

Quaid-e-Awam's Philosophy and the Present Government

By: Farzana Raja

“I wish the suffocation to end so that the people can breathe in freedom. One day, even my bones would serve as cement to strengthen Pakistan”. This is what Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto said while fighting for the rights of the people. In the current political context, every rational Pakistani can appreciate the importance of this saying. It is the 31st anniversary of the judicial murder of Mr. Bhutto. On 18th March 1978, a court presided over by Maulvi Mushtaq Hussain sentenced an elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and that dark decision was put into effect by the dictator General Zia on the night of 4th April 1979. His wife Begum Nusrat Bhutto and daughter Benazir Bhutto were not even allowed to participate in his last rites.

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was a bold and fearless leader. He always tried to promote a politics of national reconciliation. He left lasting effects on Pakistani politics, raised his voice against dictatorship and conformist civil administration and gave hope and determination to the people. He rejected all forms of dictatorship by developing a constitution that was agreed upon by all. The enemies of democracy have always conspired against every regime of People's Party but they have failed to eliminate Mr. Bhutto's ideas from the minds of the people. To this day, Mr. Bhutto's philosophy and political ideology lives on in the Pakistan People's Party. The forces of oppression and injustice martyred him for making the people aware of their rights, but he still challenges them from his tomb. He lives on in the hearts of 180 million Pakistanis who stand for the dignity of the constitution and consider the country's nuclear arsenal a must for their defence. The constitution and the nuclear deterrence are Mr. Bhutto's gifts to our beloved country, Pakistan. I can say this with certainty that the kind of sacrifices made for democracy in Pakistan by Mr. Bhutto and his family are unmatched throughout the history of the world.

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto had made a pledge to the spirit of her father and the people of Pakistan that she would dedicate all her time and energy for the law against usurpers, for good against evil and virtue against vice. The brave daughter who was determined to see her father's mission to completion was martyred among a throng of those who loved her on 27th December. Her martyrdom defeated dictatorship and democracy was upheld once again.

Islam is our religion. Democracy is the aim and the basis of our politics. We believe in a socialistic economy. All power stems from the people. It is the people who lie at the heart of these four principles of Quaid-e-Awam. Even after 32 years of Mr. Bhutto's demise, a majority of the people have brought the Pakistan People's Party into power. Everyone is aware of the circumstances under which People's Party took reigns of the government. The present government's performance must be considered vis a vis Mr. Bhutto's philosophy and Shaheed Mohtarma's vision.

After 8 years of dictatorial injustices, reign of terror, dilapidated economy, political turmoil and extreme uncertainty, the government led by the president Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and the Prime Minister Mr. Yousuf Raza Gilani accomplished such feats that were unheard of in the past.

A historical public and political alliance was achieved that made possible decisive victories in Swat and Bajaur. For the first time ever, the defence budget was debated in the parliament. The end of the National Security Council, reinstatement of the deposed judges, the advent of the 'Aghaaz Huqooq-e-Balochistan Package', the distribution of 12% shares of all government business among the employees under the Benazir Employees Stock Option Scheme, the start of the Benazir Green Tractor Scheme for small farmers, the awarding of provincial status to Gilgit and Baltistan and the conducting of transparent elections there, the signing of Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline, allowing the people of FATA the right of participation in the political process and to top it all off, the rehabilitation of the 1973 constitution through a committee that had participation of all political parties are some remarkable achievements of the present government.

As an extension of the 'Roti, Kapra, Makaan' slogan of Quaid-e-Awam, the people's government initiated the Benazir Income Support Program that aims at financial rehabilitation of the poor and the destitute and allowing them dignified and respectable existence. This program is a true reflection of Mr. Bhutto's philosophy, and it allows the under-privileged the same facilities as the rest of the population.

Even after repeated dictatorships and the tragedy of East Pakistan, what kept Pakistan together was the 1973 constitution. Mr. Bhutto had promised that even his bones would cement and strengthen Pakistan. Today, we pledge to our party's founder that in line with his principles, we will continue our struggle to end extremism, conformism and poverty and provide the people of Pakistan the same 'air of freedom' that he had dreamed for them.