

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: Democratic, Constitutional Inspiration



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Great and true leaders live eternally. Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was truly one of the greatest visionary leaders of modern era whose political philosophy and democratic constitutional polices are logical providing basis and guiding principles for all times to come.

Shaheed Bhutto by virtue of his statesmanship qualities, steered the nation towards the destination of peace, progress and stability under extremely challenging and difficult circumstances. He provided the nation an insight and the leadership to counter all the looming threats for the very existence of the country.

After the tragedy of East Pakistan, in a historic speech in the year 1971, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto summed up his vision about the future of Pakistan by saying, “My dear countrymen, my dear friends, my dear students, laborers, peasants, those who fought for Pakistan. We are facing the worst crisis in our country's life, a deadly crisis. We have to pick up the pieces, very small pieces, but we will make a new Pakistan, a prosperous and progressive Pakistan, a Pakistan free of exploitation, a Pakistan envisaged by the Quaid-e-Awam.”

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto resolved all the external threats to the integrity of the nation. He introduced a wide range of reforms in political, economic, social, industrial, educational and administrative arenas aiming to change the fate of common man in Pakistan.

The political career, struggle and policies adopted by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto during his democratically elected government suggest that the leader of masses was born to serve the people of Pakistan and to accomplish great deeds for the nation. It was his able leadership that had infused new spirit in the nation and thus gave the people courage and momentum to rise from the ashes.

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, during the process of nation building, paid special attention to bring about positive changes in the lives of poor and downtrodden segments of society. Besides, he was able to boost the image of Pakistan in the comity of nations by exhibiting unprecedented mastery in international diplomacy. Securing the release of 90,000 prisoners of war and by vacating 5,000 square miles of Pakistani territory back

from India through negotiations is a remarkable example that depicts the abilities of great Quaid-e-Awam.

Democratic process cannot be complete without providing relief to each and every segment of society. The zeal and commitment of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto towards serving the underprivileged of society made him iconic person with regards to securing the rights of the people of Pakistan. Hence, the forces that did not want to empower people perceived Quaid-e-Awam as the biggest threat for their vested interests based on the abuse of the rights of common man.

In another historic speech, Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam elaborated this vision in categorical terms and said, "For all those who have been the victim of most inhuman exploitation known to contemporary times, this intolerable state of affairs have to be brought to an end. It is our moral duty to lift the people of Pakistan from the quagmire of poverty. We consider the end of inequalities, the achievements of the fair distribution of wealth, and the establishment of a welfare society as a proper function of the state".

While being fully aware of the consequences of empowering common man, our Shaheed leader decided to live in the history rather than making compromises with retrogressive elements. Hence, the daring leader of the masses sacrificed his life to empower the people and to make Pakistan a modern progressive democracy.

The adversaries of Quaid-e-Awam were in fact the enemies of a stable modern Pakistan. Such anti-people elements were afraid of the power of masses, sensing that the process of development and progress ushered by Shaheed Bhutto would ultimately end all sort of oppression and exploitation from the society.

A careful analysis of the measures and interventions taken by the democratic regime of Shaheed Bhutto, especially in the social sector, suggests that his socio-economic agenda was based on the well being of the people of Pakistan. This socio-economic agenda has been aptly described by the slogan 'roti, kapra aur makan', a true reflection of his economic agenda, which is quite relevant today and would remain so in the future.

Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam infused a ray of hope in the people during extremely difficult time and guided the nation clear of various looming internal and external threats. Shaheed Bhutto preached greater national harmony among the nation as only way forward to become a stronger federation. He bestowed the nation the gift of unanimous Constitution to ensure the protection and provision of the rights of every Pakistani.

The democratic government of Shaheed Bhutto introduced various measures aiming to provide basic amenities of life to marginalized segments of society. Keeping in view the importance of education, new scholarships for the students were introduced to bring about a revolution in the arena field of education and to solve as an effective tool to combat poverty.

Today, the socio-economic vision of Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam is being promoted through the platform of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The initiative was given a task to alleviate the economic troubles and hardships of the masses. It is a matter of immense pleasure and satisfaction to me that the stated objectives of the programme are being remarkably achieved under the guiding principles laid down by Quaid-e-Awam and in accordance with the vision of his great daughter, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

BISP is first ever comprehensive social protection net introduced in Pakistan which has won recognition from credible international institutions. The programme is being expanded further consistently by extending new interventions to deserving families including health and life insurance facility, micro financing, vocational technical training and most importantly by imparting education to non school going children of the registered families. Inshallah, BISP will continue the vision of Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam.

Today, while marking 34th Martyrdom Day of the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, every Pakistani that believes in democracy is paying tribute to Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam for the great sacrifice he has made for the better future of coming generations. April 4, 1979 would always be remembered as a black day as it was the day when the judicial murder of our great leader was committed on the behest of a dictator. By the grace of God, in the light of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's democratic and constitutional vision, Pakistan will achieve its goals including sovereignty, welfare, prosperity and success.

- ***The writer is former Federal Minister and founding Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)***

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