

Mother of Democracy: The Icon of Courage and Sacrifice



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The democratic history of Pakistan would always be owing to Begum Nusrat Bhutto, a legendary personality that had exhibited tremendous strength, courage and character during her struggle against the ruthless despotic military regime. In this momentous struggle for the revival of democracy and fundamental rights of the people of Pakistan, she had to go through the agonized moments of unprecedented grief and hardships. However, none of these adversaries could deter her firm resolve and commitment with the cause and legacy of her great husband, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Today, only a few people would be aware of the fact that it was Begum Sahiba, who being the first lady of Pakistan, served as a dynamic force behind various pro poor initiatives launched by the democratically elected government of Quaid-e-Awam, Shaheed Bhutto. She remained on forefront in serving the poor and marginalized of the country, not only at policy level, but also through establishing direct interaction with deprived segments of society.

At the initial stages of emergence of Pakistan Peoples Party as a voice for the voiceless of Pakistan, Begum Sahiba proved to be a great source of strength for Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam in dealing with rising challenges at organizational level, especially, in establishing an effective and vibrant women wing of the newly found party. She was able to win the hearts and minds of party workers with the help of her charismatic personality as well as sheer dedication with the cause of bringing about some meaningful changes in the lives of the people of Pakistan.

Besides rendering untiring services to establish and strengthen Women's Wing of the party, which proved to be a powerful political force and voice of Pakistani women, Begum Sahiba assumed the role of a bridge between the masses and the democratic government.

The welfare of people and wellbeing of party workers had always been foremost important priority of the great leader. Hence, to obtain first hand information about the issues of the people, she would listen to their grievances and problems on daily basis. This love and compassion for the people of Pakistan resulted in her emergence as most popular political figure of the country after Quaid-e-Awam.

While recalling some cherished memories from start of my career as young political activist, I cannot overlook the fact that the historic role and the aura of Begum Bhutto was one of my major inspirations in political arena. All the democracy lovers and especially the leaders and workers of PPP became her admirers due to towering efforts and sacrifices she made in the pursuit of democracy, liberty and happiness for his beloved Pakistanis. She exhibited her remarkable insight and abilities while playing much needed and crucial role in organizing the event of 1974 Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore. Same is true when Begum Sahiba showed tremendous resilience during the difficult hours in the aftermath of the coup by Gen. Zia against the democratic regime of PPP.

During this era of brute tyranny, Mohtarma Nusrat Bhutto faced all sort of sufferings with tremendous courage and epic resilience. On one hand, she had to struggle for the life of her great husband and on the other; she had to confront with the brutal force of martial law regime. She did not stop playing her active role in the politics despite the various oppressive tools used by martial law regime to break her spirit.

During her long struggle for the revival of democracy, she was imprisoned and exiled but kept the legacy of her great husband intact. Indeed, the life of Begum Sahiba was an extraordinary chapter of the political history of Pakistan. She was and would always remain an icon of struggle for democracy and a pioneer of political reconciliation in the country.

She would rightly be remembered as ‘mother of democracy’ as she orchestrated an exceptional struggle for the restoration of democracy from the platform of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). There is no denying the fact that the oppressive regime could have been succeeded in its evil designs to crush and eliminate Pakistan Peoples Party had it not been Mohtarma Nusrat Bhutto to keep the flag of democratic struggle flying high.

Begum Bhutto, during this movement was not only imprisoned but also beaten up harshly by the goons of the regime. However, accompanied by her brave daughter and our great leader, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Begum Bhutto did not surrender her stance before the forces of the darkness.

Despite facing serious health issues from early 80’s, Begum Sahiba kept her resolve steadfast and continued her political work from abroad while providing full support and guidance to her daughter Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. It was due the leadership abilities and vision of Begum Sahiba that she was able to convince the political leadership of the country to boycott the elections under Gen Zia-ul-Haq in 1985. Therefore, the so-called elections were left devoid of credibility which was an important landmark in our political history.

I must share one of the glittering aspects of her personality as I had the honor and privilege to get enlightened by her vision and mission. Following the footsteps of her great husband, Begum Sahiba always had a keen desire to empower women along with the socio-economic uplift of the poor of Pakistan. She took woman as a symbol of strength and spirit. For her, the woman folk could play a larger role to strengthen her family and she in herself was the best example of it. Every woman beneficiary of Benazir

Income Support Programme, I must say, is a stimulation of the relentless services of Begum Nusrat Bhutto. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed carried on Begum Sahiba's mission of women empowerment and poverty alleviation in the country with an amazing zeal and spirit. Insha Allah, the dream of a making Pakistan a welfare state will be fulfilled as per Begum Sahiba's aspirations under the leadership and guidance of President Asif Ali Zardari.

Although, Begum Sahiba is no more among us physically, however, she will always remain a source of motivation to all of us who believe in the continuity of the vision and legacy of Bhuttos. She will also be remembered in history of Pakistan for her compassion for the poor and resolve for serving humanity. Her contribution for uplifting the lives of poor and destitute of the society and to bring a healthy socio-economic change in the country through progressive and people-centric policies would remain a golden chapter of the history.

Especially written Article on the first death anniversary of Mohtarma Nusrat Bhutto