

The Saga of Benazir Bhutto's Premiership 1988-90 and 1993-96

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to explore, investigate and analyze the political leadership of Benazir Bhutto and her role as ruler/Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988-90 and 1993-96. She remained one of the main players in the corridor of politics in Pakistan for about thirty years and contributed immensely for the peace, prosperity, security and integration of Pakistan. Further, it encapsulates that Benazir Bhutto possessed rare leadership traits which enabled her to come into power and also discusses her leadership traits, attitude, behavior and decisions as a political leader during her premiership (1988-90 and 1993-96). 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. Moreover, this paper summarizes that Benazir Bhutto emerged as a female leader as well as Prime Minister; in a male chauvinistic social structure, under suppressive military leadership, outspoken religious Ulemas and vindictive politics of opposition mainly because she was a charismatic leader. She accepted all challenges and responded accordingly. Moreover, different theories have been applied to have a better understanding of Benazir Bhutto's leadership qualities and administrative abilities. Therefore, in this study, the author tries to find answers to the following; What were specific leadership traits which enabled Benazir Bhutto to emerge as a main political leader and as a Prime Minister of Pakistan? What were diverse challenges faced by Benazir Bhutto as a Prime Minister twice? How did she respond to various challenges as Prime Minister? How does the prism of female leadership unfold the personality of Benazir Bhutto as a female leader?

Keywords: *Benazir, female leadership, Pakistan, Prime Minister*

Introduction

Benazir Bhutto was a compassionate and charming political personality who carried forward the unfulfilled mission of her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan politics. She became the Prime Minister of Pakistan twice (1988-90 and 1993-96) and 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. As Prime Minister of Pakistan twice, during her life time, was a great opportunity for Benazir Bhutto, to exercise her leadership skills, traits, character, attitude and political vision to address the problems, challenges and hardships that were being faced by 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.

Theoretical Framework

To understand, Benazir's leadership qualities, administrative skills and response to existing challenges of Pakistan, during her presence in the office of Prime Minister twice (1988-90 and 1993-96), various theories are important to apply on her personality and leadership. Although, the understanding of leadership, is a complex phenomenon and variety of theories, views and definitions exist yet, the process of influence of Benazir Bhutto's leadership skills, during her both tenures in her Premiership remained an inspiration for many political leaders. No doubt, leadership provides a better opportunity and power to attain one's objectives in life, yet, the study of skills, beliefs, attitudes and behavior is also helpful to dig deep into the character of any leader. A dynamic political leader is always a visionary person who associates with the people to achieve his or her political objectives that are purely for the well-being of common man (Anderson, 1996, p. 5-11). Several political leaders, after getting the opportunity to work as Prime Minister; brought economic prosperity, inculcated political and democratic strength, solidified national cohesion and worked for stability of democratic system (Suri and Chhabra, 2005, p. 236). Before the advent of Benazir Bhutto, as Prime Minister, she fixed her political objectives and dedicated herself to influence the affairs of the country; to uphold the political vision of her father and to work for democratic revival in Pakistan (Kuhro and Choudhary, 2009, p. 162-165). Therefore, various writers have differentiated several traits, characteristics and political skills of different leaders in different time spans. For this purpose, gender differences are also elaborated to understand the culture of emergence of political leadership; in context of female and male leadership. Although, males are considered confident, aggressive and independent political leaders, yet, females are generally characterized as submissive, talkative and emotional leaders (Park, 1996, p.13-17). In these circumstances, the emergence of Benazir Bhutto, as a political leader, with her female leadership qualities; and to handle administrative challenges of Pakistan, as Prime Minister twice; are evidence of her transformational political skills, style of governance and adoption of democratic norms. As a leader, Benazir's ideals were associated with democratic as well as social capitalist policies and she also tried to inculcate these political ideals during her time; as Prime Minister twice.

Personally, Benazir Bhutto possessed various political and leadership traits that are also visible during her administrative skills when she became Prime Minister of Pakistan. She experienced a different style of political governance, exhibited her attitude and demonstrated a sound temperament. She used to have personal political abilities, perception of views and competent vision to resolve the grave problems. Benazir Bhutto also nurtured her political ideals with her visionary recognition of disturbed affairs, organized the people and devised the strategies to protect the interest of the masses. Further, Benazir Bhutto demonstrated her commitment to fulfill the wishes of the people and to remove disappointment of masses. Although,

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she got her education from Radcliff and Oxford, yet, her personality grooming and political training was patronized by her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was also her political mentor (*Daily Times*, December 27, 2017). Benazir Bhutto was a sympathetic leader who wanted to serve her nation. Therefore, she worked hard and participated in the political activities courageously (Interview of Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, Foreign Minister during Benazir Bhutto's Premiership (1993-96) conducted on 23rd May, 2018).

Services and Contribution as Prime Minister 1988-90 and 1993-96

The services and contributions of Benazir Bhutto, during her both stints as Prime Minister, are important to understand her political and democratic vision. She, many times, contributed decisively and demonstrated compromises with other institutions as well as political stakeholders; before her arrival and during her presence in the office of Prime Minister (Shafqat, 1996, 655-672). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave political training to Benazir Bhutto with his chiseled and vast political experience of Pakistan politics. In fact, Z.A. Bhutto wished that, Benazir, being his eldest child, should inherit the political gains of Pakistan Peoples' Party (*Daily Times*, December 27, 2017). Therefore, the personality of Benazir Bhutto, since her educational career, was exceptionally prone towards hard work and dedication. The political potentials and mental capacity of Benazir Bhutto were unique that made her popular leader and facilitated the ways for her arrival in the office of Prime Minister (*The Nation*, December 29, 2017). Therefore, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto advised her daughter, during her studies, to read more literature and history (Bhatia, 2008, p.14). Benazir Bhutto not only proved herself as an outstanding and capable student at Oxford but was also elected as President, Oxford Students Union in November 1976 (Naden, 2011, 35-36). At this phase of her life, Benazir Bhutto, as a student at Oxford and Harvard, experienced great interaction with international politics but also learnt different political tricks (Bhatia, 2008, p.16). Her educational experience and efforts of her father Z.A. Bhutto groomed her politically and inculcated a political maturity in her. She also experienced various diplomatic exposure, international political interactions and guidance of charismatic father Z.A. Bhutto who also created a sense of foreign affair in her (Shafqat, 1996, 655-672).

The personality and leadership skills of Benazir Bhutto can also be gauged in context of various theories about leadership. In order to understand her childhood and political grooming which she acquired from her surroundings as well as at different learning occasions and events, one can apply social learning theory that is helpful to understand her chiseled capabilities and political exuberance as a leader. These traits, determinants and attitude for learning are helpful to dig deep her time of premiership and exhibition of her political grooming and training.

After the death of her father Z.A. Bhutto, Benazir faced different political challenges; however, she remained committed and demonstrated dedication as well as political dexterity in difficult circumstances. Moreover, the death of her father Z.A. Bhutto paved the way for her arrival into mainstream politics of Pakistan. During this political exposures and upheavals, Benazir Bhutto assumed the leadership of PPP and de-radicalized it (Ziring, 1991, 178-189).

On 17th of August 1988, Gen. Zia died and his more than a decade long rule ended (Zakria, p.10). The death of Gen. Zia paved the way to hold elections, therefore, the succeeding Army Chief, Gen. Aslam Beg, ensured to implement Gen. Zia's

announcement for holding general elections in 1988 in Pakistan (Rizvi, 1991, p.17-21). However, political parties, supporters of the constitution and social activists also wanted to restore democracy in Pakistan. PPP got majority in the general elections of 1988 and was able to form government and Benazir became the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan (Sheikh, 2000, p.1).

The advent of Benazir Bhutto as a Prime Minister was a hard journey full of socio-economic, constitutional, political and regional challenges (Interview of Ch. Manzoor Ahmad, Former MNA of PPP and Contemporary of Benazir Bhutto conducted on 28th August 2018). On the flipside of the coin, more than a decade long rule of Zia led regime had created a tremendous disappointment in general public. Therefore, people associated high hopes and expectations with Benazir Bhutto (Interview of Barrister Ch. Aitzaz Ahsan, Interior Minister during Benazir's Premiership (1988-90) conducted on 16th August 2018). Moreover, victory of Pakistan Peoples' Party generated concerns in military leadership. However, before assuming the responsibilities of Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto not only required the military's nod to form her government but also she has to accept military's demands; tried to develop an understanding and a sense of cooperation with them. Therefore, at the very onset of her Premiership, Benazir faced challenges of political bargaining and tried to smooth her relations with military (Dharramdasani, 1989, p. 198). However, later, in her first tenure as the Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto ignored her earlier understandings and compromises with military. Hence, her attempt to replace ISI Chief, Gen. Hameed Gul with Lt. Gen. Shamsur Rehman Kallu, *Pacca Qilla* operation and interference in Military's Selection Boards was not liked by military (The Nation, May 25, 1989). Therefore, military considered these acts of Benazir Bhutto as a violation of her commitment with the Army. As a Prime Minister, it was a grave challenge for her government to develop understanding and maintain compromises with army (Burki, 2004, p.80).

Benazir also contributed with different efforts to uplift the dwindling economy and improved economic growth rate. During her presence as Prime Minister twice, Benazir tried to address the poverty, un-employment and took steps to increase agricultural growth as well as per capita income in Pakistan (Interview of Ch. Manzoor Ahmad, Former MNA of PPP and Contemporary of Benazir Bhutto conducted on 28th August 2018). Besides, the vindictive politics of opposition also created many hurdles for her when she assumed the responsibilities of Prime Minister. Moreover, the opposition did not waste any opportunity to destabilize her government. In these circumstances of confrontational politics, she had a hard time for delivering of good governance and working for the prosperity of the people. However, this kind of blame gaming between her government and opposition paved the way for ouster of Benazir from premiership twice (Sheikh, 2000, p. 133-134).

The challenge of her stormy relationship with Ghulam Ishaq; proved a grave problem for her premiership. This mutual rivalry between President and Prime Minister was further galvanized when the issue of judge's appointment emerged in superior judiciary of Pakistan. Benazir was of the opinion that the President was bound to accept the advice of Prime Minister regarding appointment of judges. However, this controversy was persisting and it posed huge challenge for Benazir Bhutto to fulfill its duration (Akhund, 2000, 70-72). Thus, her government developed a huge rivalry and tussle with President which facilitated the ouster of Benazir from the office of Prime Minister in her first tenure.

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Moreover, Benazir Bhutto was re-elected, as a Prime Minister of Pakistan (1993-96), on 17th October 1993. However, Farooq Laghari¹ (1940-2010) became President of Pakistan, who got victory in presidential elections; with the nomination and support of PPP (Talbot, 1998, p. 333-334). Unfortunately, the presence of Farooq Laghari, as a President, was not proved fruitful for the fulfillment of her tenure of Prime Minister for second time (Sheikh, 2000, 214). The cordial ties with Farooq Laghari became bitter and tense over the appointment of Gen. Jahangir Karamat, as Army Chief. These doubts and suspicions, again with the President of Pakistan, was also a grave challenge for her government (Ziring, 1999, p. 566-567).

Benazir also faced different challenges in Centre-Provinces relations and foreign policy like Afghan issue, Kashmir dispute, relationship with United States and India. Therefore, during her Premiership twice, she confronted with huge challenges domestically and internationally. However, the response and strategies of Benazir Bhutto, as Prime Minister were systematic and proactive. As a Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto set her priorities and introduced different policies to respond domestic problems, to safeguard national interests and to adopt reasonable foreign policy. During her twice existence in the office of Prime Minister, Benazir addressed economic challenges, tried to remove constitutional barriers and expressed her dissatisfaction on the imbalance of power between President and Prime Minister. She also worked on regional disparities and tried to uplift the economy of Pakistan.

Initially, for assuming the office of Prime Minister, Benazir utilized her political bargaining chip sagaciously and accepted the demands of military (Dharamdasani, 1989, 198). However, after taking oath of Premiership, Benazir also used her authority and replaced the ISI chief (*The Nation*, May 25, 1989). Therefore, her response to accept military demands for becoming a Prime Minister and then to exercise her authority as a Prime Minister; was a dual response that brought dual consequences; first appeasing the military and then annoying it. This kind of unsystematic response not only jeopardized her understanding with military but also disturbed her credibility in political compromises for democratic stability. Later on, Benazir formulated a Committee to assess and review the role of Intelligence agencies in democratic polity of Pakistan. However, the Committee presented its findings and appreciated the excellent performance of ISI. Besides this, the Committee also expressed deep concerns over the influence of agencies in Pakistan politics (*Dawn*, May 29, 2000). Alongside this, the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto also encouraged soldiers and gave compassionate response to enhance their morale

¹ Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari (1940-2010) was one of the most reliable and trustworthy associates of Benazir Bhutto who for 30 years had been faithful and active PPP worker. He started his career as a civil servant prior to joining the politics in 1973 and tenured as Senator representing the Balochistan on Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) platform from 1975 to 1977. In 1980s, he led demonstrations aimed against President Zia-ul-Haq's administration and successfully carried out in general elections held in 1988. From 1990 to 1993, he worked under Benazir Bhutto as her deputy Leader of the Opposition. He served as the 8th President of Pakistan from 14th November 1993 till his resignation i.e. on 2nd December 1997.

while paying a visit to *Siachen* glacier. The visit of Benazir Bhutto on such high place for uplifting the morale of soldiers was a fearless gesture that proved vital for the soldiers who were rendering their services for the national safety (Akhund, 2000,113). Benazir's response to civil military relationship during her second tenure was more prudent and sagacious. She appointed her supporters and sympathizers at the key posts of military. Benazir tried to protect the corporate interests of military and cooperated fully over the Afghan problem and Pakistan's stance on nuclear issue (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672). By and large, during Benazir's second tenure, her relations with military were; smooth, collaborative and cooperative (Interview of Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, Foreign Minister during Benazir Bhutto's Premiership (1993-96) conducted on 23rd May 2018). However, one can assess that her response, to some extent, regarding civil military relationship was courageous; to revive civilian supremacy over military.

As far as the economic conditions of Pakistan are concerned, Benazir established Board of Investment, introduced People's Work Program as well as multinational corporations. Her government also brought economic welfare program for women and focused on economic growth. She made utmost efforts to attract foreign investment and focused to work for oil exploration, energy production, road construction as well as the development of telecommunication (Burki, 2004, p. 81). Moreover, she also tried to deliver public sector services programs like pure drinking water, houses for homeless and education for all. Her government also allocated funds to launch employment schemes for the common man (*The News* (Rawalpindi) October 19, 1996). Similarly, the challenge of inflation was also given priorities by her government. Hence, her government tried to control the inflation during her second tenure with effective reform strategies as well as revenue collection efforts (Annual Report of State Bank of Pakistan 1995-96, 4). During her second tenure, poverty was also a rising issue that required serious efforts and commitments for creating more jobs, minimizing corruption and poverty (*The News* (Rawalpindi) October 19, 1996). Hence, Benazir's government focused on economic growth and amelioration the plight of women. Further, the gender economic disparities and male chauvinism was also threatening economic opportunities for females. However, Benazir Bhutto was determined enough to bring economic independence for females; particularly living in far flung areas of Pakistan (Sheikh, 2000, p. 80-81). Therefore, her second term is famous for her efforts for economic growth, unemployment reduction, and attraction for foreign investment as well as for poverty reduction programs.

Furthermore, Benazir responded to the opposition politics and dealt the opposition allegations with steadfastness. However, she was well aware about the give and take political as well as democratic tactics (Shafqat, p. 655-672). As a female leader, she emerged as a strong leader in the tough political atmosphere of South Asia with her assertive female political skills. One can gauge her leadership qualities in the prism of global female leadership. She emerged as a female leader on the ocean of time and was the choice of millions of Pakistanis (Bhutto, 1989, p. 259-261). Although, it is not an easy task to become a Prime Minister and popular leader in a politically male dominated social structure, yet, her emergence as a female leader and then to become Prime Minister of Pakistan; in an over develop state structure was a gigantic achievement. She was a lady of commitment and patriotism. Her strategies and political skills were unique and symbolized the calm temperament with cool

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objectivity. However, her character is always an inspirational proposition for millions of females across the globe. She emerged as a female political leader, faced socio political hurdles and became the first head of the state, as democratically elected, in any Muslim state (Dharramdasani, 1989, 196). Therefore, the existence of aforesaid socio political fact, the emergence of Benazir as Prime Minister not only challenged the religious dogmatism but also created a ray of hope for suppressed females. 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 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. These traits are also evident from her efforts and responsibilities as Prime Minister of Pakistan twice. Benazir Bhutto's political contributions and services left valuable footprints on Pakistan's politics.

Conclusion

The tenure of Benazir Bhutto as a Prime Minister (1988-90 and 1993-96) is an important era of Pakistani political structure and democratic stability. The leadership assessment unfolds that Benazir Bhutto possessed different leadership traits which she demonstrated as a Prime Minister of Pakistan during her both tenures. She acquired personal exposure from the charismatic leadership of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who was her father as well as political mentor. The interests to serve the nation and to drive the institution of Parliament towards the supreme and decisive authority: Benazir Bhutto made utmost efforts to transform Pakistan into democratic and welfare state. She acted sometimes decisively to prove her authority and sometimes demonstrated compromises with the other political stakeholders in Pakistan. She portrays the image of transformational leader by aspiring to transform Pakistan into an economically developed, socially tolerant and modern nation state. The expectations she had aroused were very high, yet her performance as Prime Minister on both occasions remained less than satisfactory. During her both tenures, she faced myriad challenges political entrenchment of military, acute imbalance of power between President and Prime Minister, rampant poverty, endemic unemployment, deep rooted illiteracy, volatile geopolitical situation, regional disparities and the major drawback was the vindictive politics of opposition. Her political opponents, like Nawaz Sharif, tried to destabilize her Government by using various tools and tactics. Inspire of all these challenges, hardships and difficulties, she managed to rule twice in a society where male chauvinistic politics were dominating, religious ulamas were against the ruling of a women and general lull of perception was that lady is always considered to be neglected to accept her order and authority, which is a unique distinction in the politics as well as in the historiography of Pakistan. Her entry into politics and her political leadership

ushered in a new era of women activism and participation in various walks of life including politics.

In short, the study brought forth the lesson that when a person including a woman accepts the challenge to achieve her goals in any given time and space he/she can achieve it if she possesses strong leadership qualities and Benazir Bhutto is one best example in case of Pakistani state and society. When she was a quite young student, Benazir Bhutto was left with no choice but to follow the political path of her father to save Z.A. Bhutto's political party and to carry out her father's mission of working for the betterment of downtrodden society of Pakistan. She believed that her father was an innocent person and was punished for transforming Pakistan into a nuclear power. She thought her father's death punishment was judicial murder and thus decided to enter into politics. No stone was left unturned to eliminate democracy, to suppress political parties and political process by 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 1988. She deserved full power as Prime Minister but she had to make compromises to step in the governments on both times. Her approach of reconciliation did not bear fruit and antidemocratic forces did not let her to work freely and independently and tried to create hurdles. Consequently, she could not complete her terms of office both times and thus her performance as a Prime Minister could not be judged with honest and fair yardstick and parameters. However, repressive and reactionary forces including religious and authoritative groups created hurdles and did not let her to complete terms or to implement her strategic goals. Stereotyped charges of corruption, nepotism and security risks were imposed and 58 (2) (B) was exercised to dismiss her governments twice. She had set wonderful goals in the election campaigns and initiated projects but she failed to implement her election manifesto and could not achieve her objectives. Apart from dismissal from Prime Ministership twice with nefarious propaganda of corruption, nepotism and bad governance, each time she reemerged with more force, vigor and popularity. No doubt, she got political charisma, strong nerves and managerial abilities, therefore, this study has observed that she assumed political leader of her political party; became prime minister twice and emerged a major player in political game of Pakistan mainly through these unusual qualities which were rare in the contemporary world. Like Margret Thatcher her supporters declared Benazir Bhutto as an "Iron Lady" because of her inspirational political contributions for her country and the world. Most probably, looking at the surveys and response of the people in the elections of 2007, it appeared she would have become Prime Minister of Pakistan for the third time but was martyred in 2007 in a terrorist attack. However, before her demise, Benazir Bhutto reawakened the political philosophy of Z.A. Bhutto, consolidated democracy in shape of Chartered of Democracy (COD) and gave voice to the marginalized and voiceless people especially the women of Pakistan. Zia had applied Islamic orthodox approach of religion but Benazir transformed the Pakistani society into a modern Islamic society.

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