulemas have gone a little bit out of the step.” (Rahi, 1990, 136-37)

All these arguments, floated by Benazir Bhutto, solidified her competency and questioned the credibility of Ulemas' fatwas against the women leadership in Pakistan. The courageous character of her leadership can be known from the fact that she responded with constitutional references and dual opinion of Ulemas against women leadership in the history of Pakistan. During 1960s at Fatima Jinnah's political maneuvering, Ulemas' justified women leadership in Pakistan and in the 1980s, during Benazir era, Ulemas' unleashed fatwas against women leadership. These historical facts led to another argument that as a woman leader she faced the challenge of Ulemas' opinion against her leadership. However, she, only and solely, questioned the validity of Ulemas' opinion against woman leadership.

The autobiography of Benazir Bhutto also justifies these facts about women leadership through teaching and arguing with data from Islamic history;

“Bibi Khadija, the first ever convert to Islam; was a widow who ran her own business. She employed Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) during his young age and later married him. Moreover, Umm-e-Umara also fought alongside Muslims against the enemies in the battles against Islam. In the history of Sub-continent, Chand Bibi of Ahmad Nagar; state of south India defeated the then Mughal ruler Akbar as well as forced him to conclude a decisive peace treaty with Chand Bibi. Further, Noor

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Jehan, wife of Mughal emperor Jahangir; possessed leadership as well as administrative skills that was required to run the affairs of the state. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto referred the character and contribution of women, from Muslim history and rule since the early days of Islam till the contribution of women in politics in the Sub-continent. Therefore, Islam as a religion permits the participation of women in administrative affair of any state. The Holy Quran in the Sura Nammal, maintains that the men are allotted what they earn and women what they earn.” (Bhutto, 1989, 30)

It was a fact that Benazir Bhutto used Islamic symbols and historical references for the justifications of her female leadership. Even, the critics remarked that Benazir Bhutto adopted chadar on her head, attracted and entrapped many women across Pakistan; to participate in election process during the discourse of elections. Women leaders; in different occasions, took different steps as precautions; and to avoid any religious/cultural contradictions against Islamic ways of life and preaching's. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto did not succumb to Ulamas' pressure, fatwas and arguments about women leadership that aimed straight away to suppress her leadership. However, she removed misconceptions about the status of women and argued through religious reference that a woman can lead a country. (The Express Tribune, June 30, 2010)

During Zia led regime, social status of women, in Pakistan, was jeopardized and Zia inculcated the image of female as a faithful for Chadar and Chardivari. However, Benazir Bhutto focused to upgrade the image of women and tried to remove Zia's concept about women.

Therefore, Benazir Bhutto, during her both tenures, tried her level best for the improvement and amelioration of the women plight in different areas of Pakistan. She focused to increase literacy rate because she knew that illiterate mother cannot prove viable for literate, moderate and modern society. Benazir Bhutto was also aware of this fact that gender equality is indispensable for strong democracy and economy. Benazir Bhutto's government also extended various facilities like establishment of First Women Bank (FWB) to facilitate female gender that used to face difficulties while seeking banking facilities. (Sheikh, 2000, p. 155) She established Ministry of Women Development to improve the plight of women. She inducted women as pilot in Pakistan International Airlines first time in the history of Pakistan. She also established women Police Stations. Benazir Bhutto introduced the lady health program as well as fixed the female quota in jobs. Hence, Benazir also introduced various schemes in order to ensure skill development, professional training and methods to uplift women; living in far flung areas of Pakistan. (Ahmad, 2018) Her government exhibited democratic spirit and consulted various departments at federal level as well as provincial level and NGOs to seek the opinion and find ways for better implementations of women schemes; to ameliorate female population of Pakistan. Her government responded to the problems faced by women in social departments like education, health, nutrition and provisions of different skills and trainings for income generation for women. (Dawn, June 8, 1990) Therefore, it was under her leadership, that she, as Prime Minister, took several steps and measures to improve the plight of woman; so that they may be able to participate at all areas of national life, in Pakistan. Thus, Benazir Bhutto worked to groom women leadership as she considered that political and economic independence of women is indispensable. (Bhutto, 2008, 288-90)

It is pertinent to mention here that Benazir Bhutto perceived that the amelioration of the plight of women is essential for nurturing women leadership at grass roots level. She focused to remove illiteracy and introduced several programs for women education. Further, Benazir Bhutto also took several measures for the socio-economic amelioration of women. She as a female leader, have gone through the experience; and she faced many difficulties during the formative phase of her leadership until she reached in the office of Prime Minister. Therefore, she was also determined to remove gender inequalities and took some concrete steps for the uplift of women in Pakistan and render her utmost efforts to shun the clouds of gender discrimination during her both stints as a Prime Minister.

Benazir Bhutto encouraged the women participation in sports and her government also infused the consciousness of child care, family planning, nutritional counseling as well as birth control information; in order to achieve physical fitness, better health and population control objectives in females of Pakistan. Thus, Benazir Bhutto was the female leader who tried to ensure freedom for women in every walk of life that was restricted during the Zia period. (Bhutto, 398)

Benazir Bhutto's symbolic significance as a woman leader can be known from those steps and measures which she took in her regime were important; however, she could not challenge several laws that were existed; under the name of Islam. As a Prime Minister, her leadership faced multiple problems like fragile coalition, to appease the opposition and Islamists lobbyist; that were always willing, the very existence of female leadership in mainstream politics of Pakistan. However, Benazir Bhutto, upheld the PPP manifesto, in spite of socio-religious hurdles, paid special attention to gender issues and focused to give strength to females that was neglected in previous regimes in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto's politics, as a female leader, focused to identify, some links in politics, women rights and struggle of women; through vocal protest against gender discrimination. It was her unique efforts as a female leader, to introduce a gender balance in Pakistan society and to improve the fate of women. (Express Tribune, June 30, 2010)

Benazir Bhutto, throughout her life, focused on objectives of social liberty and social justice. Therefore, she wrote that she did believe in her career that faced different challenges because she was a woman. She was of the view, even, in modern societies, women required extra efforts to prove themselves; as equal to men. She further asserted that ladies, as a leader, have to present more sacrifices and extra work for longer hours; to express their leadership qualities. Sadly, still, in this world, many people believe that women are destined to be controlled by men in their lives and will have to bear the pressure of men in order to achieve women's objectives of life. (Bhutto, 13)

As a female leader, she faced the challenge of opposition demand that she should be debarred from premiership during the era of her second pregnancy. However, she not only rejected oppositions demand but also argued with the permissibility of law; that facilitates maternity leaves and also argued that implicitly; maternity leave law also employed on her as a Prime Minister of Pakistan. On the other hand, opposition parties tried to develop pressure on Pakistan's President in order to sack her government. Benazir Bhutto explained her leadership skills and faced the challenge as well as pressure of opposition; she wrote:

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“I used to make her own plans and her father Z.A. Bhutto taught her that in politics; timings are very important. Benazir Bhutto consulted her doctor, before her second delivery, during her second pregnancy, who assured her that her child was full term, therefore, with doctor’s permission; she decided to carry out a caesarian delivery; on the eve of call for strike. She described that she did not want to encourage or persuade any stereotype that pregnancy creates any hurdle with the performance. As a Prime Minister, she compared herself with any male Prime Minister; because she worked a lot harder as a female than a male Prime Minister. In her premiership, as a lady, she was the only who gave birth to a child.” (Bhutto, 13)

Benazir Bhutto, as a woman, tolerated pressure of opposition, bore her personal physical sufferings, and decided the caesarian for her delivery. All these actions, and in time decisions were evident that she was a matured political female leader who even, did not care her biological hurdles for her political objectives.

Besides this, during her both tenures, as a female leader, her attitude for woman folk was encouraging and she always responded their struggle. She wrote that discrimination against women was one of the grave social problems that have been inherited in Pakistan democratic government. She also wrote that basic Islamic principle of equality of men and women was sacrificed while making the amendments. She was glad that woman folk in Pakistan questioned various orders of the courts and now woman possessed the courage to inquire that; if a woman could stand up and questioned Hazrat Umar Farooq 1400 years ago then why not the woman of Pakistan can stand up and the question to law makers of the today. She also reiterated her resolve to repeal all those laws which were discriminatory against woman. She further described that it has been committed in her party’s manifesto and democracy always flourishes in the atmosphere of free debate, tolerance and social justice. (Rahi, 1990, 134-35)

Conclusion

According to the Subaltern studies, women are marginalized groups in the society. Benazir Bhutto was aware of the socio-culture, economic and political plight of women of Pakistan. Therefore, she expressed her willingness to emancipate women in Pakistan. Thus, she made significant contribution towards the gender equality and improved the plight of women; to ensure social justice and political empowerment. She introduced various projects and built institutions for uplifting women. For instance, she established first Women Development Bank to facilitate women to get loans from the bank to start their own business. Further, she also established Ministry of Women for the development and social amelioration of women. She also inducted women as pilot in Pakistan International Airlines first time in the history of Pakistan. Hence, Benazir introduced various schemes in order to ensure skill development, professional training and methods to uplift women; living in far flung areas of Pakistan.

In this prism, one can assess that Benazir Bhutto’s participation in politics and to uphold the political legacy of her father; received strong opposition and Ulema also unleashed fatwas against female leadership in Pakistan. In these circumstances, Benazir Bhutto courageously defended her position as a leader and woman. She responded to Ulemas fatwa through reference from Islamic history and teachings regarding the role of females. Thus, Benazir Bhutto as a female leader did not let herself to be succumbed by the needless pressure of religious scholars. Hence, she

demonstrated skills like charismatic leader and focused to resolve problems of the people. Although she faced many difficulties, during her political career, yet, she demonstrated perseverance, auspicious character and invincible courage, as a woman, and helped Pakistan to build a democratic polity; based on social equality. She took various measures for the amelioration of women plight, and ensured women participation in politics. She set the example for women contribution at managerial positions, decision making process and created opportunities for administrative responsibilities for women.

In global politics, women leadership like Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi inculcated the spirit of hope, identity and information; in the women for their contributions and to gain public office to express their leadership qualities. Benazir Bhutto also did the same and inculcated new spirit and vigour in society and transformed into a progressive society. As compared to aforementioned global female leaders, Benazir Bhutto's job was difficult because she became Prime Minister in Islamic country that creates great challenges for social exposure of women.

After the death of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto was a ray of hope for political empowerment of PPP workers and supporters. Therefore, the political contributions and responsibilities of Benazir is an appreciable chapter in the political history of Pakistan. She not only defended herself, tolerated criticism, responded actively and delivered administrative responsibilities in the office of Prime Minister twice as a female leader. Although, in South Asian political system male dominance always remained a difficult task to handle and women were considered for soft portfolios because of their temperament. However, Benazir Bhutto, as a woman, proved herself as a symbol of modernity that demonstrated aspirational and assertive political approach and proved through her characters and actions that she possessed good leadership qualities. However, she was the choice of millions of people who used to welcome her on roads and streets for her glimpse. Therefore, she was the hope of marginalized people and contributed fearlessly for democracy, removed the shadows of dictators and showed political acumen. As a female leader, her struggle in Pakistan, remained an important chapter in history; because of her bravery, charming personality and supported parliamentary supremacy. Therefore, it is said she was a pure democratic lady with beautiful personality who ruled male dominated Islamic society. Being a woman, she did not care for cruel and revengeful strategy of Zia and relied on her political capabilities and leadership skills. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto was a brave female political leader whose contributions for Pakistani women will remain; a source of inspiration in the political history of Pakistan.

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- [27] M.K Dohery, A.C. Dottry, *Benazir Bhutto*, Sani H. Panwhar.
- [28] Muhammad Ali Sheikh, *Benazir Bhutto: A Political Biography*, 155.
- [29] Ch. Manzoor Ahmad, Former MNA of PPP and Contemporary of Benazir Bhutto, interview by the researcher, Ali Ahmad Shah Colony, Kasur, on 28th August 2018.
- [30] *Dawn*, June 8, 1990.
- [31] *The Express Tribune*, June 30, 2010.

Notes

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (1917-1984) was an Indian states woman and central figure of the Indian National Congress. She was the first and, to date, the only female Prime Minister of India. Indira Gandhi belonged to the Nehru–Gandhi family and was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Indian Prime Minister. Despite her surname Gandhi, she is not related to the family of Mahatma Gandhi. She served as Prime Minister from January 1966 to March 1977 and again from January 1980 until her assassination in October 1984, making her the second longest-serving Indian Prime Minister after her father.

Margaret Hilda Thatcher (1925-2013) was a British stateswoman who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990 and Leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990. She was the longest-serving British Prime Minister of 20th century and the first woman to have been appointed. A Soviet journalist dubbed her the "Iron Lady", a nickname that became associated with her uncompromising politics and leadership style. As Prime Minister, she implemented policies that have come to be known as Thatcherism.

Golda Meir (1898-1978) was an Israeli stateswoman and the fourth Prime Minister of Israel. Meir was elected Prime Minister of Israel on March 17, 1969. The world's fourth and Israel's first and only woman to hold such an office. Her tenure ended before the term was applied to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She was often portrayed as the strong-willed, straight-talking, grey-bunned grandmother of the Jewish people. Meir resigned as prime minister in 1974 and died in 1978 of lymphoma.

Islam, Pakistan and Women Leadership: A Case Study of Benazir Bhutto

Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike (1916-2000) was a Sri Lankan stateswoman and the world's first female head of government. She served as Prime Minister of Ceylon and Sri Lanka three times 1960-65, 1970-77 and 1994-2000 and was a long-time leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. On the assassination of her husband, Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike, Bandaranaike took over the leadership of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and kept it for forty years until her death in 2000.