

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Still a source of Inspiration



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The name of *Shaheed* Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the first elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and founding father of the Pakistan Peoples Party, is and will always remain an icon of struggle for the rights of people. The courageous leader scarified his life to protect the rights of Pakistani nation and to make Pakistan a modern progressive democracy. That is the reason that the great *Quaid-e-Awam* will live in the hearts and minds of the people of Pakistan forever.

The enemies of *Shaheed* Bhutto were actually the enemy of Pakistan and its people as they were aware that the process of progress and development ushered by his democratic government would be unstoppable under his dynamic leadership. The social and economic well being of the people was the focal point of the policies of *Shaheed* Bhutto. The slogan of '*roti, kapra aur makan*' is very much reflective of his economic agenda, which is not only quite relevant today but will also remain so in future as well.

While marking 33rd "Yum-e-Shahadat" of the *Shaheed* Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, every democracy loving Pakistani rightly owes it to *Shaheed* Bhutto for living in a democratic Pakistan, free from tyrannical rule of undemocratic and oppressive forces. April 4, 1979 was indeed a black day when the judicial murder of *Shaheed* Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was committed on the behest of the then dictator Zia ul Haq. The forces of darkness succeeded to eliminate the most popular leader of the people for his 'crime' of giving voice to poor people of Pakistan and for his promise to rid the downtrodden masses of the country of the bane of poverty.

Shaheed Bhutto wanted to make the defense of the country stronger and for this it was his democratic regime that gave Pakistan its nuclear programme. Besides, to strengthen the economy of the country, various futures oriented projects including Pakistan Steel Mills and Heavy Mechanical Complex were initiated by ZAB government on urgent basis.

Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam instilled a new zeal and vigor in the people of Pakistan at a time when their hopes were diminishing and their dreams were getting shattered as a result of various internal and external factors. These were the difficult hours in the history of the country when the courageous people of Pakistan, as a result of follies of their short-sighted rulers, were haplessly facing looming threats to social, political and geographical integrity of the country.

In the face of all these challenges, it was the unmatched wisdom of *Shaheed* leader who dealt with these challenges in most befitting and efficient manner. He prescribed greater national harmony as the only solution to keep the social, political and geographical integrity intact and protected.

Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam gave a gift of unanimous Constitution to nation to infuse a sense of national harmony and integrity. Besides, he initiated mega developmental projects including Steel Mills and Kamra Aeronautical Complex aiming to revitalize the ailing economy of the country and to lay down the future economic roadmap of the country.

Quaid-e-Awam always exhibited phenomenal love and affection for the poor and downtrodden of the country. This fact is quite evident from the fact that he took numerous revolutionary pro-poor steps in short span of time during his democratic tenure. The main thrust of the policies of *Shaheed* Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the manifesto of his party was to uplift the lives of socially and economically deprived segments of society.

In this connection, he promised to the deprived segments of society of the basic amenities of life. Considering education a key to bring about a real economic revolution, new educational institutes and Polytechnic institutions were established and upgraded by his democratic government. Besides, scholarships for the students were increased aiming to promote higher education among the bright and diligent students of Pakistan.

Throughout his democratic regime, *Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam* strived hard to strengthen institutions, correct the economy and improve the living standard of the people. It's indeed a coincidence that the present democratic government which is the heir of Bhutto's legacy, is confronting with similar daunting tasks of correcting the ailing economy as well as to develop, strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions.

Being the heir of the legacy of *Shaheed* ZAB, today, the democratic government under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, is focused on to serve poor and destitute of society. The PPP led Federal Government took courageous steps soon after its inception to alleviate the economic troubles and hardships of the masses. This agenda is in the

pursuance the guiding principles of *Quaid-e-Awam* as well as the vision of his great daughter, *Shaheed* Benazir Bhutto.

The initiation of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is the part of the same legacy. It is first ever comprehensive social protection net which is expanding by every passing day despite various economic woes of our national economy. The programme has recently extended its life insurance facility to millions of new beneficiary families registered with BISP, which is an unprecedented step in the entire South Asia.

Turning the pro-poor and pro-people socio-economic vision of *Shaheed* Bhutto into reality, BISP has also envisaged Waseela-e-Taleem initiative to provide education to millions of children of poor deserving families. Besides, the programme has already introduced various initiatives including long-term interest free financial assistance, vocational and technical training opportunities to poor beneficiary families and is about to launch health insurance for the poorest of the poor who cannot face any health shock, in addition to monthly cash grants.

At the occasion of 33rd 'Youm-e-Shahadat' of *Shaheed* ZAB, the PPP led democratic government and BISP would reinvigorate its policy of serving the masses of Pakistan and to make Pakistan a modern, progressive as well as developed nation as it was dreamt by the *Shaheed Qaid-e-Awam*.

****Especially written in connection with Martyrdom Day of Quaid-e-Awam, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto***