

# **BENAZIR BHUTTO**

## **A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY**



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To

Sunny Parkwar,

with good wishes,

Bunazir

Shukr

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## Preface

Last few decades have witnessed emergence of quite a few female popular leaders on the global political scene: Margaret Thatcher in Europe, Golda Meir in Middle East, Indra Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and Aung San Suu Kyi in Asia, to name a few.

Except the last two names, all the other female leaders assumed power in a smooth, orderly and methodical democratic manner. They had not to confront the dictatorial regimes, where they would have been subjected to confinements, trials, tribulations and tortures in their struggle for restoration of democracy.

In another case, Corazon Aquino had confronted the dictator in the Philippines like Benazir Bhutto and Aung San Suu Kyi, but Aquino had a full-fledged support from the Church and a strong faction of the Philippines army. The result was that they had not to go through the ordeal that the two leaders in Asia had to go for the restoration of democracy in their respective countries.

The similarities in case of Benazir Bhutto and Aung San Suu Kyi end here. Aung San Suu Kyi is still on the way, which Benazir Bhutto has already covered. She has already gone through long years of confinement at the hands of martial law authorities, which her Burmese counterpart has been experiencing for the last many years.

Benazir Bhutto was the first on this road with an added disadvantage that the society she represented had strong taboos against any role for a female in politics. The Buddhist civilization of Burma fortunately has not had such sort of taboos that could hinder the women from playing any leadership role. Benazir had. She assumed the role

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of a leader in a society where to be a woman is a born-disadvantage. Throughout the centuries, women in the subcontinent have to bear the brunt of male chauvinism, from burning alive (Satti) to the so-called honor-killing (Kari-Karo).

I have been fascinated by Benazir Bhutto's story. Her emergence as the most popular leader in one of the most conservative societies, in itself, is very exciting. It is in this backdrop that I decided some six years ago to compile her political biography. To write a biography, and that a political one, when the subject personality is not only alive, but actively engaged in the political game, is very difficult. But, it has got an advantage also. The author can check and recheck the authenticity of the information from the subject personality. This advantage, I have been able to avail.

I am indebted to a number of persons for their kind help and special assistance in bringing this book out. My special thanks are due to Ms Benazir Bhutto who granted me interviews at Karachi and London during last few years.

I interviewed several people in Pakistan, as well as in England. The other places where I could not reach, the communication revolution, brought in by the Internet, came to my rescue. I am thankful to Ms Sanam Bhutto for sharing her memories relating to Ms Benazir Bhutto's childhood, her life in prisons, the tragic fate of her brothers and other related topics. Ms Victoria Schofield was very kind to invite us to her London residence, where she provided me information on her and Ms Benazir Bhutto's days in Oxford and afterwards during her father's trial period. I am thankful to her.

I am grateful to Mr Bashir Riaz for divulging details about her period in the exile. Mr Wajid Shamsul Hassan and his family welcomed us wholeheartedly at their London apartment. I am thankful to them. Mr Siraj Shams was always helpful in finding time for the interviews from extremely busy schedule of Ms Bhutto. He also shared with me his memories regarding her two stints in power, when he worked with her as her Personal Staff Officer. Thank you very much Mr Siraj.

We had the privilege to enjoy the hospitality of Mr Riaz and his good wife in their beautiful London residence when they very kindly invited us to meet with the British parliamentarians. Amongst others,

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Mr George Galloway and Mr Muhammed Sarwar, both members of the British Parliament, deserve special gratitude.

In London, I had an opportunity to meet and interview Mr Rehman Malik and Mr Hussain Lowaie. Dr. Niazi was also kind to meet with me in London.

In addition to them I had the privilege to meet countless other people both in the country and abroad, who contributed in a significant way towards completing this book. I express my deep sense of gratitude for all of them.

The management of Daily DAWN Karachi owes my most sincere thanks for opening the doors of their most modern library for me. I was greatly facilitated by their microfilm record of the old newspapers. Similarly, the National Liaquat library of Karachi also proved to be a treasure of information for me.

Mr Anwer Pirzado and Mr M.H. Askari ably did the editing of this work. I am grateful to them for taking great pains and suggesting changes in the draft. However, what has been narrated in the book is completely my view and nobody else is responsible for whatsoever has been written here.

My friends Anwer Abro, Ms Zaibi Riaz, her husband Riaz, my PA Alidino, the typists Qasim, Shams and Amjad did my work in their extra hours. Designer Abdullah Thebbo did a splendid work on the title and the photographs. My gratitude for all of them.

I had the benefit of enriching myself from the scholarly discourses of Mr Ali Ahmed Brohi, who has always been a great help to me while writing on any topic. He provided me his valuable insight from the very beginning till the end in this project. I am greatly indebted to him for all that he has done for me.

I am extremely indebted to my most beloved wife, Shaista, whom I can not adequately thank for her boundless love, invaluable assistance and most sincere and objective advice. This would be incomplete if I do not mention my four kids Hassan, Hina, Fariya and Saba, who has always enlightened me with their innocent smiles and never complained of my inattention to them when I was absorbed in my work.

*Karachi*  
*September 2000*

Muhammed Ali Shaikh

## Chapter 1

# The Bhuttos

(Pre-1953)

It was a cold December afternoon when history was being made in Pakistan. A young woman in her early thirties was to take oath of the office of the Prime Minister of a Muslim country for the first time ever. She was elected by the majority of 130 million people of the country through their right of franchise. All the conspiracies to keep her out from leadership role in the name of religion, racial hatred, provincialism and gender had failed; and failed miserably. It was unheard of in the annals of contemporary history of Islamic world that a woman could be chosen to lead a nation. She was the first example. And her added distinction was that she was the youngest elected head of government in world. For eleven long years she had remained the target of the worst kind of persecution and suppression at the hands of a military dictator. But, despite the military despot's all-out effort to subjugate her will, she had not given up and continued with her heroic struggle against tyranny. In the final count she triumphed. The reality was stranger than fiction.

The occasion was the oath taking ceremony by Prime Minister-designate Benazir Bhutto, on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1988. The picturesque capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, was the centre of attention for whole

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of the world. The imposing building of *Aiwan-e-Sadar*, the local name for the Presidency, was the venue of this event. Though the building had been built some six years back, it was for the first time that the oath taking ceremony of a Prime Minister was taking place there. Outside this beautiful white edifice, at the foot of the lush green hills of *Shakrparyan*, thousands of people, students, women, farmers and factory workers lined up along the Constitutional Avenue, the main thoroughfare leading to the *Aiwan-e-Sadar*. Many carried the tricolor flag of Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party. Others, waving welcoming banners, greeted their young leader who had emerged as a symbol of democracy for them, a 'goddess of democracy.' After every few moments slogans of *Jeay Bhutto* (long live Bhutto) echoed in emotion choked voices in the spectacular surroundings.

Inside the Presidency, the atmosphere was enormously magnificent. The main reception hall, decorated with beige colored curtains and tapestry, overlooked vast stretches of the capital's most beautiful pine covered road, the *Khayaban Quaid-e-Azam*. The hall was filled with dignitaries from all walks of life —the leaders of various political parties, parliamentarians, diplomats, judges of the supreme and high courts, senior civil and military officials. Almost everybody who was anybody in Pakistani society was there. It was country's complete who's who. The chief of the army staff and his counterparts in navy and airforce sat on the right side of the presidential dais. In the front row sat the Prime Minister-designate's mother, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, spouse Asif Ali Zardari and her sister Sanam Bhutto. There were many more nearer and dearer ones amongst some seven hundred guests, waiting for her and the President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to enter in the hall.

With an almost dramatic suddenness, the soft sound of the national anthem echoed in the hall and the guests rose en masse to pay respect to the honored entrants. Benazir Bhutto, dressed in a green *Shalwar-Kameez* and a white *Dupatta*, accompanied by the President, walked with measured steps on the red carpet between the rows of the colourfully uniformed bodyguards of the Presidency. She looked radiant and stately under the intermingling flood of



lights reflected by glittering array of crystal chandeliers.

She took her seat on the dais. The cabinet secretary invited a *Qari* to recite from Holy Quran. The verse recited on the occasion implored Almighty Allah to reward those, men or women, who do good deeds and affirmed that He would certainly compensate those, here and hereafter, who practice forbearance and fortitude in adversity. The cabinet secretary then requested the President to administer the oath of the office and the secrecy to her. Ghulam Ishaq Khan read out the solemn oath in Urdu, which she repeated word by word. When the text ended, she put her signature on the document recording the oath.

The hall echoed with prolonged clapping. Many of the guests who had been with her throughout her struggle against tyranny and dictatorship had for years longed to witness all this. Tears of joy filled their eyes. The audience rose to congratulate the first-ever Muslim woman Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. Her mother watched the ceremony with a fixed gaze, almost unbelievably, wondering whether it was a dream or a reality.

The history was made.

\* \* \* \* \*

Benazir Bhutto belongs to Sindh -- the southernmost province of Pakistan. It is named after the river 'Indus', 'Sindhu' in Sindhi language. The mighty river gave India its name and is like the very soul of the subcontinent. The *Rigveda*, considered as one of the earliest literary record of Indo-Aryans, composed sometime between 3000 to 1500 BC, has mentioned the Indus fourteen times. The Ganges, the holiest of all rivers to the Hindus, has been mentioned only three times.

In the land of Indus, Sindh has been the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, universally known as the Indus Valley Civilisation. The epic Indian literature, *Ramyaana* and *Mahabharata*, describe Sindh in glowing terms when King Dasaratha proudly tells his queen Kaikayi "Oh my dear Queen! My empire has Sindh, Sauvira, Saurashtra, Kashi and Kaushal, and these provinces produce an infinite variety of luxuries: name them

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and they shall be yours”<sup>1</sup>. This only symbolises that Sindh was such an important and wealthy province even in those pre-historic days that the first name on the lips of this ancient Indian king was that of Sindh.

Benazir Bhutto’s native place is Larkana, which is located in almost the centre of Sindh. It is popularly known as ‘*Nukhlustan*’, meaning the oasis, because of the fertility of its soil<sup>2</sup>. The area has yet another unique distinction that it houses the ruins and the remains of *Moenjodero*, the capital of the five thousand-year old Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeological excavations carried out in the region in 1920s under supervision of Sir John Marshall established beyond any doubt that the civilization belonged to third millennium BC and was a contemporary of, if not older than those of, the Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt.

The people of Indus valley knew the art of agriculture, which was their main profession. Besides, there were the artisans and accomplished craftsmen of highest order amongst them whose products were very much in demand in the markets of the ancient world. They traded with their contemporaries in Mesopotamia and other far-flung foreign lands. They had invented the art of writing, employing a pictographic script of a highly developed order. In fact, they were the sole harbingers of urbanization in whole of the subcontinent<sup>3</sup>. “As a small child”, Benazir wrote in her autobiography, “I thought the ancient city was called ‘*Munjo Dero*,’ which in Sindhi language means ‘my place’. My brothers, sister and I took great pride that we had been raised in the shadows of Moenjodaro, that we lived on the bank of Indus, which had been the life line to the land since the beginning of time.”<sup>4</sup>

The women of Sindh have been noted for their beauty and elegance throughout history. Both Alexander the Great and Chengiz Khan paid glowing tributes to the grace and the charm of Sindh’s women<sup>5</sup>. Most of the folk stories of this land revolve around female folk of very strong character. These tales have been sung by the most popular *Sufi* (mystic) poet of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. His heroines have been the virtual personification of all noble values like struggle for justice, endurance, sacrifice, love, honour, dignity,

patriotism and courage. In the folktale of *Sassui Punhu*, Sassui is shown trampling all alone in the deserts and among barren mountains, in search of her beloved husband, Punhu, who had been kidnapped by his arrogant brothers. She faces immense hardships and challenges, but never gives up her struggle. Similarly, Marvi, the heroine of the folktale *Umer Marvi*, a young damsel with a very humble family background, withstands temptations as well as harassment at the hands of a powerful king, Umer, on the basis of her sheer will power and determination<sup>6</sup>. In almost all the folktales of Benazir's land, women often face immense hardships and miseries in order to honour and uphold the noble values of the society.

Benazir's ancestors were *Rajputs*, a warrior clan spread all over the subcontinent. After their conversion to Islam, they rendered yeoman's services to the cause of Islam and became part of the Muslim army. In the seventeenth century, the Mogul emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir (r.1658-1707) accorded regal title of '*Khan*' to the Bhutto tribal chief<sup>7</sup>. Benazir is the direct descendant of the Bhutto tribal chief's family line. Her family owned much of the land in the province of Sindh and was considered as one of the largest employers of agricultural workers in the region. Their land, like those of other large landowners in Sindh, was measured in square miles and not in acres<sup>8</sup>. They produced many crops like cotton, wheat, sugarcane, cereals and a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Through the passage of time, Bhuttos evolved a distinguished life-style and developed a distinct character. They were peace-loving people, but never tolerated any slight to their honour or possessions. During the rule of *Kalhoras* in Sindh (1740-1786) a local tribe related to the ruling dynasty attempted to grab the fertile agricultural lands of Bhuttos. The assault was not tolerated by the Bhuttos, who fought back with full force till they recovered the lost territory and re-established their power and authority in the area. The spirit to fight back against any onslaught on their dignity, honour and property became a distinguishing mark of the next generations of the Bhuttos.

Another story highlighting this trait of the Bhuttos' character relates the to 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the aftermath of the annexation of

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Sindh by British in 1843, a young British woman and Benazir's great grandfather Mir Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto (1869-1899) fell in love with each other. This affair between a white woman and a native was intolerable to the area's British functionary, Collector Mayhew, who called Bhutto to reprimand him. The conversation turned into a heated debate and in a state of rage the collector attempted to whip Bhutto. The young Bhutto instead seized the whip and lashed the collector. The collector Mayhew could not tolerate this insult and got Bhutto implicated in a number of false cases. Bhutto's friends and relatives advised him to leave Larkana for the time being to escape the administration's vendetta. He left for the independent state of Bahawalpur. From there he moved onward to the kingdom of Afghanistan, where he was received as a royal guest.<sup>9</sup>

In his absence, the collector targeted Murtaza's old father Sardar Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto. One evening as the older Bhutto was returning home after inspecting his property in nearby Jacobabad district that criminals planted by the police attacked him. The old Sardar succumbed to the injuries and died shortly afterwards. A few weeks after this tragic event, the collector passed orders to confiscate Bhutto family's invaluable jewels, heirlooms, gold-embossed saddles expensive guns and other precious possessions.

Still not satisfied, he ordered that the residences, guesthouses and stores of his adversary be set on fire and to burn down everything in them including precious family furniture, Iranian carpets and stocks of grains. Murtaza's eight-year old son Shahnawaz Bhutto later recalled this nightmare in his unpublished memoirs. "We saw the fire ablaze at night and in the morning we saw the ashes." The police forced this young boy, his aged grandmother, his mother and brother to leave their once palatial and most luxurious home 'with only the clothes' on their bodies. The family had to take shelter with their employed labourers.

When the report of this blind revenge and settling of personal scores through the use of government machinery reached the higher British authorities in Karachi, they took note of it. The highest British functionary in Sindh at that time, Commissioner Sir James Avon, was a man of independent disposition. He ordered for an

impartial enquiry to ascertain the facts. When the enquiry found the collector guilty of highhandedness, he ordered for restoring back the confiscated property to Bhuttos and extended an apology on behalf of his administration.

Mir Murtaza returned to his place, where he was accorded a most enthusiastic welcome. Jubilant Bhutto addressed his supporters and publicly declared that he harboured no grievance towards anyone including those who had given false evidence against him. There was, he said, "no greater happiness than to return to the land of one's birth and to be with one's children, and with one's friends and people"<sup>11</sup>. But, he could live just for a month with his children and friends as he was poisoned to death through the machinations of some influential landowners of the area who had been witness against him to please the collector and now feared Bhutto's revenge.

At the time of this tragedy, Benazir's grandfather Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto was just ten years old. He was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1888 in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh town of Larkana district. Being the eldest son, in accordance with the custom he was nominated as the next head of the family after his father's death. With position and property of his late father, he also inherited his father's enmities. Certain influential zamindars of the region, who were not on good terms with his father also wanted to harm him and his family. But the new British collector Mr. Mules took it upon himself to look after the welfare and interests of this young boy and his family.

When he completed his initial education at a local school in Larkana, the search began for a higher educational institution in Karachi. The choice fell upon Sindh Madressah, where he was enrolled on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1906. Young Shahnawaz's intellect and manners impressed the British Principal Mr Thomas Henry Vines to such an extent that he offered him to live with him in his official residence, where he was allocated two spacious rooms on the ground floor. Shahnawaz remembered Mr Vines and his wife as 'kind people', who were 'sympathetic to Muslims'. During his stay at the Madressah, he started playing hockey in the spacious grounds of the institution. His stay at this school left a deep impression on

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his mind. "I still cherish lively memories of the very happy days I spent in this splendid institution,"<sup>12</sup> Sir Shahnawaz was to write many decades later.

Before Shahnawaz could have completed his education, fate unfurled another design for him. In December 1908, when he was enjoying his usual vacations at his home, he received the news of the untimely death of his uncle and guardian, Ellahi Bakhsh Bhutto. It was a great shock for him. Now, he had to assume the responsibilities of a family head of not only his own family but also that of his deceased uncle's. A few months later, in March 1909, at the time of attaining the age of twenty-one years, he was given back the charge of his father's estate, which had been entrusted to the Court of Wards during his infancy.

This was the time when he decided to start his active public life, to become the torchbearer of Bhutto family in politics. He set certain cardinal principles for himself in politics, which not only he followed religiously throughout his life, but also left as a political legacy for his progeny to follow. "My services were available to the common man from morning till night," wrote Sir Shahnawaz in his unpublished memoirs. "I ran an open house at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto without distinction and without motive. I tried to help all the people who came.... I tried to give them good advice.... I was courteous to the common man and rarely did I lose my temper... I spared no effort to cultivate and befriend the masses."<sup>13</sup> In fact Sir Shahnawaz was the first-ever political leader in the region who introduced this populist approach in politics. Before him, politics was mostly a drawing-room affair of the land-owning aristocracy.

In October 1913, the Muslim community leaders of Sindh, *Waderas* (Sindhi word for elders) took first united political step to safeguard the interests of Sindhi Muslims. They called a meeting at Hyderabad, which was attended by revered community leaders from all over the province. Shahnawaz was highly revered and respected for his intellect, his social position and his open stand against the exploitation of Muslim population at the hands of the money-lending classes. During these meetings, he emerged as the consensus leader of the Muslims of Sindh.

Thus, when in 1919, at the age of thirty-one years, he contested for the only seat in Delhi's Imperial Legislative Council reserved for the zamindars and jagirdars of Sindh, he won it comfortably. This victory was very important, as the council was the highest legislative forum in the British India. After coming to Delhi, he devoted all his attention and energy to the cause of the separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency and towards development of Karachi. He recalled his first impressions after reaching Delhi:

On coming to Delhi the thought crossed my mind on how I could get the Council to pay more attention to the development of Karachi. I believed that with the development of Karachi the hinterland of Sindh would not escape the benefits. I therefore chose to concentrate on Karachi. Whenever I went to other places and particularly to Bombay, I tried to learn how to improve Karachi. Bombay was a much bigger city but I looked upon it as a rival of Karachi.<sup>14</sup>

The year 1920 proved to be an important year for Sir Shahnawaz as well as the rest of India. The British Government introduced the famous Montague-Chelmsford Reforms in the form of Government of India Act 1919, expanding the number of Indian representatives in the British Indian legislative forums. This enabled Sir Shahnawaz to be elected as the member of Bombay's legislative council along with thirteen other Muslims and three non-Muslims from Sindh. On his arrival in Bombay, he was elected as the leader of Muslim bloc in the council, a position he retained till Sindh's separation from Bombay Presidency in 1936.

In his home district Larkana also that year he was elected as President of the local board, a position he retained till 1934. He ran the board most efficiently and effectively. Mr. Muhammed Ayub Khuhro, record three time chief minister of Sindh and later a political rival of Sir Shahnawaz described his tenure in the board in these words: "He was a very successful Administrator and therefore the administration of the District Local Board, Larkana, was best

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run under his Presidency. He enjoyed great respect and even the British district officers of the Imperial Service used to call on Sir Shahnawaz, which they never did in the case of other Presidents of the local boards in Sindh.”<sup>15</sup>

Sir Shahnawaz was chosen in 1925 to head the prestigious Sindh National Mohammedan Association, the first ever socio-political organization of Sindh’s Muslims. To the next generation of political leaders, Sir Shahnawaz was a great source of inspiration, and they looked up to him for guidance and direction. “All these young Politicians who came in contact with him in those good old days and who subsequently took prominent part in the affairs of their province learnt their first lesson in public life from Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto who was admittedly their political godfather. I was one of those youngsters, whom this all-Sindh leader took under his wings for training,”<sup>16</sup> wrote Syed Miran Muhammed Shah, who remained the speaker of Sindh’s legislative assembly for ten most crucial years in the subcontinent’s recent history, from 1938 to 1948. He has also given an account of an event, in which, he said he learnt a lesson of self-respect from his benefactor Sir Shahnawaz. To quote him:

“In those early days of British Raj a horse and cattle show was held at Jacobabad where seats were provided for the invitees in the order of precedence determined by the head of the police department. One Mr Omanny, DIG police, put the chairs of the members of the Bombay Legislative Council, including that of Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto, behind the row where district officers were seated. Shahnawaz Khan Bhutto and his colleagues on arrival noticed this relegation. His sense of dignity and self-respect urged him to revolt against the indignity and he along with his other followers boycotted the horse show. He also sent a strong note to the Governor of Bombay protesting against the treatment meted out to the representatives of the people of Sindh by the local British officers. This move came as a positive surprise to the people of Sindh, who prior to this incident had



never known that the public could protest against the conduct of a British officer. The result of this protest was that Mr Omanny had to apologize to the elected representatives of the people and he was also shortly afterwards transferred from Sindh.”<sup>17</sup>

Sir Shahnawaz first met Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah in Larkana in 1928, the year his youngest son Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, father of Benazir Bhutto was born. Jinnah, then a practising lawyer, shared many similarities with Sir Shahnawaz. Both of them were born Sindhis. Both of them were educated at the same school in Karachi--Sindh Madressatul Islam--and both of them had the interest of their community closest to their hearts. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah had been invited by Sindh Mohammedan Association, over which Sir Shahnawaz presided. Jinnah stayed with Sir Shahnawaz in the Bhutto family’s grand house AI-Murtaza in Larkana. This meeting proved to be the beginning of a long and harmonious association between the two leaders.<sup>18</sup>

The 1930s started with events of far-reaching consequences for Sir Shahnawaz as well as the Muslim community of India. The British government, worried over the political situation prevailing in India attempted to resolve key issues through a series of Round Table Conferences (RTC) in London during 1930-33. One of the issues on agenda was the separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency.

Historically, Sindh had been an autonomous state under formal Mogul tutelage, till 1843, when the British armies under General Sir Charles Napier annexed it. For the next four years it remained an autonomous province of British India. However, in 1847, it was attached with Bombay Presidency with which it really had very little in common. This had reduced Sindh to a heaven for the bureaucracy, as it could rule this vast province without any effective check from people’s representatives.

Sir Shahnawaz was invited to the R.T.C in London to represent the Muslims of Sindh. King George V formally inaugurated the first of these conferences on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1930, at which fifty-eight Anglo-Indian leaders, officials, princes, politicians, and sages

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of many sorts sat around in an effort to agree on the solutions of intricate constitutional and political issues confronting India. There were sixteen Muslim delegates including Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, Sir Muhammed Iqbal, His Highness Aga Khan and other important leaders of Muslim India. Sir Shahnawaz presented the case of his people in a most effective way.<sup>19</sup>

Despite strong opposition from various vested interests, this single-minded son of the soil won over the cause of separation of Sindh. This was his most outstanding and crowning political accomplishment. This provided the Muslims of the subcontinent the essential launching ground from where the movement for an independent and free Muslim State was later launched. The next decade saw that it was the 'autonomous' province of Sindh, which played the most crucial role in the creation of Pakistan. It was in this background that Stanley Wolpert wrote:

The crowning political achievement of Sir Shahnawaz's life was to convince Great Britain's rulers at the Round Table Conferences in London that Sindh deserved a separate provincial status, thus liberating his home from Bombay, elevating sleepy Karachi overnight, once the Government of India Act of 1935 took effect, to equal status with other booming provincial capitals like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras... It was the single-most-important economic-political coup won by an Indian Muslim since the founding of the Muslim League, eclipsed only by Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah's subsequent victory more than a decade later in winning his suit for separate nation-statehood' for Pakistan<sup>20</sup>.

While Sindh's separation had been agreed upon in London, it was not to take effect till elections could be held under the new Government of India Act. The Governor Lord Brabourne invited Sir Shahnawaz to join his cabinet, as he wanted his experienced advice on matters relating to separation of Sindh. Sir Shahnawaz along with his family left Karachi for Bombay on a P&O liner.

Modalities were sorted out. Decisions were made. Elections were held. Sir Shahnawaz's party won an overall majority in the new Sindh Assembly, securing 24 out of 34 Muslim seats.<sup>21</sup>

But, due to his preoccupations at Bombay regarding the issues relating to the birth of new province, he could not concentrate on his own election from Larkana. Hence, he, the top leader of the party, could not return to the assembly. The party without the leader was like a rudderless ship. It ultimately went into disarray. Mr. GM Syed, one of his vice Presidents, who had won the election from his own constituency, offered to vacate his seat in order to enable Sir Shahnawaz's return to the assembly<sup>22</sup>. But, Sir Shahnawaz's self respect made him to gracefully declined the offer.

Sir Shahnawaz was offered in 1937 the membership on the prestigious and powerful public service commission for Bombay and Sindh, a post he held for nine years. During these years he and Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah met often at the house and office of their common friend and physician Dr. Patel in Bombay. In 1946, he resigned from his substantial position as chairman of the public service commission and moved to the state of Junagarh to assume the charge of Diwan (Prime Minister) of that state<sup>23</sup>.

Junagarh was a small maritime state, five hundred kilometres south of the coast of Karachi. Most of the population of the state was Hindu and the ruler was a Muslim who wanted accession with Pakistan in 1947. In the case of Kashmir, another princely state, the situation was just the reverse.

In August 1947, Sir Shahnawaz in his capacity as the Diwan of Junagarh announced the state's accession with Pakistan. This move was of great tactical importance: that if the Indian government acquiesced, admitting the legal right of the ruler to decide which way to go, the precedent of a Muslim prince taking a Hindu-majority state into Pakistan could also be applied to other states like Hyderabad, while if the Indian Government did the opposite, it would be morally under pressure to allow Kashmir to join Pakistan. But, India decided to respond otherwise. By mid September, the Indian government sent its own emissary to meet the Nawab of Junagarh and persuade him to join India. The Nawab told the

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emissary to meet the Diwan.

Sir Shahnawaz remained unmoved and told the Indian representative that the matter had already been settled and could only be altered if the governments of Pakistan and India could agree upon the same principle for the accession of all princely states, including Kashmir. India then decided to annex Junagarh by force. Finding the odds heavily posed against him, the Nawab of Junagarh left his state for Karachi by the end of October and Sir Shahnawaz was also directed to join him there. Accordingly, Sir Shahnawaz left Junagarh in November 1947 for Karachi, where he wanted to lead a peaceful retired life after his long inning in public life.

While all this was happening, Sir Shahnawaz's youngest son, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto continued his education at Bombay. He lived in the Bhuttos' beautiful house 'The Nest' and looked after the family properties including Bombay's Hotel Astoria Building. He was just six years old, when he had come to Bombay from Karachi along with his family. His father wanted his most talented, intelligent and brilliant son to get the best possible education. The young Bhutto was enrolled in Bombay's most prestigious Cathedral High School. Because of Sir Shahnawaz's close contacts with Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had the chance to see often this great leader of Muslim India. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah and Sir Shahnawaz frequently met at their common friend Dr. Patel's afternoon tea parties.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's school was situated close to the Doctor's clinic. In the afternoons, after his school, young Bhutto used to walk over to it, where the giants of Indian politics met and discussed important issues confronting the subcontinent. It was during this period that young Bhutto developed a great reverence, respect and admiration for Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah. In April 1945, this eighteen-year old young man expressed his sentiments for Jinnah in a letter to him:

"You, sir, have brought us on one platform, under one flag, and the cry of every Mussulman should be 'onward to Pakistan'. Our destiny is Pakistan. Our aim

is Pakistan. Nobody can stop us. We are a nation by ourselves and India is a subcontinent. You have inspired us and we are proud of you. Being still in school, I am unable to help the establishment of our sacred land. But the time will come when I will even sacrifice my life for Pakistan”<sup>24</sup>.

True to his word, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was to sacrifice his life for Pakistan thirty-four years later, in April 1979.

By the mid of 1940s, India’s political scene was infused with unprecedented heat and fury, as the conflict between the three main parties – the British, the Congress and the Muslim League -- was intensifying with every passing day. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah’s all out efforts to retain a united India had failed due to the Congress leadership’s inflexible attitude. Many political developments had taken place. Several proposals had been discussed. But, the issue relating to the status of Muslims in the future scheme of things in the subcontinent was not getting resolved. By now, Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah had lost the last shred of faith in united India. Against this backdrop, when the cabinet mission plan could not bear any positive result, Jinnah directed the Muslims to observe a direct action day on 16 August 1946 so to make it clear to everybody that Muslims had their own identity and strength.

However, in the city of Bombay, Muslims were a negligible minority. There was very little hope of the success of the direct action day there. But, Bombay was the nerve-centre of the subcontinent. It was understood that if the day could be a success there, it would yield a tremendous psychological benefit to the advantage of Muslims. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah invited nineteen-year old Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and some other politically active Muslim students to his Malabar Hill home in order to seek their advice on how best to launch direct action in Bombay. Most of the students were evasive and did not forward any concrete proposal keeping in view the brute majority of Hindus in Bombay.

Recalling that meeting, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrote thirty-three years later from his death cell: ‘Every one talked in circles and used vague

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language. I remarked that Bombay was a Maharashtrian stronghold and Elphinstone College was a student fortress of Maharashtrian militant students. Some kind of strike in Elphinstone College would have a tremendous psychological effect'<sup>25</sup>.

This young student knew the college principal's son who was his classmate. Both of them rounded up about two hundred other students and they all staged a sit-in at the entrance of the college. The police were called but the principal, anxious to avoid hurting his own son, closed down the college instead of asking the police to clear the entrance. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was very pleased with Bhutto's performance because all the Bombay newspapers carried reports of the successful protest demonstration in Bombay<sup>26</sup>.

After passing his Senior Cambridge examination, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto got admission in the University of Southern California in the United States to become the first person from his family to go for foreign education. It was the month of September and just a few days had passed since the new country, Pakistan, had appeared on the map of the world.

In California, he got accommodation on South Flower Street, just a few blocks from his university campus. He was very fond of books and history was the subject of his special interest. He had read almost the whole of available literature on history and economics. He also had a very strong communication skill. He joined the university's debating team and emerged as one of the most outstanding speakers. Because of these qualities he was one of the most sought after person in the university.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was an ardent admirer of Jinnah, for whom he always used to say, 'That is my man! That is my idol, the man I respect'. Shortly after Quaid-e-Azam's death in September 1948, he wrote a letter, to Pakistan's ambassador to Washington and one of Jinnah's closest friends, Mr Hassan Isphahani, expressing his sentiments:

“(We) have been orphaned at this crucial moment when we needed more than any other the force, the torrential

magnanimity of our beloved Leader... (T)hough the Quaid is no longer with us, yet his pure virgin spirit will remain forever fertile in our mind. His entire life was a struggle for the betterment and emancipation of his people”<sup>27</sup>.

Young Bhutto decided to spend his summer holidays as a volunteer in Pakistan embassy in Washington. One of the papers he wrote there dealt with the man he highly revered: Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He wrote:

“Jinnah is solely responsible for the creation of a state for those whom he led in the struggle for the emancipation of their lives. His dream of creating a Muslim homeland, Pakistan, was a great dream, and the realisation of his dream has been nothing short of a miracle, for it has been an achievement carried out single handily. He has led a people who were thoroughly derelict and disunited and depressed. He was a God-inspired man, a man with purity of heart, with unbelievable audacity and unique courage and determination”<sup>27</sup>.

After spending a little less than two years at the University of Southern California, in June 1949, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto moved to Berkeley for further studies. Same year, in the month of September, he came to Karachi to attend his sister’s wedding.

It was during his trip home that he met Nusrat Isphahani who was to become his wife two years later and would give birth to Benazir Bhutto in 1953. Though it was their first meeting as grown-ups, they had also met for few times in their childhood.

Begum Bhutto recalled: “During my childhood, when we still lived in Bombay, we used to visit Khandala, a hill resort near Bombay. We had a small summerhouse there. Sometimes we used to go to Lonavala near Khandala. I saw him in Lonavala for the first time. I remember so vividly. I was eleven years old. We were walking

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around and his family was also there. Somehow our parents got together and started talking. There were three girls and this boy. So we kids also began talking. They said they were from Sindh, so we asked where Sindh was. They told us where it was... I think, we just met twice... And then we also shifted to Karachi."<sup>28</sup>

Nusrut Isphahani's parents came from Iran. Her great-grandfather had three sons. One of them was sent to China to learn how to manufacture silk. He became businessman. The second son, the grandfather of Begum Nusrut, was sent to Najaf-e-Ashraf for higher studies in Islam and he devoted his life to religious teaching and became an Ayatollah. The father retained the third son at home to look after the family lands. He became an agriculturist.

Begum Nusrat's father Mirza Muhammad was born in Najaf. His family name was Mirza Muhammad Abul Latif Isphahani. He studied in Najaf. He was of an outgoing disposition. Once he and his friends went on a holiday to Bombay and liked the place to such an extent that when he returned home, he told his father and grandfather that he wanted to settle in the subcontinent. This way Nusrut Isphahani's parents shifted to India. Her father established the Baghdad Soap Industries in Bombay and started his own business<sup>29</sup>.

Nusrut Isphahani was born in Bombay on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1929, as third daughter to her parents. Her sisters were much older to her: eldest sister having difference of fourteen years and the second one with difference of thirteen years. Both of the elder sisters had early marriages and had children of almost Nusrat's age. She attended school in Bombay and passed her Senior Cambridge examination at the convent school of Jesus and Mary there.

Early in 1947, when life became somewhat unsafe for Muslims in Bombay, Nusrat's parents decided to migrate to Karachi. Initially, the family stayed at Palace Hotel (now the Sheraton), one of the city's best hotels. But then on the insistence of one of their family friend, they shifted to his house. Within a few months' time the family bought a place at 23 Clifton, the main thoroughfare leading from the heart of Karachi to the seashore. Her father established his factory in Karachi and started his business in this fast growing city. After sometime, Nusrut Isphahani joined a voluntary organisation,



the Pakistan Women's National Guard. She was good at martial drill and soon learned to drive trucks and ambulances. Very soon she was promoted to the rank of a captain,<sup>30</sup> with silver pips on her shoulders.

The families of Benazir Bhutto's parents again met on the occasion of the marriage of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's sister Begum Munawarul Islam. "His sister Manna was a friend of mine," recalled Begum Bhutto, "and when she was getting married, she invited me also. So I went to the bank to get my jewellery from my locker. I saw Zulfikar standing there. He was grown up by now and I did not know in the first instance as to who he was. But his mother was also there and she knew that I was friendly with Manna. So she said, 'Oh Nusrut, this is my son, he has just come from America for his sister's wedding, his name is Zulfi'"<sup>31</sup>.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nusrut Isphahani liked each other. He arranged through one of his married friend's wife to invite her to dinner at one of Karachi's posh restaurants. There he proposed her. She did not take it seriously, as she knew that in a week or two he would return back to US to complete his studies. But he would neither forget nor retract his proposal. Distance and time only strengthened his resolve to make Nusrut Isphahani his wife.

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“Because of what he had said and I had to show him that I had the brains as good as the British boys, if not better,” recalled Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. “And I did the course in two years and got high honours.”<sup>32</sup> The Oxford professor was so impressed that he became his admirer and a lifelong friend.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto returned to Karachi after spring term of 1951. He informed his parents of his intention to marry Nusrat Ispahani. Things went well and soon they were married. The wedding took place on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1951 in Karachi. The following days passed in a whirl of customary luncheons and dinners. By week’s end the couple left Karachi for London. They stayed at a suite at the Dorchester Hotel, overlooking Hyde Park. After a week’s time the couple reached Oxford just in time for the fall term.

As it was his first year at university, he was not allowed under the rules to live outside. Therefore, his wife stayed in a hotel and he in his hostel. They used to stay together during the day and he would go back to hostel before eleven in the night when attendance was called. Once he did not go back to his hostel and the next day the dean asked for the reason, on which he told him that he stayed with his wife at the hotel. The dean was surprised to know that this young Asian of twenty-four years was a married man! However, he allowed the couple to live together afterwards.

After sometime letters from home urged Nusrat Bhutto to return to Pakistan as her father and sisters missed her very much. Her in-laws also wanted her to be in Karachi so that her husband could fully concentrate on his studies. By the end of November she flew back from London to Karachi to live with her in-laws in the house they had named ‘Benazir’ after the name of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s deceased sister, who had died at the young age of fifteen, while the family was in Bombay.

To be away from each other was a very difficult experience for the newly weds. They used to write letters and talk on phone with each other regularly. Finally, Begum Nusrat Bhutto left again for London by the mid of 1952 to live with her husband who had by then completed his residence requirements at Christ Church and was allowed to move to London. They lived in an apartment on the

sixth floor in Chatsworth Court, Kensington, for a month while he commuted between London and Oxford.

After staying for a month in London, the couple moved to Oxford where they stayed for two more months. It was there that a doctor confirmed that Begum Nusrat was pregnant. “Zulfi was so excited”, she recalled, “that he was dancing in the streets, picking me up, and to every stranger he met, Zulfikar exulted, ‘You know, I am going to be a father. My wife is going to have a child!’”<sup>33</sup>. After three months’ stay in England, she returned back to Pakistan to give birth to their first baby, leaving her husband in England to complete his studies. Back at home she lived with her in-laws at their home ‘Benazir’.

The family waited anxiously for the month of June, when the doctors had predicted the arrival of Benazir Bhutto in this world.

## Chapter 2

# Early Days

(1953-1969)

Benazir Bhutto was born on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1953 at Dr. Pinto's clinic.<sup>1</sup>

The newborn was a healthy and a beautiful child. Her golden curls and pinkish complexion prompted her aunt to call her 'Pinkie', which then became her nickname. Her beauty and her innocent charms made Pinkie a very welcomed child in the family.

To select a name for a newborn has always been a cheerful exercise in the subcontinent's society, and the entire family got engaged in it. Various relatives suggested various names. Finally, the choice of her paternal grandparents prevailed<sup>2</sup> and the newborn was named 'Benazir', which literally means 'without a match.' To them she was the return of the other 'Benazir,' her aunt, whom the family had lost in Bombay.

At the time of Benazir's birth, her father was still in London, where Princess Elizabeth had been celebrating her Coronation at a magnificent ceremony, with members of Royal families and heads of governments from all over the world assembled in Westminster Abbey to witness the grand occasion.<sup>3</sup> London was in a festive mood. Benazir's father would then have little realized that his

daughter born back in Karachi would one day emerge as one of the most popular leaders of Pakistan and as the Prime Minister of her own country sit with this very Queen in the Buckingham Palace within a span of just three and a half decade!

A few months after Benazir's birth, her father returned to Pakistan. When he saw his daughter for the first time, he was very excited. 'He kept looking at the face, the hands of his pretty daughter,' Nusrat Bhutto later recalled.<sup>4</sup> It was a 'love at first sight.' With passage of years, and even after the birth of three other children, the bonds of affection between his firstborn and himself only intensified. Thus, whenever something important happened, from Simla Accord to the meetings of the United Nations, her father would always want Benazir to be with him.

On his return to Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had come as a Barrister, with a degree from one of the world's most prestigious colleges, the Christ Church of Oxford University. He joined the bar at Karachi and attached himself with the law chambers of Barrister Dingomal Ramchandani, a firm of prominent civil lawyers of Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> He also lectured at the local Law College on honorary basis. His primary interests were the Constitutional issues facing his country. At the time, Pakistan's first constituent assembly was still striving to arrive at some Constitutional formula agreeable to all the federating units of Pakistan. The clash of interests between two biggest provinces, East Pakistan, comprising fifty-six percent of the population and the Punjab comprising twenty eight percent of total population but representing eighty-five percent of country's defense and civil establishment posed problems in the task of Constitution making. In addition to the cultural, ethnic, regional, racial and linguistic differences amongst the provinces; and amongst the two wings of the country, a distance of a thousand miles of Indian Territory only aggravated the situation.

The founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah had died in 1948, just a year after the country's creation. His political successor, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, had also been assassinated three years later. Passing away of the two great leaders within first four years of the country's life, presented a most formidable crisis to

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the newly created nation. The members of Bureaucracy tried to fill this vacuum. But, because of their lack of the necessary political background combined with intellectual, functional and training limitations, they were unable to perform a political role. This gave rise to chaos and instability in all spheres of governance. Changes of governments at centre as well as in provinces became the order of the day. The Bengali dominated East Pakistan started asserting itself and demanding a greater measure of provincial autonomy. To counter the political weight of East Pakistan, the bureaucracy introduced 'one unit' scheme under which all the four provinces of the western wing -- Sindh, Balochistan, NWFP and the Punjab -- were agglomerated into a single political and administrative unit with its capital at Lahore. A principle of 'parity' was also adopted, which placed the two wings at par with each other. Benazir's father, one of the top most Constitutional lawyers by then, opposed this scheme vehemently, but in vain.<sup>6</sup>

This was the political scenario when three years old Benazir started going to Karachi's Ms Jennings Nursery School, located in front of the most beautiful Gothic edifice of the historic Frere Hall built in memory of Sir Bartle Frere, a former British Commissioner of Sindh. A few yards away from her school was the imposing building of Flagstaff House, which was owned by Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah and now houses a museum named after him. The Bhutto family had by then moved to their new home, 70-Clifton, just a few hundred yards away from the Arabian Sea beach. Benazir's mother had given birth to a son, Murtaza Bhutto, in September 1954, providing Benazir a brother to play with. His birth in the family was followed by that of a sister Sanam, and another brother Shahnawaz, during the next five years.

Young Benazir found her parents deeply in love with each other. They were considered an ideal couple, with 'beauty, brains and buoyancy.' They were even compared with the Kennedys of United States. Her father was one of the most attractive, charming and an intelligent person, and his wife, Nusrat, was an equally attractive and well-mannered person. 'Your mother is the most beautiful woman in the world,' Bhutto used to tell his children. 'But, Papa they say that

Ava Gardner is the most beautiful woman!' Benazir reminded her father. 'They say so because they have not seen your mother,' used to be her father's firm reply.<sup>7</sup> Together they made most sought after couple in the social and political circles of the city.

Benazir's grandparents also lived in 70-Clifton. Sir Shahnawaz had grown old gracefully and was having an enjoyable retired life. To Benazir, her grandpa was 'Abba' and father Papa. She remember her Abba as a very "kindly man' with his 'silver hair and dark glasses."<sup>8</sup> In the evenings the grandparents would sit in the garden of their residence. Baby Benazir would join them and talk to them. Her mother Nusrat would also come and join them for the afternoon tea. They would all play with baby Benazir and pamper her. She was the first born of their only son, so they showered all their love on her. 'I don't remember my grandparents ever scolded me,' recalled Benazir.

Their home was full of life. Her father's sister, her auntie Mumtaz, who was married to Colonel Mustafa, would also come regularly along with her husband and children. Other maternal as well as paternal relatives also used to visit the family. The children played together for hours in an atmosphere of peace and love. Her maternal grandfather often took her for a walk down to Clifton stores and bought her goodies on their way to his own huge house nearby. There were many fruit trees in that house. She would go upstairs to pick fruit from the looming branches of the trees.<sup>9</sup>

In her childhood, Benazir was very fond of bananas. One day her mother bought her a full crate of them and asked her to eat as much as she could, hoping that this would put an end to her craving for them. To her mother's great amazement, a day later, she went to her mother again and pleaded, "Mummy! Bananas."<sup>10</sup>

Benazir's age and her father's political rise advanced together. In 1957, when she was four years old and still at her pre-primary school, reciting her nursery rhymes, her father was nominated to represent Pakistan at the United Nations General Assembly. It was a singular achievement for somebody less than thirty years old, being called upon to represent his country at the highest international forum. His grip on his subject, style of presentation, logic and

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vision highly impressed his listeners at the world assembly that November.

While he was still away, Sir Shahnawaz breathed his last in Karachi.<sup>11</sup> Benazir recalled "I remember hushed voices and people speaking in undertones, and a lot of weeping.... People rushing back and forth. I knew something terrible had happened. But did not quite know what it was."<sup>12</sup> Forty-two years later, it is a moment Benazir can still picture in her mind. Her father rushed back home from New York. After ten days mourning, he was declared as the next head of the family, in accordance with the custom. A year later Benazir's grandmother also died.

After completing her nursery courses in 1958, Benazir was enrolled in the city's top most school, the Convent of Jesus and Mary. The same year, her father was called upon to be a minister in Pakistan's central government, an offer that he accepted. He was entrusted the portfolio of the ministry of commerce, becoming the youngest cabinet member the country ever had. This also placed a great deal more responsibilities on his shoulders. He now had to be away from home for a good deal of time "I remember Papa used to come back from his foreign tours with suitcases full of clothes, toffees, chocolates and other goodies. We used to wait anxiously for him."<sup>13</sup>

Benazir was a lively child, with an inquisitive mind, always experimenting with different things to explore the world around her.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes these experiments used to prove very dangerous. Once, the family went to London for a vacation and rented an apartment. One day she put the gas valve on. Luckily her mother arrived in time. 'We all nearly died. But, Mummy arrived in time and said you are such a naughty child,' she remembered. On another occasion, while they were in Europe, she broke a glass and walked over it, leaving her blood all over the place. She then walked to the balcony, waiting for her parents to come and rescue her.<sup>15</sup>

She was witty as well. In those old days, lawyers used to wear wigs as per British tradition. One of her father's wigs remained in his dressing room. She would often go there and wear the wig and tell everybody that she was going to become a lawyer. 'On



the door there would be a nameplate bearing 'Benazir Bhutto- Bar at Law,' she recalled, because there used to be a brass nameplate bearing 'Zulfikar Ali Bhutto - Bar at Law, at their residence gate.' She would not inherit her father's legal mantle, but she would inherit his political legacy.

At a young age, she also began to receive her religious education from a *Moulvi*, who came to their home every afternoon after school hours to teach her the reading of Holy Quran. He also instructed her on the fundamentals of Islam. Her mother taught her *Nimaz*, — the obligatory Islamic prayers. Benazir's mother was particular about religion. She would rise early in the morning and go to her daughter's bedroom to wake her up for the *Nimaz-e-Fajr*, the pre-morning prayer. Together the mother and daughter would perform *Wuzzo* (ablution) and offer their prayers.<sup>16</sup>

When she was about seven, Benazir's family moved to Rawalpindi, where her father, as a central minister was allotted an official residence, firstly on Peshawar Road and then in the Civil Lines, an exclusive part of the capital. She was enrolled at the Presentation Convent, a prestigious institution of the city. Getting uprooted from Karachi at such a young age had a deep impact on her mind. Her entire life seemed to have changed. The old friends had gone. Her home in Karachi used to be humming with activity. But, here in Rawalpindi it was rather lonely. Her loving grandparents too were no more in this world. Her father was getting busier by each passing day, having to carry out the responsibility for several ministries. He also had to travel quite a lot within Pakistan as well as to foreign countries. Her mother frequently accompanied her husband on his tours, leaving the kids under the charge of a nanny.

Benazir, being the eldest, considered herself responsible for the well being of her siblings. 'Look after the other children,' her parents would charge her. 'You are the eldest.' Her mother would give her the money for daily household expenses 'which I hid under my pillow,' she remembered. 'Though I was just learning my sums at school, every night in my mother's absence I would sit on a stool in the kitchen and pretend to go over the accounts with Babu, our long time and loyal majordomo. Whether the figures tallied, I

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have no recollection. Luckily very small sums were involved. At that time, rupees ten, about two dollars, bought food for the whole household.<sup>17</sup> All these pressures had a psychological effect on her and she became a little shy. 'She was not shy, but disliked show off,' remarked her sister Sanam Bhutto, many years later in her apartment in London.

However, life used to be fun when her father was around. Benazir was his favorite for many reasons; she was excellent in her studies, she carried the name of his beloved sister, and she was the prettiest of all, a Golden Girl. She was also a very well behaved young girl. She was praised for her handwriting, her manners and her work. Like her father, she was also very fond of reading. He used to take her along with him to the famous Ferozsons bookstore in Rawalpindi. Historical books, especially the biographies of great personalities, were her most preferred choice, little realizing then that one day her own autobiography would become the best seller all over the world. At a later stage, she also read Agatha Christi's crime stories, which she would then narrate, to Sanam. In the night on the bed, she would say to her younger sister, 'Sunny, tell me *the whole...* story!' recalled Sanam.<sup>18</sup>

The family went for picnics almost every Sunday. She saw several archeological sites in the vicinity of the city. Taxila, housing the ruins of an ancient city almost of Moenjodero's age, was her most favorite place. Her aunt Mumtaz's family had also moved to Pindi, where her husband was posted as an army commander. Sometimes they would too join the family in going for boating on the nearby Soan River. While sitting on the bank of the river, her mother would instruct her on cooking. She would then play, discuss, learn and move around with her siblings and other family members in a most carefree atmosphere. Stamp collection was another hobby that inspired her the most in her early age. 'She was fond of making cakes, especially when the parents were not around,' recalled Sanam Bhutto.<sup>19</sup>

But, by this time Benazir's happy childhood days were destined to go through a tough test. The marriage of her parents came under severe strain. Her mother decided to seek separation, She left her

home and went to live with her relatives in Iran. Kids remained with their father. These were terrible times for Benazir and her other siblings.<sup>20</sup> She being the eldest felt the agony of this breakup the most and assumed the role of a surrogate mother for her youngest brother, Shahnawaz. Her aunt, Mumtaz, also came regularly to look after the children. Her father also felt the absence of his wife badly. He never wanted separation. So he went to Iran and then to California, where her mother had gone by then, to convince her of his faithfulness towards her. Finally, she agreed to return on her own terms. The time however had taken its toll. The period of uncertainty left its marks on the impressionable mind of young Benazir, who developed a strong yearning for stability. 'Though the mother was with us, but I was always afraid that she may leave us again,' recalled Benazir.<sup>21</sup>

After about two years schooling in Pindi's Presentation Convent, Benazir and Sanam were sent to a boarding school in Murree, the pine covered hill station, north of Rawalpindi. The boys were sent to Lahore's famous Aitcheson College. Their father believed that experience of living a life far from their family and the denial of usual comforts of the home would toughen them up to face the challenges of life. "For the first time I had to make my own bed, polish my shows, carry water for bathing and tooth-brushing back and forth from the wash basins in the corridors."<sup>22</sup>

Their parents used to come to Murree every weekend from Pindi to see them. 'I remember we did not like the bathrooms in the convent and in the first week we complained to our parents about them,' recalled Benazir. Her father offered the school administration to get a new bathroom block built. A complaint by one of the students to their parents was not much liked by the school authorities. Benazir was summoned to the principal's office, where she was asked about what she had told her father about the lavatories. Unfortunately, Benazir had never heard the word 'lavatories,' so very innocently she said 'nothing.' The more the visibly agitated principal insisted on her for getting the correct answer, "the more I insisted that I had not said any thing to my father about lavatories, because I had never heard the word before."<sup>23</sup> Anyway, they were allowed to use

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the teachers' washrooms till that a new block was constructed.

Despite her father's busy schedule, he continued her political education through detailed letters on significant national and international issues. The example before him, perhaps, was that of Jawaharlal Nehru of India who had written extensively on a wide variety of subjects to his daughter Indra Gandhi. 'One of the nuns sat Sanam and I down on a bench in the school garden and read the letter to us in its entirety, though we understood little of its content,' recollected Benazir.

Meanwhile, in January 1963 her father had become the foreign minister of the country. "[He] was well qualified to fill it [the position of a foreign minister] on account of his penchant for foreign affairs, his abilities, and his academic background." Tall, dashing, flamboyant and brilliant, he seemed to be cut out for the job.<sup>24</sup> He brought much needed moderation in the foreign policy of the country, especially bringing about a balance in the country's relations with the two superpowers. Another bold initiative by him was his support for China's admission in the United Nations.

He had personal relations with the top American leadership. During one of his official visit to Washington in October 1963, he called on President Kennedy in the White House. Both the young leaders liked each other. When the meeting ended, President Kennedy shook Bhutto's hand and remarked, "If you were an American you would be in my Cabinet". Bhutto sharply retorted, "Be careful, Mr President, if I were American, I would be in your place". At which they both laughed heartily."<sup>25</sup>

A month later, Benazir was travelling with her father in the foreign minister's private railway carriage, when the news of President Kennedy's assassination reached Pakistan. The ten-year-old Benazir was sleeping, when her father shook her awake: 'this is no time to sleep. There has been a great tragedy. The young President of the United States has been shot,' recalled Benazir. "Though I was only ten and had heard only vaguely of the US President, my father made me stay by his side while he received the latest bulletins on the condition of President John F. Kennedy, a man whom he'd met several times and whom he admired for his liberal views."<sup>26</sup>

By this time the dark clouds of war were hovering over the horizons of the subcontinent. She and her sister were learning their lessons at Murree, when in September 1965, India and Pakistan fought a full-scale war over their chronic dispute, Kashmir: the dispute that would be inherited by Benazir Bhutto as the Prime Minister of Pakistan twenty-three years later. 'While my father flew off to the United Nations,' she recalled, 'to argue for the right of self determination for the people of Kashmir and against the aggression of India, the nuns at the Convent of Jesus and Mary prepared their students for the possibility of an Indian invasion. The road to Kashmir ran right through Murree, a clear invitation, most people thought, for Indian troops to use it to march into Pakistan.'

She has vivid memories of that war: "Where once we had played 'jacks' with goat bones after dinner, or read Enid Blyton books, now suddenly we had air raid practices and blackouts. The nuns made older girls responsible for getting their younger sisters into the shelters, and I made Sunny tie her slippers to her feet at night so she wouldn't lose time in looking for them. Many of our schoolmates were daughters of prominent government officials or army officers, and with excitement we gave each other false names and practised them in case we fell into the hands of our enemies. In the flush of our adolescence, it was all quite dramatic, the possibility of being kidnapped and carried off into the hills. But for the seventeen days of the war, the threat of invasion was quite real and frightening."<sup>27</sup>

This war eventually ended. "Safely back at home the talk turned to politics even more," she recalled. 'Terms such as cold war and arms embargo had already become part of our dimly understood vocabulary as small children. We were as familiar with hearing the results of round table conferences and summit meetings as the other children were with World Cup Cricket scores.' Unaware of what the future was to bring for them, Benazir enjoyed her stay at Murree thoroughly. She had lots of friends there. Her closest friend was Sheila Vallia, who died afterwards at a young age.<sup>28</sup> Benazir took an active part in sports, studies and extra-curricular activities. She was the apple of the eye to her parents and teachers, who all liked her. "She was never a trouble for her parents or for the teachers,"

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confided Sanam.<sup>29</sup>

This put Sanam in a predicament. 'Your sister is so good. Why can't you be like her, everybody asked me in the school,' recalled Sanam decades later. She could not withstand all this for long and after about two-year's stay at the school in this hill station, young Sanam was so bored by the routine that she along with President Ayub Khan's granddaughter literally ran away from Murree. 'This caused a big scandal,' recalled Benazir. Their parents decided to call back both the sisters to Rawalpindi, where they were readmitted in the city's Presentation Convent.<sup>30</sup>

In 1966, her father sent his children along with their mother to visit historical places of Europe. This was an enthralling proposal for Benazir and her siblings. They were to stay in Europe for three months and explore the real beauty and the treasures of the continent. The family first went to Turkey, where they stayed at the Intercontinental Hotel. They saw the magnificent buildings of the capital Ankara, an ancient city that used to be called Angora in the olden days. It was the capital of the Roman province of Galatia, when the Ottoman Turks took it by 1360. This is the place where the East joins the West, the meeting point of the powerful civilizations. Benazir discovered the beauty and the elegance, which were the reminders of the Turkish Empire of bygone years.

The family then went on to Paris in France, where they stayed at Hotel George V. Discovering this great commercial and cultural centre of France, founded in the first century BC on the banks of river Seine, was a fascinating experience for young Benazir. She saw the famous Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower and numerous other historical places, and the museums, theatres and educational institutions.

After this enriching experience, the family traveled to London, where she had been in the past as well. The family was housed in Mount Royal Hotel. She felt she had her roots in London. Her father had studied there. Her grandfather had paid several visits to the city. It was for her a very special city, a second home. This time she and her other siblings had enough opportunity to explore the historical London. They took full advantage of the opportunity and explored

this great capital on the north bank of river Thames.

On their return to home, they found that the time had changed. They were no more the privileged children of the foreign minister of the country. But, they were had the consolation of being looked upon as the children of the country's most popular leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Thirteen-year-old Benazir saw two strange phenomena taking place simultaneously. On one hand, her father's rupture with the government brought him under the wrath of the ruler who used every possible weapon in his armoury -- threats, murder attempt, false cases -- to subdue his will, but without success. On the other hand she saw the emergence of a great mystic love amongst the common people for her father, for taking a bold stand against the military dictator.

When, after quitting his cabinet position, her father left Rawalpindi for Lahore in the night of 20 June 1966, information of his visit reached Lahore ahead of him. When the train pulled into the Lahore station, people filled every inch of the space on the platforms. He was garlanded, his hands were kissed, and he was lifted onto their shoulders by thousands of his admirers, who had flocked to the city just to catch a glimpse of him. The handkerchief, with which he wiped his eyes filled with tears, was later sold for thousands of rupees. 'After my father broke with Ayub Khan in 1966, the words "civil liberties" and "democracy" were the ones that came up the most, the words which were mythical to most Pakistanis, who had only experienced restricted political participation under Ayub.

The family then shifted back to Karachi, where Benazir was admitted once again in her old school, the Convent of Jesus and Mary, just across the road from her residence. She absorbed herself in her studies for her O level examination. 'I used to read a lot,' she remembered. 'There was a time, when I knew every Shakespeare play by heart -- Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet and Julius Caesar --.' She had a very organised life. In her spare times she went to Sindh Club, where she swam, played squash, and moved around in her own social circle. "I had a close circle of friends. Not a lot of friends, but a few good friends."<sup>31</sup>

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During all this time, the country remained in the grip of political turmoil. East Pakistan had exploded in an open rebellion. West Pakistan was groaning under the weight of unpopular policies of the military despot. President Ayub Khan was fast losing his grip on power. While Bhutto's own popularity was increasing by leaps and bounds. He had emerged as the only hope to most of the Pakistanis. In winter of 1967, her father founded the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the party she was to head many years later. The foundation of the party was laid at Lahore. Her father addressed the delegates assembled there and presented the motto of the new party. It was to be a centrist party. The delegates approved the proposal and the PPP came into being with her father as the chairman.

Fourteen years old Benazir was among the party's first few members. 'The first floor of our house at 70 Clifton, Karachi, began to serve as a branch office of the PPP. At eleven and fourteen, my sister and I enthusiastically paid the four anna dues to join the party so that we, too, help our major-domo, Babu, sign up the increasing numbers of people who lined up at the gates every day,' she recalled. The party launched its offices all over the country -- in huts, small shops and modest houses of PPP workers -- where unending crowds gathered to secure the membership and pay the nominal subscription fees.

By 1968, the whole of the country was in the grip of an unprecedented agitation and a lot of unrest prevailed against Ayub Khan's government. There was not a single day when there would not be a procession or a public meeting. Her father addressed numerous rallies fearlessly attacking the policies of the incumbent rulers. When this became unbearable for Ayub government and other vested interests, an attempt was made on his life. This greatly disturbed the teenage Benazir. 'The world of violence was unknown to me then. There was the world of politics in which my father lived, and there was the world of the children, schools and games and laughter at the beach. But the two worlds collided when the news of the armed attacks against my father began to come in. Ayub's supporters fired on him at Rahimyar Khan, Sanghar and other stops on his tour...'<sup>32</sup>

In November 1968, when she was facing the most crucial time of



her academic life, preparing for her O level exams to be held next months, her father was put under arrest for the first time. He was whisked away to Mianwali Jail, one of the worst prisons in Pakistan, where he was kept in solitary confinement. These were the terrible times for this young girl, who was supposed to give her full attention to her studies.

But, missing the exam meant wasting one full year as they were conducted from England. Her mother directed Benazir to stay at Karachi and study for her exams, while she herself along with the other kids left for Lahore to file a petition in the Lahore High Court against her husband's detention. Benazir was left alone at 70 Clifton. 'To distract myself from worrying about my father in prison, I buried myself in my work, going over and over my subjects with the tutors, who came to the house every day,' she recalled.

Her father, held in solitary confinement, was concerned about her education. He wrote a letter to Benazir from Sahiwal prison on 28 November:

"I am praying for your success in your O level examinations. I am really proud to have a daughter who is so bright that she is doing O levels at the young age of fifteen, three years before I did them. At this rate, you might become the President... I know you read a great deal, but you should read a little more literature and history... You have all the books you need. Read about Napoleon Bonaparte, the most complete man of modern history. Read about the American Revolution and about Abraham Lincoln. Read *Ten Days That Shook the World* by John Reed. Read about Bismarck and Lenin, Ataturk and Mao Tse-Tung. Read the history of India from ancient times. And above all read the history of Islam."<sup>33</sup>

She appeared in her exams at the Vatican Embassy in Karachi, where the tests had been arranged for, under the most stressful conditions.

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Her father's detention gave birth to an unprecedented agitation all over the country. With every passing day, the unrest against the Ayub government became more intense. The President could speak nowhere in public without getting shot at or causing a riot. Everywhere people demanded an end to his rule and the release of Bhutto. Finding no other way, in February 1969, the government decided to shift him from the prison to his Larkana house, where he was placed under house arrest for some more time. Finally, by March 1969, President Ayub Khan decided to step down. But, instead of handing over power to the political leadership, he invited the army chief to take over the country. Accordingly, the army chief, General Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan proclaimed martial law in the country and the country entered in its second military rule.

Benazir passed her O level examinations. She had two options now. Either to apply for her admission in some American University or to go for her A Level in Karachi first and then to proceed abroad. She and her father preferred the first option. But, the problem was that she was a very young girl, just fifteen, underage for admission in a university. She had taken two double promotions during her school and was able to complete her studies two years before her contemporaries were able to do.

It was then decided to explore both the options simultaneously. On one side, she applied for her admission in US at Harvard University's Radcliffe College. On the other hand, she obtained admission in Karachi Grammar School for her A level. There, she kept herself busy in a number of things including debates. In one such debate competition, she delivered a fiery speech on the topic of 'Women in Islam.' But, her stay in the Grammar School of Karachi was very short.<sup>34</sup>

In April, she received much-awaited letter from Radcliffe, confirming her admission there for the autumn term. She was to leave for the States along with her mother in August that year. At the time of her leaving, her father gave her a beautiful volume of the Holy Quran, bound in mother-of-pearl, as a going-away present. His advice to his daughter was: "You will see many things that may surprise you in America and some that may shock you. But I know

you have the ability to adapt. Above all you must study hard. Very few in Pakistan have the opportunity you now have and you must take advantage of it. Never forget that the money it is costing to send you comes from the land, from the people who sweat and toil on the lands. You will owe a debt to them, a debt you can repay with God's blessing by using your education to better their lives."<sup>35</sup>

It was late August by then. The entire family had come to the airport to see her off. Her mother was also accompanying her daughter on her journey to the US. Surrounded by the loved ones Benazir entered the plane, to fly to the United States and to become the first Bhutto woman to study abroad.

## Chapter 3

# **A Taste of the West**

(1969-1971)

It was a dawn of autumn in the United States, when the plane carrying adolescent Benazir and her mother landed at New York airport. About a month before her arrival, Neil Armstrong had set his foot on the moon, becoming the first human being to do so. A month later, Benazir had set her foot on a foreign land, in pursuit of education, to become first Bhutto female to do so. Coming from a traditional society, the task of this shy and inhabited girl to adjust herself in an advanced society like that of United States was even harder. New York city's skyline of skyscrapers, flyovers, wide roads, most modern shopping malls, beautiful buildings, and an advanced way of life were ages apart from her own small world thousands miles away. She had landed in a strange but a beautiful and fascinating world.

On their arrival, mother and daughter stayed for few days at New York's Charles Hotel, before moving to Cambridge, where Benazir's admission was confirmed. Her class that year consisted mostly of American students, with only five foreigners including herself.<sup>1</sup> She was allotted a double room on sharing basis in all-girls' dormitory, the Eliot Hall. It was a beautiful building with a corridor run-

ning between the two rows of single and double rooms, at thirty minutes walking distance from her academic block. Begum Nusrat helped her in finding out the location of Mecca, the direction of prayers by Muslims all over the world. They met the renowned Harvard academic, Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, a friend of her father who had been US Ambassador to India during 1960s. Before her mother started her journey back home, the professor and his wife were designated as Benazir's parents-in-residence.

For the first time in her life she was now living on her own in a cosmopolitan world. The vast grounds, the lush green lawns, the whole city to live in and no one to bother about her. The straight forward people. There was a great sense of freedom. A personal freedom, which allows one to judge the right and the wrong on one's own. The added advantage for this shy girl was the state of anonymity as no one except a few at the campus knew who she was or whose daughter she was. It was an entirely new phenomenon for this sixteen year old, as in her own country her surname 'Bhutto' brought her immediate recognition as well as burden of social status. But, here where most of the people were even unaware of the existence of a country named Pakistan, Bhutto or no Bhutto did not make any difference. And she realized fully well that in the new environment, she would be judged on her own merit.

But, her excessive shyness was a big obstacle in her way. At home she had been brought up in a privileged milieu, where she could afford to remain shy and liptied. But, here she had to approach strangers and ask for direction to the library, to the lecture halls, to the dining hall, and to almost everywhere. "I had been thrown in at the deep end of a strange and foreign pool. If I were to get to the surface, I had to get there by myself,"<sup>2</sup> she recalled. She made an effort and was able to tear down the shell of the shyness.

The next immediate problem for her was her wardrobe. She had brought with her dozens of Shalwar-Kameez suits from Pakistan, not knowing exactly the peculiarities of the weather and the customs of her new home. She packed them safely and bought few pairs of jeans and sweatshirts from Harvard's co-op. She grew her hair long and straight. Now, Pinkie from Pakistan, as she was known

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there, had adopted herself to her role in the New World, the western world.

It was an age of scientific discovery and political change in the US. The NASA had successfully sent astronauts, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin to the moon. They had landed there on 21 July 1969, making true one of the most ancient dreams of humanity. They had brought a piece of mass from the moon with them, which was placed in the museum of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "All of us walked there to see the piece of moon which had come from the other world,"<sup>3</sup> she remembered. The astronauts had stalked an American flag and a plaque on the moon reading, 'We came in peace for all mankind.'<sup>4</sup>

But, that very peace was lacking in their own country, where massive demonstrations, demanding an end to the war in Vietnam, were the order of the day. President Nixon had already entered the White House on his pledge to bring an end to the war, which had cost 135000 million US dollars and 57000 lives with hundreds of thousand crippled.<sup>5</sup> The President favoured slow withdrawal of the troops, but many of his countrymen wanted him to act immediately. It was the time when the anti war movement was at its peak. As a student, Benazir participated in many of such demonstrations along with her friends, even at the risk of being deported for taking part in the political activities. It was during one such demonstration that she suffered her first whiff of tear gas.<sup>6</sup>

It was also the time when the women liberation movement was building up in whole of the United States. The Harvard bookstores were filled with literature on issues relating to the women. She and her friends were impressed by the new philosophies governing the relationship between the two genders. She involved herself with this movement and became an ardent supporter of its ideology. Her room became a centre for such feminine gatherings, where these teenage girls contemplated about their future relationships with men. "Night after night my friends and I gathered to talk about our aspirations for the future and what kind of new rules would govern our relationships with the people we married -- if indeed we chose to get married at all."<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the circle of her friends kept on expanding. When the time came for elections for the secretary of the Eliot Hall, she decided to contest. Her popularity amongst her friends helped her to win the elections. It was the first election of her life in a long series throughout her political career, which was to start few years later.

The social activities became a part and parcel of her new role in Harvard. When East Pakistan was hit by a cyclone, she helped raise funds from the platform of SAVE, an intentional social welfare organization, for the victims of the catastrophe. Her activities brought her good name and fame in and around the campus. In recognition of her services for the affected people, the Asian Society invited her to address their assembly on the subject of East Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> Though she had delivered many speeches during her school days on a variety of subjects, but the invitation by such a distinguished forum was something special carrying excitement for this teenager. Her speech went very well and won her thunderous applause from her audience. This also brought her the first honorarium of her life for delivering a speech, to be followed by many in her later life.

The things changed for her when during the first snowfall in December, all the dormitories emptied and her friends and everybody else left for celebrating the Christmas. "I was very lonely in the winter of my first year"<sup>9</sup> thirty years later, she could still feel that loneliness in her inner-self. It was a daunting experience. But she found out the solution, which she could apply on all subsequent occasions in her life, whenever she is lonely or going through an ordeal, she would keep herself busy in a lot of other things to distract her attention from her predicament. "Somehow when you are active and doing a lot of things you don't have time to think," she confided. 'I do not sit and mourn where I am. I just adjust myself to the circumstances and the place where I am,' was the lesson she learnt that winter. She concentrated on a number of other things: typing, reading, articles writing, watching movie, and going to watch stage dramas. And time just passed on.<sup>10</sup>

The lasting gift of that lonely winter was perhaps the discovery she herself made of her talent for writing. When she read an article in *Life Magazine*, criticizing Aswan Dam, she decided to write a

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letter to the editor in support of the dam. The sixteen-year-old Benazir was surprised to see that her letter was published!<sup>11</sup> This first adventure in self-expression culminated, about two decades later, into writing of her autobiography, which became the bestseller all over the world with millions of copies sold. But, these sideline activities during her academic career did not distract her much from her main focus: the studies, which consumed most of her time. She proved to be a good student, with almost all As and Bs. Only in her first term examination, she got one C. "I was so ashamed of myself," she recalled, "I wondered what my father would think of me, when he is going to see my marks." That was the first and the last time that she secured a C grade in any of her subject in her entire academic life.<sup>12</sup>

In her second year, she had to choose her major course of study. Initially, she was interested in studying psychology. But, when she learnt that it entailed certain courses in medical science requiring dissection of animals, she changed her mind. Her father wanted her to study political science. 'When I learnt that my father wanted me to do comparative governments, I decided to do it,' she recalled. For the next seven years Benazir bent her will and intellect to realise her father's dream. A fond daughter Benazir recalled: "I always wanted to please my father. I adored him. Getting so much love... His eyes would sparkle to see me that I wanted him to feel him happy with me."<sup>13</sup> Her decision to study political science made her father very happy, because this fitted in well for the role for which he had prepared her since her childhood, when he wrote her long letters on all the national and international issues from all corners of the world: to be heir to his political legacy, his ideals.

By that time, the management of the university decided to convert the all-girls' dormitories, the Eliot Halls, into co-eds. The sea of difference in the cultural taboos of the East and the West made it very difficult for her to adjust herself to live in such proximity to men. "Even finding a male undergraduate in the laundry room was enough to cause me to postpone doing my own laundry."<sup>14</sup> She could not take it for long and decided to acquire a suite in the Eliot House on sharing basis with her partner Yolanda Kodrzycki.



Both the friends moved to this new place which was nearer to their academic block, just at a twelve minutes walking distance. Here they had a living room, two single rooms and a separate bathroom. It was a nice place to live in.

While Benazir was pursuing her course of studies in the political science at Harvard, her country, at another end of the world, was passing through an unprecedented political turmoil. The military government headed by General Yahya Khan had undone the One-Unit scheme, which had amalgamated four provinces of the West Pakistan into one unit. After restoring four provinces of the western wing, the government ended 'parity' between the eastern and the western wings of the country. It was then declared that the basis of the future election would be 'one man, one vote' principle, giving an obvious weight to the eastern wing, which was six times smaller than the western wing in territorial terms but had a majority in terms of population. The policies of the civil and military government since 1951 had deepened the already existing gulf amongst the five provinces, and more so between the two wings of the country. In this backdrop Pakistan was going to have general elections that December, for the first time in its quarter century history.

If her first winter in the US was dull, the second brought full measure of excitement to her. Her father's Pakistan Peoples Party was one of the major contenders in the election, with an agenda to provide basics of a living, *Roti, Kapra aur Makan* (Food, clothing and shelter) to all the citizens of Pakistan. On the night of 7<sup>th</sup> December 1970, the Election Day, Benazir waited anxiously in her suite, thousands miles away, for the news from Pakistan. 'On the other side of the world in Cambridge, I studied all night with the telephone beside me,' she recalled. Finally, the long hours of waiting came to an end and she received a call from her mother informing her that her father's PPP had won a majority in the western wing, securing 82 of 138 National Assembly seats. Her father himself had won five seats of National Assembly from various constituencies and from different parts of the country.<sup>15</sup>

Next day she came to know through newspapers more about her father's thumping electoral victory in the West Pakistan. Most of his

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party candidates had defeated big feudals, wealthy and influential political rivals, setting a new trend in the country's politics. She little realised then that in a traditional feudal society like that of Pakistan, the electoral defeat of her father's rivals will earn him a permanent enmity which would not be quenched even after shedding his blood just nine years later. And that after his assassination, the enmity will be passed on to his daughter, herself, as his political heir, who will have to bear the brunt of these fateful elections, even years and decades later. But, naïve to all these things that winter Benazir was very happy on an overwhelming victory of her father in the election.

However, the things were different in the eastern wing of Pakistan, one thousand miles away, beyond the border of India. Awami League there had captured, almost unopposed, the entire bloc of seats on the basis of its 'Six-Points' agenda. It provided for an extremely weak federal structure with limited jurisdiction to defence and foreign affairs, minus foreign trade and aid.<sup>16</sup> The scheme envisaged a federal government having neither taxing authority nor foreign exchange resources of its own. It was to meet its expenses out of the amounts provided to it by the federating units. Each of the federating units was authorised to levy taxes, control the use of its foreign exchange resources, make and carry out its fiscal policy independent of the federation. Furthermore, each of the federating units had to have their own currency, or their own federal reserve banks to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to the other. The federating units were to have the authority to raise and maintain their own paramilitary forces.<sup>17</sup>

Her father's political rival, leader of Awami League, Shaikh Mujibur Rehman had first introduced his Six-Point formula at a national conference of political leaders in Lahore, on the soil of West Pakistan, in February 1966. But all the western wing leaders, including his own Awami League's provincial President, Nawabzada Nasrullah, had rejected it. Jamaat Islami viewed it as a separatist design. The Council Muslim League decried it as a demand for confederation. Even the National Awami Party, which favoured substantial provincial autonomy, dismissed it as being parochial.<sup>18</sup>

So, whole of the West Pakistan was in unison against the Awami League's formula for the future structure of the federation. Giving voice to these feelings of West Pakistan, Benazir's father as the undisputed leader of that wing had held that, taken together, the so-called Six-Point scheme contained the potential of Constitutional secession for all the five provinces of Pakistan, or each of the 'member states,' as termed in the Awami League's terminology. He thought that the federal government constituted under this formula would be completely helpless amid the clamour of five warring provinces, each asserting its own brand of sub-nationalism and each pulled in different direction by foreign intrigues.<sup>19</sup>

He argued that without control of foreign trade and aid, the central government would have little to do in the area of foreign affairs. Since, foreign and defence policies were very closely related, the central government would not be able to formulate and carry out any effective defence policy. He believed that each wing, worse still the five provinces of the country, with their own foreign and economic relations, would develop different attitudes and attachments towards foreign powers, making it impossible to develop a common foreign policy. He thought that with two currencies, and two or more foreign exchange control systems, the Pakistani rupee would virtually cease to exist. To him the formula was meant to strike at the very roots of Pakistani nationhood, with inherent potential of bringing out five independent states out of the five provinces of Pakistan.<sup>20</sup> His constituency, the West Pakistan, abhorred the scheme like anything.

Two wings of the country separated by a thousand miles of enemy territory and not merely two political parties were at loggerheads with each other. It was a conflict of ideologies, like that between the North and South America in 1860s, when two slogans, two ideologies, United States of America and Confederate States of America, pulled the country down. It was a power struggle between federation and confederation. Here her father took a leaf out of Abraham Lincoln. But, he was without power. The country was already in for a crisis.

At this most crucial hour of Pakistan's political history, an army general of mediocre status presided over the destiny of the country.

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Soon after assuming the power, the general indulged excessively in women and wine, leaving matters of state in the hands of his unimaginative and incompetent advisors, who succeeded in effectively erecting a ring of isolation around him. As the pressure of work increased and the circumstances demanded hard decisions from him, he sunk still deeper in the pool of his ephemeral pleasures, closing his eyes to the harsh realities. The general's indulgence reached to such an extent that his military chief General Hameed had to advise his military governors "not to implement the President's verbal orders, if given to them personally by him after 10 PM."<sup>21</sup> In such circumstances the tension between the two wings increased by every passing day.

The initial days of 1971 witnessed a worsening political deadlock in the country. The assembly elected in December previous year had a more profound function to perform, to frame the Constitution. Shaikh Mujibur Rehman hardened his stance on his Six-Point formula and demanded for an immediate session of the Assembly, so that his party could bulldoze West Pakistan's opposition on the basis of his brute numerical strength. But Bhutto believed that the future Constitution of the country was a very important issue and it should not be taken in a customary vein merely as a simple piece of legislation. He therefore proposed holding a dialogue between two wings, represented by two major parties, the PPP and the Awami League, before a session of Assembly was held to pass the new Constitutional structure. To resolve the issue, the government invited twelve elected members of the parliamentary groups in the newly elected Assembly to meet in Dhaka on 10 March to prepare the groundwork for the Assembly session.

But, it seemed that the Bengali leadership had made up their mind by then for secession from Pakistan. Shaikh Mujibur Rehman was interested in becoming the founding father of Bangladesh rather than the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Shaikh Mujibur Rehman was quoted as saying in early 1970s: "My path was of different kind where Bengalis had to break bondage with Pakistan."<sup>22</sup> At another place Mujibur Rehman was quoted saying: "I had been working for this independence (of Bangladesh) for the last twenty-five years.

Now my dream has come true."<sup>23</sup> These evidences suggest that Awami League was bent upon getting an independent homeland for the Bengalis. The foully of the military government only provided them with an easy way to get what they wanted.

Shaikh Mujibur Rehman declined to participate in the meeting of parliamentary party groups as invited by the government and insisted on calling the session directly. When the government budged before this demand and announced the Assembly session on 25<sup>th</sup> March, the Awami League changed its stance and placed four pre-conditions for attending the session. Meanwhile, by mid of March, the eastern wing of Pakistan was in an acute state of chaos. The militant cadre of League's terrorist band, *Mukti Bahni* massacred with impunity the West Pakistanis stationed there. The Radio Dacca was captured and 'Down with Pakistan' became the popular slogan. These circumstances could only half awake the sleepy general who finally decided to go to Dacca himself to get the first hand account of the state of affairs there. He landed on the Dacca airport on 15<sup>th</sup> March to find the city in flames and without writ of the government. He met Mujibur Rehman to convince him to agree to some Constitutional formula agreeable to both of the wings of the country. The reply was not encouraging.

The general was really unnerved by the conditions he saw in Dacca. Being a military mind, he ordered military action in East Pakistan to quell the political unrest, which to him was an armed insurgency. In the following days, the martial law authorities in a swift operation arrested Shaikh Mujibur Rehman and other prominent leaders of Awami League and flew them to West Pakistan. Many others went underground or crossed over to the neighbouring India. If the use of military force could have been kept in check and exercised to the bare minimum level, just to make things right for a political solution, perhaps the situation in the rebellious East Pakistan could have been improved. But, with the central command keeping itself occupied somewhere else, the local commanders used excessive force, further alienating the local population. General KM Arif puts it in these words: "The military action caused casualties which further alienated the people. At considerable political cost, a

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modicum of order had been restored. But the people lost confidence in the government. Their wounds were bleeding.<sup>124</sup>

Even Dr. Henry Kissinger, national security advisor to US President was intrigued by such severe action on part of General Yahya. "What prompted Yahya to his reckless step on March 25 is not fully known. No doubt the Bengal population taunted the Pakistani soldiers drawn almost exclusively from the West. Mujib's version of autonomy seemed indistinguishable from independence. Almost all nations will fight for their unity, even if sentiment in the disaffected area is overwhelmingly for secession. So it was during Civil War, with Nigeria toward Biafra, and with Congo toward Katanga. Pakistan was unique however, in that the seceding province was separated from West Pakistan by a thousand miles of Indian territory. There was no likelihood that a small military force owing loyalty to the one wing of the country could indefinitely hold down a population of 75 million of the other. Once indigenous Bengali support for a united Pakistan evaporated, the integrity of Pakistan was finished."<sup>25</sup>

Benazir was there in the United States to bear the brunt of the policies of a military dictator, with whom she had nothing to do except that he ruled her poor country with help of brute force. As the reports of atrocities on civilian population by armed forces in Bengal poured in, it opened floodgates of news reports in the western media, and resultant condemnation from all over the world. Her country was getting increasingly isolated in international community. Her teachers, classmates, friends, and almost everyone she knew in the States condemned these policies.

She was just unable to believe what was being said was true. She recalled: 'Everyone was turning against West Pakistan, even the people with whom I had gone door to door earlier in the year, collecting money for the victims of a devastating cyclone in East Pakistan.' She continued: "Looting. Rape. Kidnappings. Murder. Where no one had cared about Pakistan when I arrived at Harvard, now everyone did. And the condemnation of my country was universal. At first, I refused to believe the accounts in the Western press of atrocities being committed by our army in what the East Bengal

rebels were now calling Bangladesh. According to the government-controlled Pakistani papers my parents sent me every week, the brief rebellion had been quelled. What were these charges then that Dacca had been burned to the ground and firing squads sent into the university to execute students, teachers, poets, novelists, doctors and lawyers? I shook my head in disbelief. Refugees were reportedly fleeing by the thousands, so many of them strafed and killed by Pakistani planes and, that, their bodies were being used to erect roadblocks."<sup>26</sup>

The situation in the subcontinent continued to aggravate. India found it a lifetime opportunity to gain an advantage of arch adversary Pakistan's internal political troubles. The Indian support for Bengali nationalism kept on increasing. On 31<sup>st</sup> March, the Indian Parliament unanimously expressed its wholehearted sympathy and support for the Bengalis. Then, two weeks later, a Government in Exile of Bangladesh was established on the Indian soil, manned by the Bengali fugitives, who had escaped from East Pakistan to adjoining Calcutta. Bands of guerrilla fighters were trained and infiltrated in Pakistani territory to keep the insurgency alive. By May, the Indian government ordered its defence forces to prepare plans for a lightning attack to take over East Pakistan. But, the military high command advised the political leadership to delay the action till November in view of a possible Chinese counter-intervention, believing that winter in Himalayas would restrict any Chinese movement towards the subcontinent.<sup>27</sup> Besides they wanted some more time for better preparation as they foresaw a likelihood of the escalation of hostilities, which they thought might culminate at taking the whole of Pakistan.

While these preparations were being made, Pakistan's military leadership was still deep in slumber. The General had left the ship of the state rudderless to flow with the current of events. In July, Henry Kissinger undertook a visit of the subcontinent to ease the tensions in the region. In Delhi he observed a fighting mood. When he tried to inform Islamabad of the looming danger of Indian attack, he was astonished to see the insensitivity of the generals, engulfed in a false sense of pride and security. Dr. Kissinger wrote: "(Yahya) was

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oblivious to his perils and unprepared to face necessities. He and his colleagues did not believe that India might be planning war; if so, they were convinced that they would win. When I asked as tactfully as I could about the Indian advantage in numbers and equipment, Yahya and his colleagues answered with bravado about historic superiority of Moslem fighters.... There simply was no blinking the fact that Pakistan's military leaders were caught up in a process beyond their comprehension".<sup>28</sup>

The military junta in order to hide its follies and to divert attention of Pakistani people unleashed a propaganda campaign against Benazir Bhutto's father blaming him for hindering the transfer of power to Shaikh Mujibur Rehman. Nothing was far from truth than this assertion. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had no objection to the transfer of power to Awami League. Dr Henry Kissinger later reported: "On 16 October our charge in Islamabad met Bhutto, who agreed that leading positions in a new government should go to East Pakistan; Mujib could play an active role."<sup>29</sup> The only thing on which Bhutto differed with Shaikh Mujibur Rehman was the latter's Constitutional model based on Six-Points, to which the League was inflexibly committed, and which Bhutto considered detrimental to the very existence of Pakistan.

The general had his own axe to grind. He wanted assurances from one of the contending party for his continuance as President even after the transfer of power to civilian hands. As the assurance was not forthcoming, he kept on lingering the issue, even when the country was at the verge of collapse. The generals were in no mood to hand over power to anyone, and Shaikh Mujibur Rehman was not at all ready to reconsider his stance on the Six Point formula. The crisis kept on worsening.

Meanwhile, the momentum of war was developing on its own pace, at a very fast pace. After the border skirmishes between the two armies, the Indians undertook a major offensive against Pakistani artillery on 1<sup>st</sup> November. Twenty days later a full scale war was being fought on the soil of East Pakistan. About 70,000 Pakistani soldiers stationed there were pitted against their five-time stronger rival and rebellious local populace. Twelve Pakistani air



force fighter planes had to face an onslaught of more than two hundred Indian planes.<sup>30</sup> Thus, within a year of elections, by December 1971, the internal political strife of the country had evolved itself into an international war between Pakistan and India. The greatest weakness for Pakistan was wide spread disenchantment amongst its own citizens in the eastern wing. The Indian military superiority and the international politics made the conditions for Pakistan worse enough to be tackled by a military government.

Against these heavy odds, the generals now looked towards Benazir's father for the salvation, to help in saving what could be saved of the country. There was not a single Pakistani leader except her father, as Dr. Henry Kissinger later noted, who could match the stature, caliber and influence of the Indian leaders. He was to win the losing battle at the negotiation table of United Nations.

While the war was raging, the military government designated Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as the deputy Prime Minister and foreign minister. This was the moment of most severe crisis for his country. The existence of Pakistan was at stake. He could not decline the request and decided to do whatsoever he could to safeguard the interests of Pakistan with best of his abilities.

He immediately rushed to New York to present the case of his country at the UN Security Council. Benazir was at Harvard. She received her father's cable directing her to meet him in New York at Pierre Hotel on 9<sup>th</sup> December. On his arrival he told her to be with him and assist him in his efforts to rescue his country. Iqbal Akhund, a Pakistani diplomat who was present there during those crucial moments of Pakistan's life, reported Benazir's presence with her father in Pierre Hotel: "Benazir, who had come down from Harvard, was at the table beside her father. He referred to her presence in his speech, saying that he had asked her to come down for Security Council's meeting, so that when she grew up she would remember these difficult and tragic moments in the country's life and would learn that in the worst of times a nation must hold its head high and in the darkest moments look to the future with hope."<sup>31</sup>

Benazir learnt the lesson by heart.

Her father engaged himself immediately in damage-control efforts.

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By then, East Pakistan had virtually gone out of hand. And West Pakistan was most vulnerable to the Indian advances. Worst of all, the moral of the nation and the armed forces had touched the lowest ebb. Benazir's father initiated his diplomatic endeavours with his meeting with Dr Kissinger at the house of the then US Ambassador to United Nations, Mr George Bush, who later became the President of United States. Recounting the meeting with ZA Bhutto that fateful December, Dr. Henry Kissinger wrote:

“The next morning, still in New York City, I met for breakfast with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had been appointed Deputy Prime Minister a few days before, in the elegant apartment of our UN Ambassador at the Waldorf Towers... Elegant, eloquent, subtle, Bhutto was at last a representative who would be able to compete with the Indian leaders for public attention... I found him brilliant charming, of global stature in his perceptions. He could distinguish posturing from policy. He did not suffer fools gladly. Since he had many to contend with, this provided him with more than the ordinary share of enemies. He was not really comfortable with the plodding pace of Pakistan's military leaders... But in the days of his country's tragedy he held the remnant of his nation together and restored its self-confidence. In its hour of greatest need, he saved his country from complete destruction.”<sup>32</sup>

Benazir continued to assist her father in his hotel suite, which had been converted into a makeshift control room. He had initiated several diplomatic and political initiatives to stop any further Indian onslaught. “The telephones at the Pierre ring non-stop,” recalled Benazir, who attended the calls on her father's behalf. “Interrupt the meetings,” her father told her. “If the Soviets are here, tell me the Chinese are calling. If the Americans are here, tell me that the Russians are on line or the Indians. And don't tell anybody who really is here. One of the fundamental lessons of diplomacy is to

create doubt: never lay your cards on the table,' her father instructed her. "I follow his instructions but not the lesson. I always lay my cards on table."<sup>33</sup>

Her father made hectic efforts to safeguard the country. But, the outcome of these measures depended much on the strength and ability of the army to resist Indian military attack. The response was not forthcoming. It was evident to everybody that Pakistani command in the eastern wing would not be able to resist the Indian attack for long, and that an unconditional surrender of Pakistani troops was due anytime. This devastated Pakistan's diplomatic strength, leaving little room for an honourable way out of the catastrophe. Distressing news were pouring in from everywhere. Six times bigger Indian war machine was on full swing. Pakistan was virtually defenceless. Benazir took messages and passed them on to her father.

The meeting of the Security Council was convened for eighth time on 12<sup>th</sup> December to consider the ongoing war in the subcontinent. Her father was to present the case of his country. She accompanied him and sat two rows behind him in the hall amidst the diplomats and ministers from all over the world. Her father pleaded his best for the cease-fire, the withdrawal of Indian forces from Pakistani territory, the stationing of UN forces and the means to ensure that no reprisal take place in East Pakistan. But the time had really run out. The international community as well as the ruling junta in Pakistan had psychologically accepted the fall of Dacca as inevitable. The Council adopted a most casual approach to the issue, adjourning the meetings off and on, discussing trivial things for hours, while Pakistan was bleeding. The international politics actually waited for the victor and the loser to emerge at the battleground.

This was all unbearable for her father who finally lost his patience with the drama that was going on in the hollow halls of the United Nations. It was 15<sup>th</sup> December. The East Pakistan had virtually been taken over by the Indian army. Benazir sat behind her father in her accustomed seat, when he, tearing up his notes, thundered: 'You can take your Security Council. Here you are. I am going.' He rose to his feet and strode out of the chamber in stunned silence. Benazir

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collected her papers hastily and followed him along with rest of the Pakistani delegation. 'My father was very upset as we walked and walked, seeing the devastating repercussions ahead for Pakistan,' Benazir recalled.<sup>34</sup> Next day General Niazi formally surrendered before Indian Commander at Dacca's Racecourse Ground, giving about a hundred thousand of Pakistan's best soldiers under the command and control of his Indian counterpart, General Jagjit Aurora.

Ironically, the news of the Pakistani troops' surrender came to Pakistani people through Indian Prime Minister's broadcast on All India Radio. Pakistani media, under censorship, had kept the public in dark about the realities of battleground. Finally, when the inevitable happened, Radio Pakistan announced the surrender in its evening news bulletin, saying: "Following an arrangement between the commanders of India and Pakistan, fighting has ceased in the eastern theatre and the Indian troops have entered Dhaka." Few hours later, the President came on radio and television to confirm the surrender. This was a rude shock to the people of Pakistan, who were fed with stories of victories by Pakistani armed forces on official media, even a day before the surrender.

This initiated mass rallies and demonstration all over the country, condemning the junta and demanding death for General Yahya. The demand for immediate transfer of power to elected civilian leadership grew louder and louder. Insensitive military rulers were still planning to hang on and were in no mood to effect the transfer power to the popularly elected representatives, even after such a big catastrophe. However, an incident in Pindi's National Defence College changed the scenario and compelled the generals to effect the transfer of power. It so happened that, when President Yahya's chief of staff General Hamid Khan tried to brief the junior army officers at NDC on recent events in the East Pakistan, he was hooted upon and hurled abuses. The esteem and resultantly the composure of the top brass in the army had gone, and gone for good. For Yahya the game was over. Finding no other way out, the generals decided to transfer power to the popularly elected leader of the largest Parliamentary party in Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Bhutto was still away from the country, when the generals cabled him to reach immediately and take over reigns of the remains of Pakistan. The country had paid the price with blood of millions and half of its being to get rid of the unrepresentative rule of last decades.

As soon as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto arrived, he was rushed to the Presidency, where he was handed over the power. Ironically, since there was no Constitution, he was sworn in as the President and the first-ever civilian chief martial law administrator of the country. It was a broken and a most demoralised Pakistan. Her father had to 'pick up the pieces, very small pieces,' as he said in his televised broadcast soon after the oath-taking ceremony. 'We will make a new Pakistan, a prosperous and progressive Pakistan, a Pakistan free of exploitation, a Pakistan envisaged by the Quaid-e-Azam. I want the flowering of our society... I want suffocation to end... This is not the way civilised countries are run. Civilisation means Civil Rule... democracy ... We have to rebuild democratic institutions ... We have to rebuild hope in the future,' Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the President of Pakistan shared his ideals with his countrymen.<sup>35</sup>

At Harvard, Benazir was no longer known as Pinkie from Pakistan, but Pinkie Bhutto daughter of the President of Pakistan.

## Chapter 4

# **The President's Daughter** (1972-1977)

When in June 1972, Benazir Bhutto returned back to Pakistan for spending her summer vacations at home, she found the stage set for summit meeting between her father and Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indra Gandhi, to be held at Simla, to ease tensions between the two South Asian neighbors. The wounds of the Indo-Pak war of December 1971 were still bleeding. The East Pakistan had been amputated and had emerged as Bangladesh on map of the world. Pakistan's international image had nose-dived due to the alleged atrocities of military action in the former East Pakistan. India held more than 93,000 Pakistani soldiers as the prisoners of war and occupied 5139 square miles of Pakistani territory. On the other hand, Pakistan held only 637 Indian personnel and 69 square miles of Indian territory.<sup>1</sup> The balance of power had never been that heavily tilted in favour of India since 1947, when both the countries achieved independence from the British rule. Defeated and dismembered Pakistan under her father wanted to regain on negotiation table what the country had lost at the battleground. On the other hand, India wanted to extract maximum advantage out of its position as the victor of the war. Perhaps, the Indians wanted to repeat the Treaty of

Versailles in the subcontinent! The event was destined to be a great diplomatic occurrence in the history of two countries.

Her father wanted her to accompany him to India so as to witness the accord first hand. She happily agreed. But, she faced a little problem. As she had just come for the summer holidays, she had no proper clothes to wear on such an occasion. She asked her friends Samia and Salima to lend some dresses to her. Luckily, her friends' elder sister Uzma's clothes fitted her well and she obtained few of her dresses to wear in India. "When I went there, everybody thought I had set new fashion trends. But in fact they were desperately borrowed clothes from a friend," remembered a smiling Benazir.<sup>2</sup>

A week after celebrating her nineteenth birthday, she boarded the Presidential Plane on her flight to Chandigarh, along with her father's official delegation. On their departure, a ceremony was held at Lahore, where they were accorded a touching send-off. The political leaders, members of the assemblies and a large number of people had gathered on airport to see them off. Everybody prayed for success of the crucial mission. Amidst hopes, fears and prayers, the special flight left Lahore for Chandigarh.

On board, her father gave her a lesson in diplomacy: "Everyone will be looking for signs of how the meetings are progressing, so be extra careful. You must not smile and give the impression you are enjoying yourself while our soldiers are still in Indian prisoners-of-war camps. You must not look grim, either, which people may interpret as a sign of pessimism."

"So how should I look?" asked confused Benazir.

"I've already told you. Don't look sad and don't look happy," was her father's reply to a bewildered Benazir.<sup>3</sup>

"I wondered, if I am not supposed to be happy or to be sad, what was I supposed to be. But I suppose I managed it because he was quite pleased with me," recalled Benazir thirty-seven years later.<sup>4</sup>

On their arrival at Chandigarh, Indian Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh received them as Mrs. Gandhi had already left for Simla to have a final look at the arrangements of the summit meeting. As soon as Benazir, clad in a loose red Shalwar Kameez, following steps of her father, alighted from the plane, an Indian

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lady moved forward and presented her a flower-bouquet. They were introduced to a long line of dignitaries, who welcomed them on Indian soil. They stayed there for some time and then boarded a Russian-built M-8 helicopter for the next part of their journey northwards to the hilly area.

Half an hour later, by quarter past one in the afternoon, the helicopter landed in Simla, in the middle of a football field that had been converted into a makeshift heliport by the Indian authorities. A beautiful weather welcomed them at the picturesque hill station, which had been the summer capital during British Raj. Only a day earlier, a heavy downpour had lashed out the place. Though the skies were still covered with dark clouds, but rain had stopped. It was a little chilly, which gave a pleasant feeling to the guests coming from the hot plains of Indus.

Mrs. Indra Gandhi, clad in a sari and covered with a raincoat under threatening skies, welcomed Benazir and her father at the airport. It was Benazir's first chance to meet with Mrs. Indra Gandhi. "I had read so much about Mrs. Indra Gandhi and when I met her I was so surprised to see that she was smaller than I had thought, and she was gentler than I had thought," remembered Benazir.<sup>5</sup>

"*Aslam-o-Alekum*," Benazir greeted Indra.

"*Namaste*," replied a smiling Indra.<sup>6</sup>

After the ceremonies were over, Indra showed her guests to the black limousine, flying the flags of Pakistan and India, to drive them to Himachal Bhavan, the provincial governor's house, which had been designated as their official residence in Simla. Her father's school-days' friend Pilo Mody (1926-80) and his wife, Vina, had specially come from Delhi to meet with her father. "I remember meeting with Pilo Mody at Simla... and I was so amused of hearing his stories," recalled Benazir.<sup>7</sup>

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, Prime Minister Indra Gandhi hosted a dinner in honor of the visiting delegates. Benazir decided to wear a silk sari. "I wore the sari for the second time in my life. And I did not have Mummy there to help me put it on. So I was really quite nervous and scared that I am going to step on the sari and it is going to fall off and I am going to embarrass my father." Indra kept staring



at her, which made her more nervous. "Perhaps she was recalling the diplomatic missions on which she had accompanied her father," she thought to herself. "Was she seeing herself in me, a daughter of another statesman? Was she remembering the love of a daughter for her father, a father for his daughter?" she kept on contemplating.<sup>8</sup>

After the initial pleasantries, the delegations of the two countries locked themselves to find out a mutually agreeable version of the accord. The Indians wanted Pakistan to recognise Bangladesh, accept the new cease-fire line in Kashmir as a permanent boundary, sign a 'no-war' pact, agree to reduction in armed forces and defence expenditure, and similar other conditions.<sup>9</sup> This was the price that India wanted for the return of Pakistani territory and personnel. Though Pakistan was under heavy odds, but the sense of self-respect had not been destroyed as yet. Then, the Indians had to negotiate with President Bhutto, a seasoned statesman, who did not play fools like the previous military dictators. He knew his country's weaknesses. But, he also knew the strength of his country.

Before coming to Simla, he had visited fourteen Muslim countries in the region and had obtained public assurances of their support for the cause of Pakistan. At home he had consulted the opposition leaders, industrial workers, students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, religious leaders, and the military commanders.<sup>9</sup> All of them had extended him their full-fledged support during negotiations with India. Hence, he was there as sole spokesman of not only the cross section of his own country, but also of all the important Muslim countries of the region. This enhanced strength of Pakistan perfectly matched with that of India. The negotiations went on and on. Sometimes the political weather was sunny, while at other times it was cloudy. To Benazir, it was a "roller coaster of emotions."

While these diplomatic and political parlays were going on, a strange phenomenon was taking place simultaneously. A teenager Benazir was experiencing the media focus and public attention for the first time in her life. "Every time I left the *Himachal Bhavan*, the former residence of the British governors of the Punjab," recalled Benazir, "people lined the streets to stare at me."<sup>10</sup> Wherever she went, cheering crowds and the journalists followed her. The Indian

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government had chalked out a separate itinerary of her official visits, which included a visit to a doll museum, a handicrafts centre, tinned fruit factories, and a dance programme at a convent.<sup>11</sup>

“When I walked down the Mall,” recalled Benazir, “where officials of the Imperial Government had once promenaded with their wives, the crowds grew so huge that the traffic had to be stopped.” This public attention and media gaze made her feel “quite uncomfortable.” Indian newspapers were full of her photographs and her news coverage.

In the evening hours of her arrival day, she went out to the Mall, the main shopping area of the hill station to buy few books. She was amazed to see that a number of journalists and press photographers were waiting outside her place in the chilly weather of Simla. As she went they followed her. There was another surprise in store for her in the bookstore: “I was amazed when I went to a bookshop and there were books out on East Pakistan situation and I said war had just ended how could they been so prolific in their writings? How could they come out with such material within so short a time.”<sup>12</sup>

As she bought the books, the flashes of the cameras flashed several times and her simple activity became a news story of the next day. The story released by UPI news agency went with the headline: ‘Benazir Goes Shopping, Bystanders Cheer.’ The story read:

SIMLA, June 28: Miss Benazir Bhutto today went shopping while her father, President Bhutto was holding talks with Mrs. Indra Gandhi. The 18 years old Benazir went to the fashionable shopping centre, the Mall, and bought three books. She was cheered by bystanders as she went through the bazaar...<sup>13</sup>

Her coverage was not confined to the regional press only. The ‘Tribune’ covered her in its issue and stated: “Though dressed in a modern manner Miss Benazir’s behavior is typically Oriental. No high-pitched talk, no open-mouthed laughter, no giggles, but a pleasant smile played on here lips and eyes. She is quite reserved, but highly observant and understanding. Describing her visit to the

Himachal Government Emporium, the 'Tribune' wrote that as she came out of the emporium, 'Miss Bhutto stood up on the steps to acknowledge the greetings of the huge crowd. 'Khuda Hafiz' she said and slipped into the car."<sup>14</sup>

The electronic media was not far behind. All India Radio (AIR) interviewed her and the contents became a subject of another day's newspaper stories. Daily Dawn reported the story in its 1<sup>st</sup> July issue with headline: "Benazir Impressed by Friendliness of Indian People." The story read:

SIMLA, June 30: Miss Benazir Bhutto said here that she was very much impressed by the love and feelings shown by the people of India. She was giving an interview to AIR correspondent this evening.... She hoped some fruitful results would come out of the talks.... She thought that the people of India are eager to have friendship with Pakistan... Miss Benazir Bhutto simple, unassuming 18-year-old daughter of President Bhutto, has been widely praised by the Indian press for her culture and manners... Today was another busy day for her in Simla. She visited two schools. She witnessed a gymnastic display and an opera.

"What had I done to draw such attention?" she wondered to herself.

Letters and telegrams piled up welcoming her to India. One even suggested her father to appoint her as Pakistan's Ambassador to India.

"You have stolen the hearts of the people of India," her father teased her.

"No Papa, that's not possible," she would reply in a protesting voice.

But this would not stop her fond father telling her again that she was more popular than he himself was in India.<sup>15</sup>

While this was all going on, serious negotiations between the two countries continued. The parleys were made difficult by India's

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inflexibility over most of the issues. But, Pakistan under President Bhutto was not ready to buckle down under domineering India. On fourth day of the deadlocked talks, her father told her to pack as he decided to go back without an agreement instead of with one dictated by India.

“Without an agreement?” a curious Benazir asked her father.

“Yes. Without an agreement,” her father replied. “I ‘d rather go back to Pakistan with no agreement than with one imposed by India. The Indians think I can’t afford to go home without a treaty and will therefore give in to their demands. But I’m calling their bluff. I would rather face disillusionment in Pakistan than a treaty which sells out our country.”<sup>16</sup>

In the afternoon, President Bhutto instructed his foreign minister Aziz Ahmed to let it be known to Indians officially that the Pakistani delegation was ready to quit and go home. This turn of events was beyond the wildest imaginations of Indians who had taken it for granted that Pakistan would have no option but to accede to their terms. Failure of talks was a calamity not only for Pakistan, but also for India.

Shortly before the sunset, her father was to see Mrs. Gandhi for tea. A disappointed Benazir was sitting at the floor of her bedroom, when her father suddenly appeared in the doorway.

“Don’t tell anybody,” he told her with a new gleam in his eyes, “but I’m going to use this protocol visit to try one last time with Mrs. Gandhi.”

With this he was gone leaving Benazir in an unending spell of waiting. The agonizing moments of wait finally came to an end and her father returned back with a smile on his face. He had convinced Mrs. Gandhi that the failure of talks would be harmful for both the parties, not just for Pakistan. As a politician, and the leader of India, Mrs. Indra would also be equally held responsible for continuing tension in the South Asia. The logic was very well conveyed and the Indians agreed to resume back negotiations after the last formal dinner that Pakistani delegation was to host in honour of their Indian hosts that night at *Himachal Bhavan*.

“How we all got through the banquet toasts, the speeches, the

pleasantries, I will never know. This time I was the one to keep glancing at Mrs. Gandhi but could read nothing from her face," remembered Benazir.

After the dinner was over, President Bhutto and Prime Minister Mrs. Indra Gandhi went into a small side sitting room while the negotiating teams sat in the billiard room, the largest room available in the house. Whenever there was an agreement or a disagreement on a point, the two leaders were consulted by the negotiating teams to elicit a yes or a no from them. After hectic exchanges between the two delegations on each and every point, and consultations within each group on every comma and full stop, an agreement was finally hammered out, typed up, and signed in the wee hours of 3<sup>rd</sup> July.<sup>17</sup>

So unlikely was the signing of the accord during this formal protocol dinner hosted by the guest delegation that even an electric typewriter was not available in *Himachal Bhawan*, and one was sent for to type the accord. The parchment paper on which the document was to be typed was not available either and was to be procured too. Then Mrs. Gandhi's seal of office had to be sent for from her residence, seventeen miles away.<sup>18</sup> But, the will of the leaders made it possible to overcome all these difficulties and the agreement could see the light of the day.

The preamble to the agreement reached at by Pakistan and India in those fateful hours, which would usher the longest era of peace in the subcontinent since the end of British Raj in 1947, read that: "The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan are resolved that the two countries put in end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of the durable peace in the subcontinent so that both countries may henceforth devote their resources and energies to the pressing task of advancing the welfare of their people."<sup>19</sup>

The provisions provided that the territories occupied by either country along the recognized international border would be vacated. This for Pakistan meant that its more than five thousand square miles area in its two key provinces, Sindh and Punjab, shall be freed from Indian forces, allowing hundreds of thousands of Pakistan's

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uprooted people to return back to their homes. On the other hand, Pakistan had to vacate less than seventy square miles, that its army had captured during the war. One of the two most important immediate objectives of Pakistan, to get back its occupied land and the prisoners of war, was achieved with full marks. Regarding the release of Pakistani prisoners of war, though it was not stated in the agreement, the India formally agreed to repatriate them subject to the concurrence of the Government of newly born Bangladesh: the concurrence that came after sometime when Pakistan formally recognized Bangladesh.

But, at that time, Benazir was quite upset at no immediate release of her country's armed forces personnel living in the Indian camps as prisoners-of-war. When her father came upstairs after signing the agreement, the subject came up for discussion between the father and the daughter. "Mrs. Gandhi agreed to return either the prisoners of war or the territory. Why do you think I chose the territory?" her father asked her.

"I really don't know, Papa. The people in Pakistan would have been much happier if the prisoners had been freed," answered a puzzled Benazir.

"And they will be freed," her father assured her. "Prisoners are a human problem. The magnitude is increased when there are 93,000 of them. It would be inhuman for India to keep them indefinitely. And it will also be a problem to keep on feeding and housing them. Territory, on the other hand, is not a human problem. Territory can be assimilated. Prisoners cannot. The Arabs have still not succeeded in regaining the territory lost in 1967 war. But, the capturing of land doesn't cry out for international attention the same way prisoners do,"<sup>20</sup> he gave her a discourse in diplomacy.

Next morning the delegation was to return back to Pakistan. Benazir had wanted to visit Poona, a beautiful town near Bombay, where her namesake aunt was buried.<sup>21</sup> She wanted to visit Bombay, where her grandmother Fatima Isphahani was buried, where her father had spent his adolescent days and where her grandfather Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto had played the most important innings of his political career in the pre-partition days. But, the heated politics of

the subcontinent did not allow this desire to be fulfilled. She along with her father and other members of official entourage flew back from Simla to Chandigarh in a helicopter and from there to Lahore in a special plane of Pakistan International Airline.

On their return, they found the city of Lahore in a jubilant mood. Proud of the fact that their leader had not given way on basic principles during his talks with the Indian Prime Minister, the people of Lahore accorded a befitting welcome, when their plane landed at the Lahore Airport. President Bhutto called a special session of the National Assembly to discuss and approve the agreement that he had reached at with the Prime Minister of India. On 10<sup>th</sup> of July, a week after the signing of the accord Pakistan's National Assembly endorsed it without any change.

Soon afterwards, Benazir left for Harvard to resume back her studies. On her arrival, to her astonishment, she found herself to be somebody exotic that people would be interested in. The reason was that she had been to Soviet Union that year with her father. Then, she had also gone to China in the February of that year on an official visit along with her father. Now she had gone to India. This way she had visited the places that no other of her classmates had even thought of. Because, in those days of cold war, the Soviet Union was still considered an evil empire, the communist China a closed state, and India shrouded in mystery. Everyone tried to draw nearer to her to hear the untold stories of these hidden lands. "I was somebody who had visited a place where nobody had been to and I came from a country where others could not visit," remembered a smiling Benazir decades later.<sup>22</sup>

The year 1972 was an election year for the United States. It was Benazir's first chance to see first hand an American election in November that year. President Nixon, with definite achievements in foreign policy including bringing to an end the Vietnam War, was a heavy favorite with the American voters. On Election Day, he carried forty-nine states and won more than sixty percent of votes, one of the highest percentages in the American history.<sup>23</sup> The election itself was a smooth and orderly affair. This was entirely different from the election scenes in the subcontinent where they are often

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marred with violence.

But, she was destined to see still another face of the American democratic traditions within no time. A popular most President like President Nixon had to face the charges and finally leave the office a year later, on account of an obscure event that occurred during 1972 campaign – the attempted burglary of the Democratic Party's National Headquarters in the Watergate apartments in downtown Washington! "The Watergate process left me with a profound sense of importance of nationally accepted laws, rather than whimsical or arbitrary laws imposed by the individuals," wrote Benazir in her autobiography.

The time rolled on and her graduation ceremony at Harvard drew nearer. This also meant an end to her student life in the United States, because her father wanted her to pursue further studies at Oxford in England, where he himself had studied. This disappointed her, as she wanted to continue at Cambridge. "I was in Harvard for four years," remembered Benazir. "I did not want to leave America. I loved America. It was my father who decided that I should go to Oxford. I knew my ways around Cambridge. I felt that why should I uproot myself and make new friends, and learn about new roads, new shops, new tutorial rooms and new teachers."<sup>24</sup>

She was interested in her career in diplomacy and in joining Pakistan's foreign office. So she wanted to go to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts, an institution near Cambridge. But her father was adamant. "Four years in one place is more than enough," he wrote to her. "If you stay longer in America, you will begin to put down roots there. It is time for you to move on, advised her father." When she was still reluctant to leave her accustomed place for an unknown one, her father told her very fondly: "I had been to Oxford and it is my desire to see you walking on the same stones on which I walked. I want to see my little daughter is grown up there. You will have the best years of your life there." This left her without any other choice, but to go along with the desire of her father.

Her mother flew from Pakistan to attend her graduation ceremony at Harvard. A recently declassified note in the US State Department's papers bears mention of Benazir Bhutto and her graduation



ceremony with reference to Begum Nusrat Bhutto's presence in the US. The note marked as an 'action memorandum' addressed to the Secretary of State advised him to contact Begum Bhutto on her arrival in US in connection with Benazir's graduation. It read: "Begum Bhutto, wife of Pakistan's President, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, will be in the U.S. June 11-20 on a private visit to attend the graduation of her daughter, Benazir Bhutto, from Radcliffe."<sup>25</sup>

After the ceremony was over, she flew back to Pakistan to spend her summer holidays with her parents before going to Oxford. At home, she found her father all set for his official visit to a number of European countries. Initially the itinerary also included a state visit to United States, but had been excluded on the eleventh hour due to 'indisposition' of President Nixon, which was nothing other than the Watergate. He invited his Harvard graduate daughter to accompany him to Europe. Being a student of politics and diplomacy, the offer was over tempting to refuse. She readily accepted the invitation and in July flew with her father to Rome, Geneva, Paris, and London.

When on 23<sup>rd</sup> July they arrived at London's Heathrow, it looked as if half the Pakistanis living in England had come to airport to greet her father, waving Pakistan's national banners and shouting, "Bhutto Zindabad" and "Jiye Bhutto." Next night, Prime Minister Edward Heath of United Kingdom hosted a dinner in her father's honour at the Savoy. It was in London that Benazir met with Nawab Muhammed Akbar Bugti, who was serving as her father's governor in Balochistan province. "I met Akbar Bugti in the hotel room, little knowing that there will be a time when I will be dealing with these people, because in those days they were my father's political associates," she recollected.<sup>26</sup> On the end of the trip, an enlightened Benazir returned back to Islamabad.

In Pakistan this was the time when her father was trying hard to give his country a democratic Constitution framed by genuinely elected representatives of the people. It was irony that the country that had been liberated from British colonial rule in 1947 was still without a Constitution. The country had briefly experimented with two Constitutions in 1956 and 1962; both authored and enforced by the dictatorial regimes. But, both of them had disappeared with the

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disappearance of their authors, as they lacked popular support.

Since coming into power in Pakistan her father had given his utmost attention to the task of framing a Constitution. On 17<sup>th</sup> April 1972, a parliamentary committee was appointed by the National Assembly to prepare a draft of the Constitution. But, the task of preparing an acceptable draft for all the divergent ethnic, cultural and ideological groups in the country was most difficult one. There was a chronic controversy, whether the form of the government should be Presidential or parliamentary democracy. Then, there was a conflict on the division of powers between the federation and the four provinces. All these issues had made the framing of the Constitution, agreeable to all the political parties in the National Assembly, a Herculean task. But, President Bhutto had decided to address this uphill task without any further wastage of time.

Finally, after long discussions amongst the parliamentary committees, public debates, spread over about a year, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1973, the National Assembly adopted the Constitution without dissent. Under the new Constitution, the country had to have a federal parliamentary system with a bicameral legislature and a Constitutional head. The executive power was to vest in the Prime Minister. The four provinces were to have statutory powers. It provided for adult franchise as the basis of election for the national and provincial assemblies.<sup>27</sup>

Benazir was in Pakistan, when the Constitution came into force formally on 14<sup>th</sup> August. "I was there in the Prime Minister's box, when my father took oath as the Prime Minister of Pakistan under the Constitution of 1973," recalled Benazir.<sup>27</sup> After a long wait spread over twenty six years, the people of Pakistan got their first democratic Constitution, which is still the basis of polity in Pakistan, a land of very frequent and violent changes.

Leaving her country rolling on the Constitutional track, Benazir flew back to London to begin her academic course at Oxford. The Oxford was a total disappointment for a Harvard educated person like her. She was allotted a tiny single room in the Lady Margaret Hall with communal bathroom down the passage, unlike Harvard where she and her roommate had the luxury of living in a suite of

rooms with a separate bathroom. Then, she found English people reserved compared to her Harvard companions, who were more open and friendly. For quite some time she had to seek the company of her American classmates who had come to Oxford.

But, that was not all. "At Harvard we used to have luxurious meals served with cottage cheese and honey, and in Oxford it was very simple," compared Benazir. "Secondly, at Harvard we all had our own separate telephone in each apartment and we always used to talk to each other. At Oxford you could not contact anybody because we did not have phones, so we had to write little notes and it will take twenty-four to thirty-six hours before it could reach anybody and to get a response. So I really thought that I have come to a backward place when I arrived at Oxford," she compared her experiences at the two places.<sup>28</sup>

However, there were certain plus points in Oxford as well. Firstly, she was happy for her father's happiness who wanted her to study in his most revered alma mater, to follow his footsteps. Then she had got a bright yellow MGB convertible as a graduation gift from her father. In Harvard she had no car, but now she could move around with her friends in her gift car. "And also I was known as 'Pinky' when I was studying at Harvard and by the time I came to Oxford, I was known as 'Benazir.' I had grown up," remarked Benazir smilingly.<sup>29</sup>

Soon, she received a letter from her father, expressing his joy over her joining his alma mater: "I feel a strange sensation in imagining you walking on the footprints I left behind at Oxford over twenty-two years ago. I was [made] happy by your presence at Radcliffe but, since I was not at Harvard, I could not picture you there through the same camera. Here I see your presence like mine in flesh and blood, over every cobble of the streets of Oxford, over every step you take on the frozen stone ladders, through every portal of learning you enter. Your being at Oxford is a dream come true. We pray and hope that this dream turned into reality will grow into a magnificent career in the service of your people."<sup>30</sup>

This letter removed every shred of discomfort or disappointment from her mind. Quickly, she adopted herself to the new realities of

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her life. Her father had told her that compared to Harvard where the studies are conducted in a much relaxed manner, at Oxford one has to work under a lot of pressure. "As I struggled to write the required two essays a week for my tutorials in politics, philosophy and economics, I had to admit he was right," she wrote in her autobiography. The circle of friends also increased with time and she was very well adjusted in the atmosphere of Oxford.

While studying there, in September 1973, she went with her father on a state visit to United States, where she met President Nixon and the Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger. She was seated next to Kissinger at a formal White House dinner. "To distract myself during the fish course I chatted to him about elitism at Harvard and other non-controversial subjects," she remembered. "I was quite bewildered therefore the next night when Kissinger collared my father at another dinner to announce: 'Mr Prime Minister, your daughter is even more intimidating than you are' My father had roared with laughter, taking the quip as a compliment. I'm still not sure..."<sup>31</sup>

In February 1974, her father hosted an Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore. Again, he wanted his daughter Benazir to be present on that historic occasion. She flew from London to Lahore to be with him. This was the most important assembly of the top leaders from all the thirty-eight Muslim nations, comprising one fifth of the humankind. They included King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, President Anwer Saddat of Egypt, Colonel Qaddafi of Libya, Shaikh Mujibur Rehman of Bangladesh, Chairman Yasar Arfat of Palestine Liberation Organization and almost every other monarch, President and Prime Minister of the Islamic World.

"In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful," she listened to her father addressing the gathering, while herself sitting in the Prime Minister's box. "Majesties, Royal Highnesses, Excellencies and dear brothers in Islam," her father continued. "Your host country...has been a victim of international conspiracies and is concerned with an intense question in which its stand is based on nothing but justice and concern for Muslim rights," he drew their attention to Kashmir. "Among the Arab territories occupied by Israel,

Al-Quds holds a special place in the Muslim hearts,” he went on to describe the issue of Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, one of the three holiest cities of Islam.<sup>32</sup>

This unprecedented large assembly that lasted for three days took stock of all the important issues relating to the Islamic nations spread all over the world. At the end of the Conference, her father was elected as chairperson of the Organization of Islamic Conference, the highest position in the highest body representing Muslim Ummah. During these three days, her father introduced her to all his dignified guests. “My father called me back for the Islamic Summit in Pakistan in February, 1974. I was there and I met all the leaders from President of U.A.E to Amir of Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain,” she remembered.<sup>33</sup> Her father was grooming her, intentionally or unintentionally, for her future role she was destined to play in Pakistan’s politics.

Back in Oxford, Benazir resumed back her studies. By this time, she had emerged as one of the most popular and active students. “She was often with people, going out for lunches, going out for dinners,” remembered her Oxford-days friend Victoria Schofield, who was one year junior to her in the same college.<sup>34</sup> She was elected on the Standing Committee of most prestigious Oxford Union Debating Society. These positions she was earning for herself through her own wit and talent, because in Oxford she was not the only one with a bright family background. “There were other people who also had influential fathers. There were lots of other influential British people also. So it was not that every body had to submit to Benazir Bhutto,” elaborated Victoria. “It was just quite normal to us.”<sup>35</sup>

She was very generous in extending help to her friends whenever they needed. “One time I was wanting to go to London,” Victoria narrated one such incident of her helpful attitude, “and she said you can take my car. She actually drove my bicycle and I borrowed her car to go up to London.” She was genuinely interested in people, their problems and shared her happiness with them. “She was always giving parties. She will always celebrate her birthdays, was generous in that respect.”<sup>36</sup>

Three years in Oxford just passed away. In 1976, she graduated

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in PPE (politics, philosophy and economics). She returned back to Pakistan with every intention to join diplomatic corps of the country. But, her father wanted her still to do a one-year postgraduate course before joining the service. "My father felt strongly that his children, by virtue of being the Prime Minister's children, had to be doubly qualified for any job so that no one could accuse him -- or us -- of favoritism." Accordingly, she again came back to Oxford in the autumn of 1976. This time, her brother Mir Murtaza was also with her. He had sought admission in first year at the same university after completing his Harvard education.<sup>37</sup>

Her returning back to Oxford proved to be a blessing in disguise.

There were a number of societies in Oxford for varied interest groups amongst students. The most prestigious of them being the Oxford Union debating society. It was established in 1823 and was modeled on the British House of Commons. It helped the students interested in politics to sharpen their communication skills. It was a male-dominated society, where only recently females were allowed to be the members. But still, ten years after its going co-ed, the ratio of the male and female members remained at seven to one. During her graduate studies, she had been on the standing committee of the society. But, now she wanted to contest for the top slot, the Presidency of the Union. For a female, that too of an Asian origin, it was definitely a tall order.

Nobody, including her father was much hopeful of her victory. Fearing her imminent defeat and to give her consolation, he wrote to her in context of American Presidential elections, where Gerald Ford was facing Jimmy Carter in November 1976: "In an election one side has to win and the other has to lose. You have to do your best the result must be accepted in good grace."<sup>38</sup> However, these apprehensions proved to be wrong and she was elected as the President of Oxford Union. Her father was very happy. "Overjoyed at your election as President of the Oxford Union. You have done splendidly. Our heartwarming congratulations on your great success. Papa," read the cable from her father.

Before assuming her elected office in January 1977, she and her brother Mir Murtaza flew back to Pakistan for a brief Michaelmas

break. On 5<sup>th</sup> January, on occasion of her father's birthday, she met for the first time her father's army chief, General Zia ul Huq, who would overthrow her father six months later and subsequently send him to gallows. "I remember being startled when I saw him. Unlike the childish image I carried of a soldier as tall and rugged with James Bond nerves of steel, the General standing in front of me was a short, nervous, ineffectual-looking man whose pomaded hair was parted in the middle and lacquered to his head. He looked more like an English cartoon villain than an inspiring military leader. And he seemed so obsequious, telling me over and over again how honored he was to meet the daughter of such a great man as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto," she gave her first impressions of the man. "Certainly my father could have found a more commanding Chief-of-Staff, I thought to myself. But I said nothing to my father."<sup>39</sup>

Her father, standing at the pinnacle of his popularity and power, decided in the beginning of 1977 to hold national elections in March that year. "I am going to call for additional land reforms," her father told her on the afternoon of his birthday. "And I am also going to call for elections in March. The Constitution doesn't require elections until August, but I see no need to wait. The democratic institutions we have installed under the Constitution are in place. The Parliament and provincial governments are functioning. With a mandate now from the people, we can move on more easily to the second phase of implementation, expanding the industrial base of the country, modernizing agriculture by sinking new tubewells, increasing seed distribution and fertilizer production,"<sup>40</sup> he shared his vision of a forward looking and prosperous Pakistan.

Leaving Pakistan in grip of electioneering she returned back to Oxford to take up her responsibilities at the Union. The first debate that she called was on the topic: 'capitalism will triumph.' She invited Tariq Ali, an ex-President of the Union and a highly respected and articulate Pakistani leftist, to oppose. The debate was a grand success with jam-packed hall. Next debate was on equally important subject: 'the West can no longer live at the expense of the Third World,' in the context of the North-South divide, being discussed in those days of bipolar world. "She opened it to everybody,

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so that everybody should have a chance to see what Oxford Union was like, and it was absolutely packed," observed Victoria.<sup>41</sup>

With Benazir Bhutto as President, her friend Victoria Schofield was also elected as librarian of the Union. The first assignment that her President gave to Victoria was to find out about all the periodicals that had been purchased, but had been never read. This was to save the money being spent on the purchase of unnecessary stuff and to utilize the same on more useful pursuits. She made Victoria organize a huge questionnaire, which was sent to all the members, asking for their preferences regarding various journals. This exercise proved very useful as it brought down the expenditure to considerably low level with inclusion of really useful periodicals on the buying list. "Perhaps, this was the beginning of the Organization mind."<sup>42</sup>

Back in Pakistan, the things were not as smooth as in the Oxford. On 7<sup>th</sup> January, her father announced in his address to the National Assembly that the general elections would be held in two months, for National Assembly on 7<sup>th</sup> March and provincial assemblies on 10<sup>th</sup> of March. All the independent observers agreed that Prime Minister Bhutto was riding on the crest of his popularity and there was not even a slightest chance of his losing the elections. Predictions were there that he may acquire two-third or may be three-fourth majority in the National Assembly.

The opposition was in complete disarray, not done well in the past. Suddenly, just a day after the dissolution of the assemblies, nine political parties and splinter groups, literally poles apart in ideological terms joined forces, formed an alliance namely Pakistan National Alliance or PNA and decided to field joint opposition candidates for all the seats they contested. The only thing in common amongst these divergent groups was their opposition towards Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Thus the battle lines were drawn on the basis of just one criterion: pro-Bhutto and anti-Bhutto.

This mass opposition alliance found many sympathizers from amongst the disgruntled vested interest elements like zamindars, jagirdars, pirs and other moneyed classes. Huge doses of money were pumped in the opposition campaign.



The worst of all, the chief of army staff General Zia ul Huq was nourishing secret ambitions to get the power in his hands, as two of his not very distant past predecessors, Ayub and Yahya, had done. Outwardly, "Zia of course, continued to behave as deferentially as ever toward the Prime Minister, smiling, bowing, quietly accepting whatever Bhutto told him with the seeming humility for which he was to become famous the world over," wrote Bhutto's biographer Stanley Wolpert.<sup>43</sup> Zia had leanings towards a very well organized and very well funded religious political party, which served as backbone of the opposition alliance erected against Bhutto. The opposition and army chief alliance was set for a big showdown with her father.

To gain the public support, the PNA decided to run their election campaign on the slogan of Islam, promising that they would return back the system of governance and the society as a whole to that as prevailed in the days of the beginning of Islam, fourteen centuries earlier. The PNA issued its manifesto in February, affirming that the Almighty is Supreme and Powerful and all things belong to Him. They promised to fully enforce the Holy Quran in the country as the law of the land and to enable very Muslim to lead life in accordance with the tenets of Islam. The sacred name of the religion was made a political weapon to dislodge an elected leader.

But, still with all these tactics, the Opposition was not able to win popular support except for some urban centers. Her father was able to maintain his popularity amongst the masses, who loved, adored and cherished him. "No more popular leader has yet emerged from the soil of Sindh or Punjab or the harsh and rugged Frontier, none more admired, even 'worshipped,' by the impoverished peasants and simple laborers than Quaid-e-Awam Bhutto," wrote his biographer.

From the very start, the PNA launched its campaign with two basic ingredients: Islam and hatred for Bhutto. During all these days of electioneering, the PNA was again and again saying that they would accept the results of election only if they declared them the winners. If PPP won the elections, they held openly, they would never accept the results. The language became harsher and harsher with open death threats to Bhutto in the oppositions public meetings. Retired

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Air Marshal Asghar Khan, head of a constituent political party of the alliance, was miles ahead in hurling abuses and death threats to the PPP chairman.

On the appointed day, some seventeen million out of thirty million eligible voters cast their votes for their representatives in the National Assembly. The PPP received a little less than sixty percent of the popular vote, while the PNA secured more than thirty-five percent of the votes. The elections gave birth to complaints about stuffing the ballot boxes and rigging in certain constituencies. However, there was a system to get the grievances redressed. But, instead the PNA decided to go ahead with a course of agitation.

Thousand miles away, Benazir was celebrating her 24<sup>th</sup> birthday in the gardens of Queen Elizabeth House in Oxford. "I must have invited the entire contents of Oxford address book, and judging from the crowd of people, everybody came. Over bowls of strawberries and cream, we reminisced and exchanged home addresses," remembered Benazir. She was sad at leaving Oxford, where she had spent four years of her carefree life. But, now she had completed her education and was to start her practical life. She had great plans regarding her career in diplomacy. But, the Fate only smiled over her plans, while she flew back to Pakistan.

## Chapter 5

# Dark Days

(1977-1984)

When she returned back to Pakistan in June 1977, her father wanted her to contest the assembly elections. Her mother had been elected that March on a National Assembly seat, but she wanted her daughter to replace her as a MNA, as she thought her profile as the First Lady of Pakistan consumed most of her time and energies. But, the minimum age for contesting assembly election was twenty-five years. She had yet one year to go to attain that age. Her mother told her that as soon as she would become eligible for the elections, she herself would resign to pave way for her daughter's entry in the political life.

Benazir had a different plan for herself. She wanted to join the Foreign Service. She had not that much interest in politics. Witness to her father and mother's extremely busy lives, filled with ongoing stresses and strains, she abhorred the idea of adopting politics as her career. But, even regarding joining the Foreign Service, the problem was that the examination for an entry in the coveted service was due in December. And there was still about six months time available to her. Her father offered a compromise formula. "Get the first-hand knowledge of the politics of Pakistan. Assist me in my office for the

next six months. If it is of some interest, you may continue. Otherwise you may go to seek the Foreign Service qualification," was his advice. She agreed.<sup>1</sup>

She was seated in a spacious office, next to her father, as an Advisor to the Prime Minister, with the task of dealing with the inter-provincial coordination committee. The function of the committee was basically aimed at sorting out differences between the provinces and the federation of Pakistan. The significance of the assignment was such that the relations between the provinces and the federation had been the core issue in Pakistani politics since the very inception of Pakistan.

In addition to the provincial coordination responsibilities, her father also assigned her to prepare summaries for the Prime Minister, so that he could see 'how good' was her comprehension. "After I did my first day summary, my father was furious," she recalled. "He said, 'This is rubbish. This is like a high school graduate. It is not like a college student who had graduated from Harvard or Oxford.'" In fact, what she had done was that she had just summarized the summaries. She was new to the job and thought that her job was to further summarize the summaries for him. Next day she changed her course of action and gave a critical review of the proposals, highlighting their pros and cons. "So the next day he was very happy with me. He said this is what I wanted you to do."<sup>2</sup>

But, this happy interlude was not going to last for very long. It was a prelude to a worst kind of nightmare that was going to put everything in her life upside down. Neither her nor her parents' future plans for her life were to prevail. It was only the plans of the Nature to succeed. The things started unfolding just a few weeks of her arrival in Pakistan. It seemed as if the events were waiting for her final return, to begin an agonizing phase that was destined to lead her to an altogether new role in her life. A role of the Daughter of the East.

In those days, her father's political rivals were agitating against his government on the results of the March elections. The agitation gave birth to negotiations and finally the government and the opposition reached to an agreement on July 4. A compromise had been evolved

and signing of the accord was to be performed the day after. But, the ambitious chief of the army staff had a different idea. "One day, when he returned from the office, on the dinner, he looked agitated," recalled Benazir. "He said that General Sharif [Chairman of JCSC] had just come to meet him and had alerted him that General Zia ul Huq was up to no good, and might be planning some kind of coup."<sup>3</sup> After getting this information, her father called the chief of ISI, General Jilani, to inquire about the truthfulness of the news. The intelligence agency chief showed his total ignorance of any such move or plan, and attributed General Sharif's warning to his alleged ill will towards General Zia; because General Sharif was not made the army chief.<sup>4</sup>

But, the ISI chief was wrong. General Zia had fully prepared his plan for removal of the elected government of her father. The General had already sent her family out of the country. Lieutenant General Faiz Ali Chishti, the Corp Commander of the area covering the territory of federal capital, and considered a key player in any coup in Pakistan, later wrote: "When Gen. Zia ordered me to take over and execute the 'Operation Fairplay,' he may well have feared for the security of his family in the event of an abortive coup. In any event, Gen. Zia's family was not in Pakistan on July 4 / 5. He had shifted his family to UK during negotiations, under the plea of his daughter's operation. Two sons and three daughters along with his wife were all abroad."<sup>5</sup>

Not only this, the General had also prepared very well for himself too to flee from the country, in case of any such eventuality. General Chishti narrates an interesting tale: "On the night of the coup my Corps Intelligence Chief told me that there was one 'Puma' helicopter ready to take off at short notice from Dhamial. It could have been for the PM or for Gen. Zia. But it was unlikely to have been for the PM because he did not know what was happening, and secondly he would not leave his family behind. In any case he had nothing at stake. It could have been for Gen. Zia, because he had everything at stake. What would happen to him if Operation Fairplay had failed? I recollected his last sentence to me after giving orders. 'Murshid, do not get me killed.' So I ordered my Intelligence Chief to keep an

eye on the helicopter and not let it take off. It did not matter who the passenger was going to be.”<sup>6</sup>

The ambitious army chief had not taken into confidence most of his senior colleagues. The senior army officers, unaware of such development, were called at an odd hour, 11.00 O’ clock in the night, on 4<sup>th</sup> July for a meeting with the army chief at the General Headquarters. “When the invitees inquired about agenda for discussion, Brigadier Khalid Latif Butt, Personal Secretary to General Zia, had a stock reply: “No preparatory work is needed for the meeting.”<sup>7</sup> To bring coup was, and has been, that easy!

While on one side all these preparations were going on, on the other side was the Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, unaware of the eventuality that was set to be fall up on him and his family. He was feeling relaxed, as only that day he and his political rivals had reached to an agreement following a long span of negotiations. Both the parties had agreed to sign the accord next morning. This was announced in a press conference on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

Benazir was sleeping in one of the rooms of her father’s official residence with her younger sister Sanam. A little after midnight there was a loud knock on their door. “My mother banged on our door and woke all of us,” she remembered of that fateful night. “Get dressed! Hurry! The army has taken over. The army has taken over.” Whole of the family gathered in her father’s bedroom. Her father’s valet come running to tell that a policeman had informed him that the troops might kill the Prime Minister and his family. Two years earlier, in similar circumstances in breakaway Bangladesh, the army had killed country’s father of the nation, Shaikh Mujibur Rehman along with his family in similar circumstances. Her father was calm and quit. He told his family not to resist the coup.<sup>8</sup>

Years later, the executioner of the coup, Corps Commander General Chishti wrote: “Just one recoilless rifle or tank could instantly kill the PM and his entire family... I have been blamed by some for not killing Mr Bhutto the night the army took over. I have also been blamed by some for installing Gen. Zia as CMLA after the successful execution of the coup. I have no regrets on both counts.”<sup>9</sup> The prudent advice of her father not to resist the coup probably saved

him and his family from the instant death.

That night, her father was taken into custody and shifted to the nearby Murree town. The General promised her father and the nation that the army was there just for ninety days, to hold impartial and fair elections. When her father called the army chief, while the process was progressing, the General said, "Sir, in three months time I will be saluting you again as the Prime Minister. This is my promise." Next day the General told the nation on radio and television "My sole aim is to organize free and fair elections which would be held in October this year. Soon after polls, the power will be transferred to the elected representatives of people. I give a solemn assurance that I will not deviate from this schedule."<sup>10</sup> Eventually he would hold his first elections, that too on non-party basis, in February 1985, after ninety months!

She along with rest of her family members returned back to Karachi. Throngs of people surrounded their house throughout the day and night to inquire about the wellbeing of her father and the future party programme. While common people were above their personal considerations, the important party leaders, mostly the former ministers, governors, and other office-holders had made themselves quite inaccessible to people following the imposition of martial law. Many stories were in circulation; the gist of them being that the new authorities had told them to remain quiet otherwise their 'accountability' would start.

After some time, the government released her father from the 'protective custody', believing that his charisma was over. But, this was a grave miscalculation. As soon as he came out, hundreds of thousand people came out to greet him, listen to him, and to pledge their unflinching support for him. The General considered it a direct threat to his own life. There were no two opinions that in case of holding elections her father was to return back to power, with more votes than he ever had got in the past. And in that case General Zia was to face the sedition charges, as was provided under Article 6 of the Constitution, the offence that carried death penalty. To save himself from that eventuality, Zia charted a new course of action: to end the very life of Benazir's father.

Less than two months of the imposition of martial law, her father was re-arrested on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1977, this time charged with conspiracy to murder Nawab Muhammad Ahmed Khan, the father of a former PPP politician, Ahmed Raza Kasuri. The murder had taken place in 1974 and Kasuri, who had estranged relations with his party leader Prime Minister Bhutto, had named him as one of the suspects. Afterwards, a high court inquiry headed by a Justice had found no substance in the allegation and had exonerated her father. Kasuri, himself had come back to the party folds and had applied for a party ticket in 1977 elections. But, he was declined the nomination. When, four months later, General Zia took over, the government searched for the old cases against her father. No other offence could be found, except for an old FIR, and a closed case, which came handy and provided the basis for arrest of her father on the criminal charges.

Within no time an upright high court judge granted him bail and he was set free. The intentions of the regime, however, looked extremely caliginous. The interior secretary Roedad Khan sent a message through a Bhutto family member saying that the regime was bent upon killing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and it would be better for him to leave the country. "He sent a message that there are meetings going on here that you must be murdered," Benazir remembered the message. "Please leave the country because even though you have got bail, they are going to arrest you again."<sup>11</sup> Her father was determined not to leave the country at any cost. "No, I won't leave the country," she remembered him saying.

He was arrested again.

The nation limped towards the promised date for the polls in October that year. In absence of her father, the responsibilities to run the campaign for restoration of democracy came on the shoulders of her mother and herself. The party leadership was divided into a number of smaller groups, each one aspiring to be the acting chairperson. However, there was no consensus candidate even amongst them. Finally, the central executive council of the party decided to request her mother Begum Nusrat Bhutto to take up responsibilities as Acting Chairperson of the party, till her husband was released. Benazir was designated as the political secretary to the acting chair-



person. Her formal role in politics had started.

“My role was very junior one. Bhutto sahib alongwith the leadership of the party was arrested. We had to manage the election campaign and to contact the people. I went to the Nasirbagh public meeting in Lahore where my mother and Moulana Kausar Niazi spoke. I remember being highly impressed by the manner Moulana spoke.” “I remember being quite apprehensive of the crowds. Apprehensive not in the sense that there was so much pushing or so. It was not like that. There was lot of love and affection, a lot of support,” she reminisced the low profile beginning of her stormy political career in the autumn of 1977.<sup>12</sup>

An Oxford and Harvard University graduate Benazir was exploring the real Pakistan in the hour of extreme adversity. She went to Faisalabad, to Kasur, to Sahiwal and to many other cities and towns all over the country. Large crowds greeted her everywhere. The regime could not cope with such political scenes. She was arrested in Sahiwal.

The huge crowds, which the PPP was getting all over the country, were phenomenal. Zia countered it by launching an ‘accountability process,’ a whipping horse every Pakistani establishment has flogged. The government released a number of ‘white papers’ telling the people how ‘bad and unworthy of their love’ Bhutto was. But, all this propaganda could not bring the desired results. Instead of decreasing, the size of the crowds increased with every passing day. The military dictator could not stomach it anymore and cancelled the elections that he had promised to hold in October. The country had entered into a dark tunnel with dead end for the next eleven years.

In meantime both her brothers, Murtaza and Shahnawaz had left the country to run an international campaign aimed at release of their father. She and her mother were left alone in the country to face the vendetta of the General’s vindictive government. During these turbulent times of Pakistan’s history, she and her mother, besides countless other political workers, remained in various jails in the most agonizing and inhuman conditions. Flogging was the most favorite punishment of the sadistic ruler, who liked listening to the

She and her mother were arrested and re-arrested time and again. Sometimes she was detained in Karachi and sometime in the Sihala Police Camp (in Punjab), sometime in the sizzling Sukkur jail, and sometime somewhere else. In between these spells of arrests and detentions, she had to cover up the time lost in the confinement. It was a race against time, and destiny. She decided to request her friend of the university days, Victoria Schofield, to come to Pakistan to help her. "I got a letter from Benazir which was something like that 'I don't know what your parents will think of a country which is ruled by men with bayonets, but if you could come and want to do some writing, please do come.'"<sup>15</sup>

She obliged and came to Pakistan to help her friend in her time of distress. "Benazir was under house-arrest at Karachi, and I went to Islamabad to be actually witness to what was going on," recalled Victoria, a future author of a number of books, one of them being on the trial of Benazir's father. "Soon after coming to Pakistan, Benazir sent message that her appeal of Habeas Corpus was being heard at Sindh High Court. So, I went to see her. Last time I had seen her in June 1977 at Oxford. At that time she had short hair and now when I saw her, she was having long hair. A totally different look! A dramatic contrast! And she was there with Habeas Corpus appeal!"<sup>16</sup>

"I remember one time when she was house arrest and they had let me to stay with her. We sat on floor and went through all the Bhutto's albums and she showed me all the photographs of her father's official visits. She said, 'look there is Papa with Chinese Chairman Chou-En-Lai, and so on. It was one of few most precious moment of life spent with her. And then she was released from house arrest and we both went up to Rawalpindi to meet the lawyers. We stayed at Flashman Hotel. To economize, we shared one room. We were there to help the lawyers. Benazir went to visit her father whenever she was allowed," narrated Victoria in her beautiful London apartment, two decades after the event took place.

Following decision of the Lahore High Court, an appeal was filed in the Supreme Court. A nine-member bench was constituted to be presided over by Chief Justice Anwarul Haq, and included Justices Qaiser Khan, Waheeduddin Ahmed, Muhammad Akram,

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Dorab Patel, Muhammad Haleem, Ghulam Safdar Shah, Karam Ellahi Chauhan and Nasim Hassan Shah. Though some of the judges on the bench had leanings towards the General, still the old guards over-weighted their more 'realistic' colleagues. The proceedings prolonged and one of the senior judge retired, while the other was declared 'incapacitated' following his illness. The majority was reduced to minority.

Out of the remaining seven, three senior judges, Justices Muhammad Halim, G. Safdar Shah and Dorab Patel, acquitted her father honorably. While the Chief Justice along with three of his other brother judges, two of whom were the latest entrants, found the appeal not maintainable and upheld the death sentence of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The ratio that might have been 5 to 4 had become 3 to 4. Zia's CGS, General K.M. Arif later wrote, "The judgement might have been different if those two judges had still been on the bench at the time of decision."<sup>17</sup>

The narrow majority decision was delivered despite the fact that the death sentence was unprecedented in cases of abatement to murder. It is perhaps because of the dubious nature of the verdict that it has never been reported as a judicial precedent anywhere in the world during last twenty years!

Following the death sentence, whole of the world's political leadership arose in unison to appeal the military dictator not to carry out the punishment. But Zia's role was dubious. He was not saying no to any of the foreign government, but had decided to execute the elected leader of the country. Benazir and her mother were detained at Sihala at that time. It was a solitary confinement during which they were effectively cut off from the rest of the world. Suspended in a balance of hope and horror, both she and her mother prayed for a miracle to happen.

But, it was destined to be otherwise. In most unprecedented haste, Zia rejected all the mercy petitions received from all over the world to save her father's life. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1979, she and her mother were informed that they were to be taken for the last meeting with her father in Rawalpindi Jail.

The news was like a bombshell for them. Her father, who had

seen so loving, so caring, so charming, was to die. A leader of the millions of the people of Pakistan, of the Islamic World, the Third World, a celebrated statesman of global stature, a man who had done so much for his country and its armed forces, was to be put to death because of the sense of insecurity of an usurper. She could not believe it. But, the realities were such.

Both the daughter and the mother, ash-faced, were taken into a speeding jeep from Sihala police camp to Rawalpindi prison. They were taken to the cell, where her father, unaware of this new development, was sitting on a mattress on the floor. The authorities had taken away even the chair, table and the bed from his cell, a dingy and drab place, hot like an oven. He was surprised to see them both at same time, because his captors had never allowed both of them to see him together.

The pain, agony and the anguish a daughter could feel, while watching helplessly her innocent father going to the gallows at the hands of an illegitimate usurper and a tyrant, was the pain she felt. But, her father was calm. He was a student of history. He knew he was going to be a part of history, as a martyr, an upright man, and a man who had a romance with the masses. It was not a losing deal for him.

Just half an hour was available to them to meet for the very last time. "Half an hour. Half an hour to say good-bye to the person I love more than any other one in my life. The pain in my chest tightens into a vice. I must not cry. I must not break down and make my father's ordeal any more difficult."<sup>18</sup>

Murtaza, Shahnawaz and Sanam were out of the country. "Give my love to the other children. Tell Mir and Sunny and Shah that I have tried to be a good father and wish I could have said good-bye to them," her father conveyed his last regards. None of the two of his listeners could reply. "You have both suffered a lot," he addressed them. "Now that they are going to kill me tonight, I want to free you as well. If you want to, you can leave Pakistan while the Constitution is suspended and martial law imposed. If you want peace of mind and to pick up your lives again, then you might want to go to Europe. I give you my permission. You can go."

Benazir is unable to reply. Her mother could hardly speak. “No. No. We can’t go. We’ll never go. The General must not think they have won. Zia has scheduled elections again, though who knows if he will dare to hold them? If we leave, there will be no one to lead the party, the party you built.”

“And you, Pinkie” Her father asked her.

“I could never go,” came a firm reply.

“I am so glad. You don’t know how much I love you. You are my jewel. You always have been.”<sup>19</sup>

Time was up by then. The last meeting had ended. It was time to say goodbye to each other, for the last time in the living life. The time to depart. How much she wanted to hug her most loved-one. But, the iron bars stood in between them. She asked the jail superintendent, standing close by, to open the door just for a moment so that she could embrace her father for the last time! The request was refused. Her father brings his hand out of the space within the bars and kept it on his daughter’s head. He gave her his prayers for the last time! The meeting was over.

Hours later, by middle of the night, he was martyred.

With him died that night a part of his sobbing daughter, Benazir, miles away from him, in the solitary confinement at Sihala.

And with this was born, a determined, courageous, confident, fearless, and dauntless Benazir, the Daughter of the East. The Benazir, who would confront the all-powerful tyrant with the power of her will and would defeat him. A Benazir, who would be acclaimed as a great leader of the world, the one who makes history, and sets records. That is why it is said ‘Sweet are the fruits of adversity.’ The night between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April saw an end to, and a beginning of, an era. The past had given birth to the future.

Following the ‘judicial murder’ of her father, as it was later termed by the world press; her mother was elected as the chairperson of the party. She continued as political secretary to the chairperson. “I had to write letters, do the schedules, do the meetings, write the statements to be released on her behalf, and to assist her in her interviews,” recalled Benazir of her initial duties as a political worker. “When Begum Sahiba became ill and she had to go abroad for the

treatment, a steering committee was formed and I was designated as the acting chairperson.”<sup>20</sup> Afterwards, she would be elected as the Co-Chairperson, then Chairperson and finally the life-Chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party during next twenty years.

The following years witnessed Pakistan’s unabated march towards the darker valleys of death, distress and drugs. These years marked the emergence of Pakistan as one of the biggest bastion of drugs, comparable only to the ‘golden triangle’ on the borders of Burma. A study disclosed that “one in every sixteen Pakistani males was an addict. While, in some jails the figure rose to one in every five inmates.” The menace of drugs, in Zia’s Pakistan, was superceded only by ethnic and sectarian frenzy. “His repressive rule opened the floodgates to drug-trafficking and the widespread ethnic and sectarian violence, which are the hallmarks of the so-called ‘Kalashnikov Culture,’” noted Ian Talbot.<sup>21</sup>

Most unfortunately, all this was being done in the name of religion, the Islam, which Zia manipulated flagrantly to prolong his rule. All the torture, from lashes to amputation of human limbs, and dirty tricks from postponement of elections to the silencing of the press, were perpetuated using the sacred name of Islam. In this, he had support of few self-proclaimed religious leaders and sycophants. The Amnesty International’s protests regarding the torture, imprisonment and other human rights abuses, including the public flogging of political prisoners, were lightly dismissed as an effort on part of the Jewish and Christian lobbies to discredit an Islamic government.

The human rights abuse attracted attention of the world by 1979. The United States, under the provisions of Symington Amendment, suspended the country’s economic and military aid in April 1979. Next year under Zia’s encouragement the US embassy in Islamabad was attacked. But, the subsequent geopolitical developments transformed this international pariah to the free world’s front-line ally against Soviet-sponsored communism. Soviet occupation of Afghanistan forced US to look for an ally in the region to contain the Cold War adversary, following the fall of the Shah of Iran. The choice fell on Zia who fully exploited the new situation to his advan-

tage.

In February 1981, a political alliance known as Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was formed, with PPP as one of the leading components. A month later in March, a PIA plane was hijacked under mysterious circumstances. Taking it as a pretext, Benazir and her mother were once again arrested. And then it was not till January 1984 that Benazir was released. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the free world had closed down their eyes towards human rights abuses in Pakistan, the ugly part of the dictatorial rules anywhere in the world. She had to suffer, along with other political workers, in desolation till the world could return from the honeymoon with Zia, bound in a marriage of convenience.

Same year, in 1981, General Zia's government brought Nawaz Sharif to help them crush the movement for democracy. The regime had realized, in wake of formation of MRD, that it would not be able to hold the people back from civilian rule with the help of the lash and bullet. It was felt that a 'civilian' set up had to be brought in, which should provide a decent face to the ugly monster of dictatorship. The military governor of the Punjab recommended Nawaz Sharif to be made provincial finance minister in his cabinet. This way Nawaz Sharif started his career as a military government's minister, with objective to silence the voices for the restoration of democracy.

Two years later, on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1983, the MRD launched its movement. Benazir was under arrest at that time. But, she contributed her part even during the confinement. She drafted an appeal in the name of her mother, the Chairperson of PPP, addressed to the people of Pakistan to rise against the dictatorship. And the people of Pakistan did rise. Whole of the country came to a standstill in the wake of the movement. For the first time in the history of the country, the rural areas came out with agitation. Amongst all the provinces, the people of Sindh were in the lead. As a matter of fact, they were taking revenge of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's assassination from the regime, though four years later.

The province had become a battlefield and there were casualties on both the sides. The regime resorted to massive repression to crush



the movement. The Sindh governor admitted that in the opening three weeks of the struggle, about two thousand people had been arrested, 189 killed and 126 injured.<sup>22</sup> The political impact of the MRD movement was tremendous. It had snatched all cards of the game from the general who was compelled to retreat and hold elections, though on non-party basis with in the next two years.

In the meantime, her ailing mother who had not as yet come out of the shock of her husband's assassination was kept in confinement. She coughed blood in the jail first time in July 1981. Next year, she was declared as a patient of lung-cancer. It was only then that she was allowed to proceed abroad for her medical treatment in November 1982. But, Benazir was made to suffer yet another year in detention at 70 Clifton, Karachi.

“Even in jail”, describing her solitary confinement, she told Victoria Schofield, the prisoners see each other and they can interact. But when I was under detention, there was simply no interaction. It was a situation where one was living and yet one was not living. It was as if I did not exist, I did not have a voice. I could not communicate: I could not interrelate. It was like being paralyzed.”

By then, she had developed a very serious infection in her ear. It had started way back in 1978, and had become acute by now due to lack of proper medical treatment. And by now, the international community had also started developing concern over the continued detention of Bhutto ladies in Pakistan. In this backdrop Benazir was at last allowed to proceed abroad on medical grounds in January 1984. After six and a half years, the prolonged dark night gave way to a ray of hope.

## Chapter 6

# Facing the Fascist

(1984-1988)

A cool breeze welcomed her at London's Heathrow Airport that January. A familiar air contained a feeling of freedom. A freedom that she had not felt for the last six and a half-year. And which was denied to her countless comrades-in-cause who were still languishing in various prisons all over the length and breadth of Pakistan. But, for most of the Pakistanis it was indifferent whether one was out of the jail or inside it. Those released from prisons usually felt that they had come out from a smaller prison to a larger one. Zia's Pakistan, as a matter of fact, had been another name of 'Zia's Prison,' especially for the opposition political workers. She had to struggle to get them all released from prisons whom the free world had forgotten under an over-enthusiasm to contain communist onslaught in Afghanistan.

She underwent an operation of her ear at London. The doctors had told her to remain in Europe for at least a year or two for the post-operative care. Her mother was in Geneva. She wanted Benazir to come and live with her in Switzerland. But, she wanted to make London the headquarter of her struggle against Zia. To her London seemed ideally suited for the purpose. Going along and living any-

where else meant that the fight was over. The world public opinion could be mobilized from London more easily than from anywhere else. "There were many Pakistanis living there . . . London is a central place, so I decided to stay there,"<sup>1</sup> confided Benazir.

Her mother again insisted her to come and live with her, if not in Switzerland, then may be in France. Her mother confided to her that she wanted to see her daughter happy. She did not find politics giving her happiness any more. "So why not to have a normal life?" the mother asked her daughter. "I think you have already spent so many years of your youth in the prison, earning only sufferings and worries. Now, you should enjoy your life like other normal human beings." But, Benazir was thinking of the millions of others, living in Pakistan who looked towards her with a hope. It was a very difficult decision to annoy her mother, but there was no other way out. She chose London: and politics.<sup>2</sup>

Her mother was very upset over Benazir's decision. She even stopped her monthly allowance in order to bring her under pressure. But, her daughter proved to be more determined than she had thought of. Benazir remained adamant on her decision. In those days, her friend Yasmeen's family, which was living in London, came to her rescue and offered her to live with them. Three months later her mother softened and restored back her monthly stipend.<sup>3</sup>

With this started yet another crucial phase of her political life: a life in exile. Her apartment in Barbican, a fortress like building, close to St. Paul's Cathedral was converted into the launching ground of her movement. A group of PPP sympathizers came forward with whatsoever was available with them, in materials as well as in skills and services. Bashir Riaz, an UK-based journalist joined as her press spokesman. Her friend Yasmeen provided secretarial services. Naheed Khan, a young woman from Pakistan came forward and joined her team. So came Sablima, another Pakistan origin girl. A number of Pakistani students studying in London also approached to assist her. A dedicated and high-spirited team was formed. She provided a nucleus. This small band of the dedicated workers, though poor in resources, challenged the might of a dictator whose just one High Commission in London was many a times

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more resourceful. They were richer in only one aspect and that was their objective, their cause. And a fierce battle ensued.<sup>4</sup>

The group under her worked eighteen hours a day, writing articles, posting letters, meeting important people, dispatching human rights reports and other democracy-related material about Pakistan. She lost herself in her task. So did the members of her team. A secret network of supporters and political workers was also formed in Pakistan to provide vital information regarding atrocities of the regime. Slowly and gradually, the world started realizing the gravity of the human right abuses in Pakistan. The influential political circles of the world powers were approached. US Senator Ted Kennedy helped. So did others who were committed with the cause of democracy. The effort was drawing the desired results. The world on a whole was awakening to the ugly realities of dictatorial rule in a South Asian country. The heat started biting the feet of the General. The demand for democracy was gaining momentum. His legitimacy was under a challenge. The beast was in heat.

When the pressure became unbearable, the General announced, by the fall of 1984 to hold elections for the national and provincial assemblies in the February next year. But, he could not afford to hold it on the party basis, because it was a fore-concluded fact that PPP was to sweep the elections. The General came with a far-fetched idea stating that the party-based elections were un-Islamic, because during the Prophet's times, about fifteen centuries ago, there used to be no political parties! A Commission appointed by him under an obliging Moulana declared that the political parties were repugnant to Islam.<sup>5</sup> And the Government accepted the findings putting a ban on the political parties, specially her PPP, to contest the elections.

The General was sure that the 'crowd' of more than two hundred representatives from various parts of the country, elected on their own, in absence of any party affiliation, would take years to evolve as a collective force. He thought that till that time, he would become an unquestionable master of the land. And no one would call him a dictator, because he would have an 'elected assembly' to show to the world his democratic credentials. How innocent the General was!

But, then one more thought crossed his mind; okay, this would provide legitimacy to his self-created 'democratic' system, but what about his own legitimacy? In an undue haste, by December, most unexpectedly, he announced for holding of a referendum that was to get a 'popular mandate' to him before the general elections were held. The wording of the referendum proposition was drafted in such a way that General Zia and Islam were made synonyms. It was made difficult for the voters to oppose the General without appearing to vote against Islam.<sup>6</sup>

The PPP and other political parties decided to boycott this farce. The General issued proclamation declaring any opposition to referendum a criminal offence. The people recorded their disapproval by not turning to the polling stations on 19<sup>th</sup> December, the referendum day. The world media reported and showed deserted streets all over the country on the day. However, the obliging Election Commission declared that the proposition had secured 97.71 per cent affirmative votes.<sup>7</sup> The General said, since the people had okayed his plans of Islamization in Pakistan, it was as if they had elected him for the next five years. He declared himself an 'elected and legitimate' President of Pakistan.

After such a 'successful' exercise, now the government moved towards another step: the election for the assemblies. In addition to being on the non-party basis, the candidates were denied the right to hold public meetings, take out processions, and even the use of loudspeakers. Because of this, the elections were dubbed as 'deaf and dumb.'<sup>8</sup> Benazir herself was interested in taking part in the elections through independent looking proxies. She was of the view that no field should be left open for the dictator to manipulate. But, she was out of country, and had to depend much on the party leadership handling the matters inside Pakistan. And they decided to boycott the polls because of their being conducted on the non-party basis. She had to agree to the unanimous decision of her colleagues.<sup>9</sup>

Seeing an open field in absence of all the prominent political parties, the religious parties tried to jump to the God-sent opportunity. Accordingly, Jamiat-e-Islami and the Samiul Haq group of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) contested through their surrogates. Despite an

open field, however, they could not send more than a score to the National Assembly. Most of the winners of the elections were from those whom the General's administration had groomed through local bodies with an objective of generating 'good governance' as against the 'sham democracy.'

The major concern of the voters while casting the vote had not been any national programme, but the tribal and family considerations about the candidates. The neo-rich industrial and commercial elite also found their way to the elected forums through an effective use of their money. Feudal lords came as usual.<sup>10</sup> One of the contestants, elected to the Punjab's provincial assembly was Nawaz Sharif, who had found his way in this herd of the party-less people. The General's assemblies were complete.

In absence of the political parties, the poor General had to do an extra work: to select and nominate the 'appropriate' persons for the position of Prime Minister and four chief ministers. He interviewed different candidates and selected Muhammed Khan Junijo, a soft-spoken Sindhi, for the job, who had worked under him as Railway Minister after the coup. The General was extra-helpful in selecting the team of the civilian ministers for his new Prime Minister, as well.

In the Punjab, the young finance minister, Nawaz Sharif, was viewed as a deserving candidate for promotion as the chief minister, in view of his 'outstanding' services towards curbing the movement for restoration of democracy. In Sindh, nobody otherwise elected in the assembly was found worth the post of chief minister. Hence, Syed Ghous Ali Shah, a former provincial minister under martial law government, was approached to become the chief minister. The NWFP slot went to General's colleague and close relative, General Fazal-e-Haque. Similar arrangement was effected in Balochistan. Above them all, the military governors continued to hold the office. Rest of the public offices of the General's 'democratic' Pakistan went to the carefully picked up persons.

The General should have felt secured now in view of the successful completion of his scheme of things. But, it was not so. Though the new set up came into force by March 1985, the martial law was

not lifted from the country till 30<sup>th</sup> of December that year.<sup>11</sup> That also on the fulfillment of the General's condition that all his act done as CMLA should be endorsed as Constitutional ex-post-facto, and also give him extra powers to dissolve the assemblies, dismiss the governments, appoint the governors and armed forces chiefs, besides all other important office-holders of the state. The new assembly, finding it as a price for the lifting of martial law, gave all such powers to him through the passage of 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Constitution: the Amendment that he himself and two of his successors would use to dissolve four elected assemblies in just eight years.

But, the General was still feeling insecure. As an extra assurance, he kept the coveted post of the army chief with himself, denying the right of elevation to a large number of senior army officers for twelve long years, till his death in 1988.

In the meantime, Benazir went through yet another tragedy. In July, her youngest brother Shahnawaz was poisoned to death in France. She accompanied the dead body of her brother to Pakistan to bury him, by the side of her father, in her family's ancestral graveyard at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh. Once again, the Government detained her, only to be released in November 1985, because she had to testify in a French court in connection with her brother's demise: once again on international pressure.

By then, the time was going against dictators everywhere in the world. The despots like Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and Duvalier in Haiti had been removed from power most unceremoniously. A wave of democratization had engulfed the globe. When two could go, why not the third one in Pakistan. She decided to launch her final assault against the General, irrespective of the consequences. In this backdrop she decided to return to Pakistan on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1986. Lahore, the heart of Pakistan's politics and power, was selected as her landing ground.<sup>12</sup>

In London, Bashir Riaz and other volunteers of her team did a fine homework to arouse the interest of the international media in her returning back to the 'neo-democratic' Pakistan. About 150 foreign journalists and media men booked their seats for Pakistan to record

the historic return of an exile. Before her departure, a large number of international radio and television channels, including the famous Channel 4, relied her interviews and statements highlighting her past life and struggle against dictatorship. A couple of international television networks had arranged for live telecast of the day's proceeding via satellite.<sup>13</sup> The world was ready to witness a breakthrough.

At the home front, the provincial administration of the Punjab, under 'ever efficient' Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif had also taken all possible efforts to obstruct or minimize the show as much as possible. The Dawn reported from Lahore: "Many PPP workers from all over the country have already reached here, while others are still arriving. However, cases have been reported of PPP workers being checked on their way to Lahore. PPP workers arriving from the NWFP and Sindh told Dawn that a large number of their colleagues had been stopped from entering the Punjab. Buses were also stopped at Sadiqabad where route permits of four buses, carrying about 250 PPP workers, were withheld. Similar incidents have been reported from Sialkot, Rawalpindi and Multan. At Shakkargarh four workers were arrested by the police for raising "objectionable" slogans, the sources added. Meanwhile, security at Lahore airport has been strengthened. Hundreds of policemen drawn from all over the province have been deployed there. All entries to the airport have been closed. According to reliable sources, no more than a hundred party leaders would be allowed to enter the airport to receive Miss Bhutto."<sup>14</sup>

But, Lahore is known for its defiance when it wakes against any tyrant. Jehangir Badr, the provincial President of the party, had also done a very good job with the help of his party colleagues. The city was in such a festive mood that the citizens had never seen in the city's history of more than ten centuries. A prestigious English newspaper reported the state of celebrations a night before her arrival:

"In the walled city of Lahore, mothers who had lost their sons in the MRD's agitation were garlanded and



presented with sweets. Young girls lit candles in memory of their lost brothers and many among the unemployed borrowed indiscriminately for the celebrations in hope that they would soon find employment and be able to pay back their loans. Printing presses worked through the night to produce posters and handbills. Self-styled revolutionary poets, who could until then recite their poetry only to extremely limited circles, and that too in hiding, openly sat by the roadside with crowds of excited party workers gathered around to applaud their verses. Throughout the night, groups of workers and followers made their way to the airport with torches held aloft. By morning, hardly any traffic signal was left functional since most were smashed by enthusiasts in a final gesture of defiance.”

She herself, unaware of what was happening in Lahore and in Pakistan, never expected such enthusiasm and open defiance to the General’s policies. When she had asked Jehangir Badr about the expected number of the people to greet her, he had guessed 500,000. She had immediately corrected him to say 100,000.<sup>15</sup>

Now, suddenly, when the PIA plane was hovering over Lahore, a steward came and told her that the ground has informed them that a million people were waiting for her! A million people! She herself came in the cockpit to see the unending ocean of the people in the early morning hours of that day.<sup>16</sup>

“The cameras could not capture it all, nor can all the superlatives in the dictionary,” wrote Lahori in Dawn. I will, therefore, use humble words. I have not seen anything like it before. Benazir Bhutto had the city at her feet the moment she landed at the Lahore Airport on Thursday.

“The night before her arrival, we were discussing how large a crowd she would attract. I told a friend working with a Gulf newspaper that I expected something like 150,000. I have never been wider off the mark. I don’t know where they came from but they were there. They were there at the airport, they were there at the

## *Benazir Bhutto*

Fortress Stadium, they were there on the Mall all day, and they were there at the Data Sahib's mausoleum. And above all, they were there at the Iqbal Park in larger numbers than you could count...

"When the MRD public meeting was held here on January 29, I had said that Mochi Gate had spoken, and when Mochi Gate speaks, the city moves, the Punjab moves, Pakistan moves... To bow before the will of the people is to bow before the will of God and what can be more Islamic than that?"<sup>17</sup>

It was just unprecedented in the history of the country that a leader had been welcomed like this. "Even Mr. Bhutto had not commanded crowds half as big at the height of his popularity," noted the columnist.<sup>18</sup> The only parallel in the history of the region was the welcome awarded to Imam Khomeini, on his return from exile after downfall of the Iranian monarch. The people of Lahore had defied every restriction that day. Even the offices were closed. Most of the employees of the Civil Secretariat and other government and semi-government offices, and corporations remained either on leave or abstained.<sup>19</sup> Several markets, particularly on the Mall and adjoining areas, through which her procession was to pass, were fully or partially closed. Some of the shops in other localities were also closed.<sup>20</sup>

She came out of the airport at about half past seven in the morning. Dressed in a black dress with a loose linen robe and tricolor PPP flag, she boarded on an open truck with the help of a wooden ladder.<sup>21</sup> "I gripped the notes for my speech as I looked at the rickety stair leading to the platform which had been built on the top of the truck for me to ride," she recalled of that moment. "I sometimes had nightmares of a stairway I didn't want to climb, but had to. Suddenly that very stair was in front of me and hundreds of expectant eyes were waiting to watch me climb it... I put my foot on the first step and took a deep breath. 'Bismallah,' I said to myself. 'In the name of God, I begin.'"<sup>22</sup>

The truck was decorated with garlands, PPP flags and a banner inscribed with a slogan 'Benazir Bhutto is guarantor of the integrity of federation.' The workers showered flowers on her as the truck moved at snail's pace. She waved back at them. Several "Ajraks"



Grandfather Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto, the pioneer of the political dynasty.



Fifth and fourth generation forefathers: Khuda Bux Khan and  
Mir Ghulam Murtaza.



Grandparents with their children. Her father on extreme right.  
Her namesake aunt on extreme left.



Her father's most beloved sister, Benazir Bhutto,  
who died at age of fifteen



Charming parents.



Learning to stand on her feet,  
an infant Benazir.





Beside her mother.



Benazir



Murtaza



Shahnawaz



Sanam



Amid the Chinese giants, and her family.



Her father's daughter: sitting beside him.



Happy siblings with their father: Benazir, Murtaza, Sanam and Shahnawaz.

were presented to her. She threw them back to the crowd. The truck moved with thousands of slogan chanting and dancing workers both in front and on its back. The pace was so slow that it took almost 75 minutes to cover a distance of about half a kilometer. People had lined up the route right from the airport up to Data Darbar. They could be seen on rooftops, telephone poles, traffic signal poles, trees and vehicles.

“It was like a carnival, with the entire crowd raising welcome slogans, reported Dawn. The authorities had made extensive security arrangements and large police contingents were deployed in the bylines, as well as along the main route. The procession moved only about a furlong in the first hour. Ms Bhutto’s truck and other vehicles accompanying it were surround by a sea of spirited workers who were dancing on drum beats and other musical instruments...At some of the houses in the Cantonment area men and women showed victory sign to the PPP leader while waving PPP flags. A worker hanging upside down from a Papal tree presented a tri-colour Dupatta to Ms Bhutto, which she immediately wore... Ms Bhutto took about a dozen glasses of water, a bottle of soft drink, and a cup of tea and salt tablets. She would also rest on a chair from time to time. At the fortress stadium the crowd was the thickest. People were seen perched on tree tops, even on the electric poles... The procession continued to shower flowers on Ms Bhutto who threw most of them back on the people. People who could not get close to Ms Bhutto used binoculars for a glimpse of the Acting Chairperson of the PPP.”<sup>23</sup>

Finally, after ten long hours, she heading the ocean of the people reached the venue of her public meeting, Minar-e-Pakistan grounds, a place just ten minutes drive away from airport in the normal days.

Amidst pindrop silence and utmost attention, she came on microphone. “The PPP was opposed to obscurantism and oppression. It wanted enlightenment, progress, freedom and justice, the causes for which PPP had been fighting for the last nine years,” she addressed the mammoth gathering that evening. She declared the gathering, as ‘Awami Referendum’ in which the people had given their verdict in favour of holding fresh elections and the restoration of genuine



democracy. When she asked from the crowd whether they wanted Zia to go, the crowd responded with raised hands, chanting the slogan “Zia Javey-e-Javey” (Zia must go).<sup>24</sup> “Never before so many people gathered in a procession nor has such a huge crowd went to listen to a public figure with such spontaneity,” noted the Dawn correspondent.<sup>24</sup>

This was the beginning of an end for Zia ul Huq. The time passed in fast forward. She addressed a number of rallies. Everywhere the demand echoed for holding the fresh elections and transfer of power to the genuine representatives of the people. International media and influential political forums also supported the country’s surge for democracy. As the pressure mounted, the fissures and cracks developed in the otherwise smooth relationship of General Zia and his ‘chosen’ Prime Minister Junjo. Exactly two years after she had landed at Lahore, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1988, a massive explosion at Ojhri Camp, a transit arms dump for Afghan Mujahideen exploded.<sup>25</sup> With this exploded also the smooth relationship between the President and the Prime Minister. Within next six weeks, the relationship deteriorated to such an extent that, on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1988, Zia dismissed Junjo government and dissolved assemblies under article 58-(2) (b) of the amended Constitution.<sup>26</sup> The country was back to square one.

In the meantime, in December 1987, she had her marriage with Asif Ali Zardari at Karachi. Though, this was her private affair, but being the popular leader of the masses, people made it an occasion to celebrate.

With the dissolution of the assemblies, the General wanted to reverse whole of the process back to 1977 again. He chose himself to head the ‘caretaker’ cabinet, as no caretaker Prime Minister was appointed. Again, the new political dispensation wrapped itself in the cloak of religion, announcing the legislative supremacy of Shariah in the country. The talk started about introduction of an Islamic economic system. It was also being heard again that the parliamentary system of democracy was against the teachings of Islam.

Finally after much ado, the General announced that the elections for national and provincial assemblies would be held again on the non-party basis, on 16<sup>th</sup> November. He perhaps believed the reports

of his agents that Benazir, who was expecting her first baby by the last quarter of the year, would be unable to mobilize due to her convalesce period coinciding with the time of elections.

However, the course of history, and her life changed when, on 17<sup>th</sup> August, the General, while returning back from the Tamewall firing range, where he had gone to witness the US-made M1 Abrams tanks, died in a plane crash. The US Ambassador Arnold Raphel and the Chief of the US Military mission in Pakistan, Brigadier General Herbert Wassom, also accompanied him on his last journey. The Hercules C-130 plane detailed for the VIP duty, just a few minutes after taking off on its return journey from Bahawalpur to Islamabad, nose-dived to the ground, and incinerated with such intensity that the remains of the passengers were not identifiable. The General disappeared somewhere in between the earth and sky.

This ended a nightmarish chapter of her life.



## Chapter 7

# **Dawn of Democracy**

(1988)

The tormentor was dead but his apparatus was still alive.

The death of Zia created a sudden vacuum in the polity of Pakistan. He held two most important keys to the power – the Chief of Army Staff and the President of Pakistan. General Aslam Beg, the vice-chief of army staff and next in command after General Zia, was not in that plane, so he was saved. He had seen off Zia at Bahawalpur and was on his way back to the military base in Dhamial near Islamabad in his own jet propeller.<sup>1</sup> Major General Jehangir Karamat, Director General Military Operations, who would later become the chief of army staff, was also with Aslam Baig on board. Few minutes after their take off, they saw the wreckage of the VVIP plane clouded in fire and smoke beneath them. The consensus emerged amongst the passengers that the capital of the country needed them more than the dead President.

The jet rushed to the power base.

General Mirza and his entourage reached the general headquarters (GHQ) of army in the fading daylight. A meeting of the top army brass was immediately called in the office of General Mirza. The most important of the corps commanders, Lieutenant General

Imranullah Khan, commanding the most important corps, the 10<sup>th</sup> Corp, also known as Rawalpindi Corp, rushed in. So did Major General Hamid Gul. They went into discussion regarding the future plan and line of action. One opinion was that the army should take control and impose the martial law. The other option available was that the Constitutional path should be followed and the chairman of the Senate, Mr Ghulam Ishaq Khan be appointed as the acting President of Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

The country had received one of the biggest shocks of its life in the death of the President and the chief of army staff along with thirty-five top-most officers of the armed forces. After detailed discussion and considering the pros and cons of both the options, the decision went in favour of Mr Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Perhaps to remove any ambiguity arising in his mind about the real power base, he was 'called' to the GHQ to inform him that he was selected for the top slot. He went back to the presidency and called the meeting of the caretaker cabinet formed by Zia after the dismissal of Junjo. He took them into confidence. It was only then that the news about the plane crash was made public.<sup>3</sup>

Next on the priority list was appointment of the chief of army staff. The vice-chief General Baig was the obvious choice, who assumed the charge forthwith. General Hamid Gul, the blue-eyed boy of Zia, was designated as the top spymaster of the country holding the reigns of the most powerful intelligence agency, the ISI. The federal cabinet consisted of all the General's men continued to hold their office. The only thing common amongst them was their the hatred towards Bhuttos. This cabinet without the Prime Minister consisted of men like Mr Aslam Khattak (senior minister), Mr Nasim Aheer (minister for interior), Mr Ellahi Bakhsh Soomro (minister for information & broadcasting), Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain (minister for industries) and Mr Wasim Sajjad (minister for law and Parliamentary affairs) and other die-hard opponents of PPP.<sup>4</sup>

The situation in the provinces was even worst. The sworn enemies of Bhuttos such as General Fazale Haque, Mian Nawaz Sharif, and Mr Taj Muhammed Jamali continued as the most powerful caretaker chief ministers of NWFP, the Punjab and Balochistan respectively.

Akhtar Ali G. Kazi, a politician of relatively mild disposition joined their ranks a few days later in the province of Sindh. All the four chief ministers swarmed their cabinets with anti-PPP elements – not a single portfolio going to a man having even a shade of sympathy towards her or her party.

The bureaucratic administration at the federal as well as the provincial level had, by and large, been already purged of the Bhutto-sympathizer elements during the eleven years rule of Zia-u- Haq.

Justice S.A. Nusrat, who had ‘successfully’ conducted the so-called referendum in 1984, declaring General Zia’s overwhelming victory with some ninety per cent affirmative votes, headed the Election Commission. One of the two members of the Commission was a close friend of Sharif family, Mr Muhammed Rafique Tarrar, who would be rewarded later by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by his elevation to the presidency for his valuable help. The other member of the commission was Mr Abdul Razzak Thahim, an equally ‘trustworthy’ man, who was elevated to the higher echelons of judiciary by the dead General.

They were all experienced hands. They knew the tricks. They resolved to hold elections on 16<sup>th</sup> November, as they foresaw public resistance to the postponement of the polls. But, they set certain rules and took certain decisions, which could guarantee the success of their party or men. First of all, they ruled out that the polls would be held on non-party basis and the candidates would contest the election in their individual capacities. They knew on the basis of their past experience of Election-1985 how easy it was to woo the non-party candidates to herd under the official party, once they are elected. It was safety valve number one.

Then, it was decided that the production of the national identity card would be mandatory for all the voters, knowing fully well that a very vast number of eligible voters in the rural areas of Pakistan, the traditional support-base of PPP, were not issued the cards. In the last election, the General had disqualified the candidates. This time the General’s men decided to disqualify the voters through this condition.<sup>5</sup> This was safety valve number two, followed by many more as such. They did not want to leave anything to a chance.

The picture was complete. The establishment had sway over the situation. The General was dead, but the General's apparatus was alive.

On the other side of the divide was Benazir, just thirty-five years old at that time, married hardly eight months ago, going through her first pregnancy, having no experience of running any official position in the past. She was a woman in a traditional male-dominated society where statecraft was considered as the sole dominion of men. The under-educated *Moulvi* element had already decreed election of any woman to the position of power as against the tenants of Islam. She had no example before her in whole of the contemporary Islamic world where a woman had been elected to the office of the head of state or the head of government. Most of her party's front-ranking leaders had already deserted her on behest of the General, in search of greener pastures, during past eleven years.

So, for all practical purposes, she was all alone to steer the ship of party and people in the turbulent waters of Pakistani politics.

But, she had certain assets as well. She was a highly educated person who had received best possible education at world's finest seats of learning. She was custodian of her father's political legacy, and of his romance with the masses. She had experienced the bitter taste of Pakistani politics while being on the other side of power. She had a great will power. She had the sense of history and more importantly her destiny. Thus, she had the strength, the will and the capability to lead the people of Pakistan towards a better future. She accepted the challenge against all the odds.

The task required work. The work at tremendous speed. She held meetings with the party leaders, with press, and with the leaders of other political parties. The immediate objective was to finalize the list of the party candidates for 207 seats of National Assembly and 483 seats of all the four provincial assemblies. The number of seats was limited and the aspirants for the party ticket unlimited. Thousands of people had applied. It was not an easy job to scrutinize them all and select the right men. The added drawback was that it was yet not clear whether the polls would be held on party basis or on non-party basis. Despite unanimous demand by all the political

### *Benazir Bhutto*

parties, to hold party-based elections, the government was adamant to have them on the non-party basis. She had already challenged the government's decision in the Supreme Court where the case was proceeding. So, it was an air of uncertainty that prevailed all around. To be extra secure, she prepared two different lists to suit two different scenarios: party-based or party-less.<sup>6</sup>

Slowly and gradually, whole of the country limped towards political activity. She was receiving a galaxy of political personalities at her residence. Air Marshal (retired) Nur Khan, the former governor of West Pakistan, flew especially from Islamabad to have meeting with her on 7<sup>th</sup> September. So did Tahreek-e-Istaqlal's chief Asghar Khan's son Omar Asghar,<sup>7</sup> who would become a minister later in General Pervaz Musharaf's dispensation.

Her residence, 70-Clifton, was humming with activity. All these activities were sending horrifying signals to the government camp. It seemed that there was just one party: her party, which had tremendous support. To counter this, all the caretaker chief ministers and the hand that pulled their strings, decided to form a "king's party" and name it as Pakistan Muslim League (Chief Ministers' Group). Mian Nawaz Sharif and General Fazale Haq were amongst the leading lights of this party.<sup>8</sup> They held a public meeting at Lahore's famous Mochi Gate, but the show was most unimpressive.

At that time, she was passing through a very crucial phase of a woman's life. She was expecting her first baby by middle of October. But because of over-work, the expected delivery date regressed by around four weeks and she gave birth to her first child, a son, Bilawal Ali Zardari, on 21 September 1988 at Lady Dufferin hospital in the Lyari area of Karachi. The people went jubilant over the news of the birth of a son to their leader.<sup>9</sup> The arrival of Bilawal in this world as the first grandson of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was widely acclaimed by the enthusiastic supporters of PPP. After about a week's time she was discharged from the hospital with strict advice of doctors to take full rest.

In meantime the hearing on her petition against party-less polls continued in the Supreme Court, where Mr Fakhurddin G. Ibrahim, one of the most respected jurist of the country represented her. After

a number of hearings the court gave verdict in favour of her contention ordering that the elections be held on the party basis. The decision came in the first week of October. The court ruled that every “political party shall be eligible to take part in the national and provincial assemblies’ election and shall be entitled to the allotment of an election symbol by Election Commission.” The court held that the decision of not allowing party-based election was violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution.<sup>10</sup>

The higher judiciary had asserted again, though after death of the dictator.

The decision sent a shock wave in the corridors of power. Everybody knew that it would be impossible to face PPP in a party-based election. The ISI chief General Hamid Gul, with the help of his two most loyal officers, Brigadier Imtiaz and Major Aamir, brokered an alliance of all the anti-PPP parties under name of Islami Jamoori Ithad (IJI), which came into being on 6<sup>th</sup> October. Even the title ‘IJI’ was coined on the pattern of ‘ISI’ by the forces that created it. The component parties of the IJI had divergent ideologies with only one common point – the hostility towards PPP.

Nawaz Sharif and his colleagues in the caretaker set-up were the leading lights of this alliance. But they needed a person from Sindh to be their titular head, to face her in her own province, and to give the feeling that the fight was in between two personalities from Sindh. The establishment’s choice fell on Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who was promptly declared as the head of IJI.

While she was recovering from her period of convalesce, the establishment divided into two camps and fell out with each other, or at least they so pretended. One group consisted of Ghulam Ishaq Khan and his sympathizers who wanted to do away with whole of the election process, while the army chief Mirza Aslam Baig led the other group favoring holding of election. The President-led group contemplated to elevate Aslam Baig as the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, a mere ceremonial position without much power.

Aslam Baig sent her an emissary with a message, The basic thrust of his arguments being that “Ghulam Ishaq Khan was not sincere with democracy and he did not want election at all, but that he (the

army chief) favored election,” she recalled a decade later.<sup>11</sup> He also wanted her support for his confirmation at the post of army chief.

“So we did make the statements... The only proposal we accepted was that, all right if he is committing elections we would favour him to be confirmed,” she recollected.<sup>12</sup> In return General Aslam Beg made a commitment that he would see to it personally that the elections were held at the promised time and were fair: a commitment which he would only partially fulfill.

After full recovery, she along with her husband and the newborn moved to their new residence, the ‘Bilawal House’ in the Boat Basin area of Clifton. For her entire life, she had lived at her parents’ house, the 70-Clifton. With her shifting to Bilawal House, the most important center of Pakistani politics also shifted from 70-Clifton to the Bilawal House.

By the first week of October she started coming across the political leaders at her new residence. On Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October, a physically enfeebled Benazir, clad in a *Shalwar Kameez* and an *Ajrak*, met the journalists for the first time after her childbirth. She announced her party’s unilateral decision not to contest the home constituencies of MRD party-heads who had struggled along with her for restoration of democracy during martial law period.<sup>13</sup> This was a gesture of goodwill on part of her for the progressive political element of Pakistan; a gesture never reciprocated from the other end.

On Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> October, she called a press conference to announce the election manifesto of her party. She pledged “to build a new order to take Pakistan into 21<sup>st</sup> century as a developed nation, free of exploitation, poverty and injustice.” The emphasis was laid on the unity amongst the people of Pakistan who had bitterly been divided on the basis of ethnic and sectarian grounds, thanks to the previous dictator’s policies. It was stated by her that the aim of the party was to create a national identity, which could give everyone a sense of pride and glory. The party pledged to provide every citizen food, clothing, shelter, education and health facilities in addition to a dignified existence and equality before the law.

The manifesto was a detailed document, prepared with a lot of effort and homework. It contained seven parts and forty-two sec-

tions, explaining the aims and objectives and laying down specific goals and targets the party wanted to achieve in every sphere of national activity – political, economic and social. The manifesto's seven sections dealt with the philosophy of her party pertaining to the provincial autonomy, devolution and decentralization of powers, rights of the oppressed, administrative reforms, agenda for 21<sup>st</sup> century, political co-existence and an end to the vendetta culture besides Pakistan's role in the world.<sup>14</sup>

Addressing the press conference, she told the reporters that she did not believe in the politics of revenge or terrorism. Her party's aim was to achieve political stability in the country. She promised that her party would wipe out poverty, illiteracy, hunger and exploitation, and would provide justice to all. Referring to the demand for the provincial autonomy in recent years, she said, her party would try to strike a balance between the powers of federation and that of the federating units on the one hand and the provincial governments and the local institutions on the other. She described this as a policy of devolution aimed at strengthening the district-level bodies and organizations run by the local representatives.<sup>15</sup>

By then, two major political forces had emerged on the political scene. The PPP and the IJI. Both of these parties held their rallies and public meetings all over the country.

The PPP, by and large, focussed on the miseries of the past military rule and outlined the future programme for the country to enter into 21<sup>st</sup> century with self-sustenance. While, the election campaign theme of the IJI mostly revolved around her character assassination, leveling wild allegations against her person, as being westernized, immoral, anti-Islam, anti-Pakistan and anti-Punjab. The religion was widely used to prevent her potential voters from voting for her, pledging them that to vote for a woman was forbidden by *Shariah*. They also tried to create fears that she would sell Kashmir and the country's nuclear program to the US, Hindus and the Jews.

Nawaz Sharif, initially, posed himself as the custodian of '*Ziaism*' a term to denote the dogmas of the dead dictator, about politics and the State, but later abandoned the slogan in view of negative public response.



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She was still not fully well physically, so kept a relatively low profile. Her opponents took full advantage of this situation, and the IJI leaders started moving in the top-most gear towards their election campaign.

But, from the establishment's point of view, all these things which IJI was doing were still not proving very helpful in cutting down considerably the political size of the PPP.

General Aslam Baig, unbitten by any moral uneasiness in view of his commitment with her to ensure a 'fair election,' called a meeting of the ISI chief and the IJI leaders over a dinner at his official residence in Rawalpindi on 24<sup>th</sup> October to 'review the situation.'<sup>16</sup>

Those who attended this meeting included the ISI chief General Hamid Gul, IJI chief Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, all four caretaker chief ministers of the provinces, who happened to be the leading stalwarts of IJI, Mian Muhammed Nawaz Sharif, General Fazale Haq, Zafarullah Jamali, Akhtar Ali G. Kazi, federal interior minister Naseem Aheer, Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed of Jamiat-e-Islami, and the very host General Aslam Baig.<sup>17</sup>

In any other civilized country it would have been unthinkable for an army chief, or a national intelligence agency chief, or for that matter, the caretaker functionaries of the State entrusted with the task of conducting free and fair elections, to enter into collusion with each other to deny a political party a fair chance of winning the election.

But, it was not so in the post-Zia Pakistan. General Hamid Gul presented a detailed analysis regarding prospects of the PPP winning the election. One of the participants of that meeting, Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed, later remembered General Gul telling them that the PPP was still considerably ahead of IJI in three most populous provinces, the Punjab, Sindh and NWFP. In only Balochistan, he remembered him telling that the PPP was not in a commanding position. The ISI chief told the participants of this secret meeting that to his information, the IJI, despite his best efforts, was not doing well.<sup>18</sup>

This assessment by the top spymaster did not please many of the guests of the army chief that night, who showed their reservations. The caretaker chief minister of NWFP General Fazale Haq, himself

a contender, told Gul that he knew his province better than anybody else did. He was confident that his tactics and strategies would bring himself and the IJI to a thumping victory in the province.<sup>19</sup> Naseem Aheer also came out with such wishful thinking. Finally, in the dark hours of the night, the participants dispersed with resolve to meet again after some time, after putting in more strength and life in their election campaigns.

Unaware of all these designs, Benazir Bhutto started her election campaign on 30<sup>th</sup> October by addressing public meetings in Malir and Lyari of Karachi. She had to cover whole of the country in a time of less than two weeks.

It was a race against time. She decided to take a whirlwind tour of the country by train. The arrangements were made and she boarded the Peshawar-bound Khyber Mail in the evening of same day for up-country.<sup>20</sup>

The train left Karachi's Cantonment Railway station amidst cheering crowd of her supporters. She was accommodated in a special bogey. The doctors had strictly advised her to take proper rest, at least the night's sleep. The train whistled through the length of Sindh province during the night. The late October chill and the darkness of the night could not stop people from gathering in large numbers at all the stations of her home province just to register their support and enthusiasm for her, despite the knowledge that she would not be able to address them in the night.<sup>21</sup>

At dawn the train neared the province of Punjab. With rising of the sun swelled the crowds. When it passed through the last three railway stations of Sindh -- Ghotki, Mirpur Mathelo and Daharki -- all the platforms were overflowing with people. It entered then in the outskirts of Punjab. The first stop was Sadiqabad. It appeared as that the entire town had turned out to be at the railway station. There was only one slogan resounding in the atmosphere "Prime Minister Benazir, Prime Minister Benazir."

"A large section of the crowd danced and shouted with joy when a lady journalist from Italy, faintly resembling Ms. Benazir Bhutto waved at them and they thought it was Ms Bhutto," wrote Shaheen Sehbai, a well known journalist reporting her journey.<sup>22</sup>

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The provincial government of Nawaz Sharif had deployed heavy police pose throughout her route. At several places, police resorted to baton charge to keep the crowds away from her, but people were not just ready to disperse. The train continued its journey through the southern Punjab. The number of passengers snowballed with passage of time.

The Khyber Mail virtually turned to be a PPP camp.

The workers were everywhere -- on the train's roof, footboards and buffers between the compartments. They waved PPP flags and chanted slogans for her. After stopping at various stations, the train reached Multan, the most important town of the Southern Punjab, hours behind schedule. "We have been expecting such crowds as the people have been given the right of franchise after eleven long years. This torrent of people will wash away the caretakers," a beaming Benazir told the correspondents on board.<sup>23</sup>

Lahore accorded the warmest welcome. When her train pulled over there, the city was just in a festive mood. Thousands of workers carrying party flags, banners and portraits of her and her late father received her with utmost enthusiasm. The audiotapes of her speeches and that of her father played on loud speakers. The rush was unprecedented.

From here she changed her train and boarded the *Tezro* to take her to Rawalpindi. There was no different scene at Rawalpindi the principal city of *Pothohar* region, home to the most of the armed forces personnel. Whole of the railway station was bedecked with her party's tricolor flags. A truck decorated with flags and her election symbol, an arrow, was there to take her. She addressed the enthusiastic crowd amidst intermittent bouts of clapping.

After successful train journey through the heart of Punjab, she returned back to Karachi by air. A battery of national and international media was there at Karachi airport. Replying to a question regarding a high level of discipline witnessed in her public meetings, she said "Democracy never creates a law and order, dictatorship does."<sup>24</sup>

She must have felt tired of such a hectic journey, but it was not the time to relax. She had to cover the remote parts of Sindh also,

before going on a detailed trip to the interior of Punjab, NWFP and Balochistan. Same day she went to Khairpur Mirs, then to Larkana and to Sukkur besides many other important towns of Sindh where she remained for next seven days. Everywhere she was accorded warm of the warmest receptions.

The 'caretaker's' by now, felt quite uneasy about the public response to her. They wondered if the things went that way, how would they manage the election?

On 6<sup>th</sup> November, General Aslam Baig again called a meeting of his associates in his unholy alliance. General Hamid Gul, Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif, Interior Minister Naseem Aheer and other leading lights of the IJI reached at his residence again. The ISI chief told the gathering that his intelligence network had reported him that despite all the efforts of the alliance, the PPP was still leading overwhelmingly. What to do next? What else can be done?<sup>25</sup>

Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed, one of the most prominent leaders of IJI, who was attending this meeting, later wrote in his book that the meeting decided to create a special cell to deal with the circumstances arising after the elections.<sup>26</sup> The establishment wanted to doubly ensure that even if she emerges as a victor in highly manipulated elections, there should be a cell to take care of her victory, even afterwards.

"When the party-based election was called out in 1988, about 37 percent of total voters were supposed to be the committed PPP voters which perhaps was more than enough for the party to win a landslide victory. So in order to deny such victory to PPP, the election was massively rigged by the then establishment," wrote M. Ziauddin, Dawn's bureau chief in Islamabad in one of his dispatches.<sup>27</sup>

While her opponents were working overtime to forestall her election victory, she was fully in grossed in election campaign. Thousand miles away, George Bush had won the elections in the United States. This, many believed, removed any ambiguity about the holding of elections in Pakistan, as, the argument went on, the Republicans in the US had put their influence on Pakistan to hold the elections as per schedule.

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The Election Day was approaching fast. She had to move fast. From Rawalpindi, it was Sargodha, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Gujrat, and every other city and town of the Punjab. The unprecedented crowds welcomed her, showered her with flowers wherever she went. She had emerged as a symbol of hope for them. Hope for the downtrodden, for the suppressed women, for the middle class and the democrats. Her victory was a foregone conclusion. A newspaper article read: "On the eve of Pakistan's 4<sup>th</sup> general election, the PPP emerges as the only major party which enters the electoral arena with its entity intact and a fine track record."<sup>28</sup>

She went on with her campaign throughout the length and the breadth of the country, setting new records of public participation, till the last hour of electioneering reached on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> November. It was Peshawar, where she addressed her last election rally that November, saying that the "people will seal the fate of the oppressors and the usurpers on 16<sup>th</sup> November."<sup>29</sup> The people did so.

The elections were held peacefully, with exception to few sporadic incidents of violence, which is a peculiar feature of any election in the subcontinent. Plans to get desired results were already very well drawn out. "We heard that there were altogether thirty-two seats that were going to be rigged to prevent us from winning a majority," she recalled. We were told that they were making the lists of the persons who had died since 1984-85, when the electoral lists had been done and they were casting fake votes in the name of the dead people." She told the journalists.

Whatever happened on that fateful day, is still shrouded in mystery. However, despite all these efforts on part of her opponent, her PPP emerged as the single largest party in the National Assembly, securing 93 seats against the collective figure of 54 won by the nine party alliance, the IJI. The PPP had even won seven of the nine minority seats swelling its strength to one hundred.

A large number of politicians, who had links with General Zia and the caretaker government, lost the elections miserably. Her relatively unknown candidates defeated political heavyweights like IJI chief Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, interior minister Naseem Aheer, Ellahi Bakhsh Soomro, Mumtaz Bhutto, and a host of others like them.

Even Pir Pagara, the spiritual head of *Hurs*, could not save his seat against a middle class youngster.

This shattered the dreams and the designs of her rivals miserably. “They never anticipated Jatoi to lose the elections,” she noted. “But he lost so suddenly that they could not do anything.” Next choice was obviously, Nawaz Sharif “because Nawaz Sharif had won the elections,” she confided.<sup>30</sup>

The outstanding feature of the victory by PPP was that it was the only party in whole of the country to have won seats from all the four provinces of Pakistan. She herself had contested three seats and won all of them. In the Punjab, her party got the maximum number of seats, 52, as against 44 of IJI; in Sindh it was again the topmost party with 31 seats followed by MQM with 13. In NWFP it got 8; and in Balochistan it bagged one seat. Even the federal capital’s lone seat went to the PPP.<sup>31</sup>

This victory was remarkable especially in face of the ‘caretaker’ government’s hostility towards her and her party. With it, uncertainty of every sort should have ended. But it did not. The government should have declared its intention to transfer power to the majority party but it did not. On the contrary, a number of non-issues like President’s discretionary powers to appoint ‘anybody’, as Prime Minister on his sweet will, were deliberately raised by the power brokers. The caretaker ministers were openly saying that the power would not be transferred to PPP, even though it had got maximum number of seats in the assembly.<sup>32</sup>

It was again the testing of nerves for her. The IJI began contacting MNA-elects for their support. Even the members of PPP were contacted to ditch her and form a ‘forward block’ of the party, which could support the IJI. The saner element throughout the country voiced against this high-handedness.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November, the prominent jurists of the country, including a former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Yaqub Ali Khan, urged the President to transfer power to PPP without further wastage of time. He said that after scoring the highest number of seats in the National Assembly, it was democratic and constitutional right of the party to be invited to form government. The jurists pointed it out to Ghulam

Ishaq Khan that the difference between number of seats secured by PPP and IJI was so wide that any move on part of him to invite the 'minority group' to form government would be outrageous and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.<sup>33</sup> Other prominent lawyers, judges and writers were also expressing similar sentiments. About one thousand Karachi lawyers signed a memorandum appealing to the President to invite her to form the government, but to no avail.<sup>34</sup>

While all this was going on, another phase of the elections was about to begin. That was the elections for the four provincial assemblies. This time Nawaz-led IJI decided to use most effective, but most dangerous propaganda weapon in multi-cultural society like that of Pakistan: to bring provincialism in the national politics. The Punjab has been the citadel of power in the country's politics. Hence it was selected for this dangerous game plan. During the interval of three days between two phases of election, Nawaz Sharif and other IJI leaders toured the entire province, chanting slogan of '*Jag Punjabi Jag, Tedi Pug noon Lag Gaya Dagh*' (Wake up Punjabis wake up! Your honor has been daunted).<sup>35</sup> The speakers told the innocent people that if PPP, which they branded as a Sindhi party, could not be restrained from winning the provincial assembly election, it would dishonor each and every Punjabi in blind revenge.

This poisonous propaganda took its toll. It weakened the foundation of Pakistani nationhood in long run, though it delivered a few more seats of provincial assembly to the IJI. So far, Sindh and Punjab had never heeded towards the slogans of provincialism in wake of political initiative by PPP. Now, suddenly, extremely irresponsible politicians, in order to serve their vested interests in utter disregard of the consequences on the national front, unleashed a very dangerous phenomenon.

The results of the provincial election were generally set on the pattern of National Assembly election, except in the Punjab, where IJI secured 108 seats as against 94 of PPP in a house of 240. In Sindh MQM emerged as the second largest party securing 26 seats after the PPP's 67 seats in the house of 100. In NWFP and Balochistan no single party could win enough number of seats to form government on their own. Again her party emerged as the single largest

party securing highest number of accumulative seats in all the four provincial assemblies of the country.<sup>36</sup>

Despite this, silence on the part of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan continued.

Desperate moves aimed at defections within PPP ranks, as well as winning over the support of independent MNA-elects and smaller splinter groups, intensified. She informed the President about late-night phone calls to independent members elects from the 'highest quarters' with 'advice' to desert PPP. She told the reporters that the "senior district and police officials had been sent to obtain written pledges of support from those members." "This," she complained to the President, "were the tactics used by the caretakers to subvert peoples verdict". She also brought to his notice the summoning of eight FATA members-elect of National Assembly from NWFP to the Government House in Peshawar to influence their loyalties.<sup>37</sup> All such pledges bore no response. A deafening silence prevailed.

She took up another political initiative and established contacts with other elected parties including MQM and the ANP. The response was positive. On Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> November, she and her husband Asif Ali Zardari went to Azizabad to meet Altaf Hussain at his residence. It was afternoon. Thousands of PPP and MQM workers were there to receive the couple. The girls showered rose petals on them. Altaf Hussain presented a copy of the Holy Quran as a gift to her. She along with her husband went into dialogue with Altaf Hussain for about two and half-hour. A large number of party workers of both the parties waited for them in the sun for hours to hear about the outcome of parleys. A battery of international and national media also waited for them to emerge. Inside, the talks proceeded on positive lines towards an understanding between the two parties. A committee comprising the leaders of both the parties was formed to spell out the terms of accord and iron out differences. A smiling Benazir stepped in the car, saying, "Thank you very much Altaf Bhaie."<sup>38</sup> The fist and the third largest parties in the newly elected National Assembly had join hands together. This had ended any hope for maneuvering on part of the establishment.

Next day Ghulam Ishaq called her for a meeting. "Once the



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elections were held, many other leaders were called,” remembered Benazir. “I was amongst the last to be called. I was called very reluctantly. After they had failed to break up the majority that we had. They tried to make a deal with everybody under the sun. None of them had the number. We had the magic number and they were unable to make a deal. And when they were unable to make a deal, I was invited”<sup>39</sup> On Tuesday evening, a PIA Boeing carrying her landed at Islamabad airport. She drove straight to the presidency, where her meeting began with the President at around 7.00 in the evening and continued till 9.30 p.m.

From here she went to General Aslam Baig’s residence who had invited the couple for dinner. It was a social dinner where Aslam Baig, his wife, his daughter having same date of birth as that of Benazir, were all together. “It was a private social dinner to break the ice,” she recalled. “I was a leader who was unknown to most of them. They had never met me before. Yet due to the support of the people of Pakistan, I had to be sworn in as the chief executive of the country, the person whom they would have to salute!”<sup>40</sup>

The General told her that the reservations or apprehensions of the army emitted from a variety of reasons ranging from her brother’s alleged involvement with an organization like Al-Zulfikar, to fears about her future policies on Afghanistan and Kashmir. She told him of her program. The ice started melting down. Few days later US Ambassador to Pakistan Mr Robert Oakley called on her and congratulated her on her victory.

After a week’s time the President called the meeting of the newly elected National Assembly. The agenda was to administer the oath to the MNA-elects. All the governors of four provinces also followed the suit and called the meetings of their respective provincial assemblies. In meantime, it was ensured that Mian Nawaz Sharif and his IJI should form the government in the biggest province of Pakistan, in order to keep a check on her central government.

On the appointed day, the Parliament house, in backdrop of picturesque hills of Islamabad, wore a festive look. It was center of activity. Elected representatives from all over the country had come after intense electioneering. At main entrance of the building stood hun-

dreds of people looking jubilant and amused. When she, dressed in a sea-green Shalwar-Kameez, a primrose Dupatta and a beige shawl, arrived in the driveway, the crowd surrounded her and yelled slogans of 'Jiye Bhutto.' She was greeted with joyous clapping as she entered main auditorium of the assembly hall. Amidst thunderous applause, she occupied a front seat, diagonally opposite to the speaker's dais. The galleries were full. The corridors of the house were choked with jostling spectators.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice S. A. Nusrut presided over this special session, as there was no speaker of the house elected as yet. She recited the solemn oath and became member of the highest political forum of the country, the National Assembly of Pakistan, at a young age of thirty-five.

Next day, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan nominated her as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in capacity of being the leader of the largest elected party of the country.

## Chapter 8

# Making the History

(1988)

Amidst glittering lights of the Presidency, she took oath of office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1988. With it, she stepped on the pedestal of history as first woman Prime Minister of any Muslim country in the world. And an added distinction for her was that she was the youngest head of state in the history of Pakistan!

The world as a whole was looking at her with admiration for her heroic struggle against forces of tyranny during last eleven years. But, she was standing in an unseen world of memories. The memories of her father, who had a romance with down-trodden masses, who became the first popularly elected leader of his country, who gathered laboriously remaining pieces of the broken Pakistan in 1971, who led the Third World, and who brought a disarrayed Muslim world of his time to unity. And then a self-seeking general of doubtful integrity and intellect just came forward, removed the popularly elected hero of the millions in Pakistan, of the Muslim bloc, of the Third World, merely on the basis of his brute force and imposed his dictatorial rule. A flood of memories came to her mind of her desperate struggle to save life of her father, and how she help-

lessly watched him going to the gallows. The present and the past mingled with each other. The moments of the glory and the grief surpassed each other.

The ceremony went on with full pomp and grandeur.

She felt a little lonely at heart. She missed her father in that crowd.

But, she knew that the strong has to be lonely in the final count. It was the Law of Nature. So much had changed. But the past could not be corrected. It was the present that needed her attention. The new challenges were ahead. Her father had said in 1971 that he would 'like to move the mountains, to change the course of history'. He did it when it was his turn. Now, she was entrusted with a similar assignment by the Nature. Now, it was her turn to prove her worth. Millions of the suffering people of Pakistan were looking towards her with a ray of hope. Her victory at the polls reflected the yearnings of the ordinary folk of her country for a better change in their lives. Their dreams for the future. She knew it well. But, she was also aware of the obstacles erected in her way by the invisible rulers of the land.

The establishment was yet not ready to accept her in her new role as elected leader of the country. The President, army chief, intelligence agencies, IJI, ISI and every other pillar of power structure had been still against her. "Even when I was taking my oath of the office, I felt that he (Ghulam Ishaq Khan) was trying to trip me out," she remembered. "There was a perception that I do not read Urdu, which is incorrect. I am not good at Urdu but I can read it very well. The Oath was in Urdu and he was reading in Urdu and I was repeating it in Urdu. But what he was doing was either sometime he was reading too many words together so that I would not follow him, or sometimes going very slow in an attempt to confuse me. But of course he was unable to do so."<sup>1</sup>

After taking the oath of the office of Prime Minister of Pakistan, she addressed the nation for the first time in her life on radio and television. The backdrop of the place was adorned with the photographs of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammed Ali Jinnah and her father. She divulged her plans for the future of the country saying, "My govern-

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ment would strive for building a progressive and democratic Pakistan, free from all kinds of exploitation.” Committing herself with the liberal Islamic principles, she said that her government would “promote the lofty Islamic principles of amity, brotherhood, equality and tolerance.” One of the top-most priorities of her government was to “work for national unity on the basis of justice and equality.” She pledged to bring about an atmosphere of peace and harmony to protect the life, property and honor of every citizen. She said, “Ours is the message of peace and hope. It is the message of unity, peace, liberty and progress”.<sup>2</sup>

She attributed the success of her party in elections to the struggle “of the entire nation,” who had given a “great honor to their sister and put a heavy responsibility on her shoulders”. She promised to “do her best to fulfil her obligations.” She was reviving the democratic spirit after an interval of eleven years. She assured the people that her government was their own. “We are from amongst you. Your suffering, happiness and honor is our suffering, happiness and honor,” she remarked while addressing herself to the common people of Pakistan. She reaffirmed her party’s stance that people only were the real source of power. She said the path her party had chosen was the path of all those who wanted to build a progressive and democratic Pakistan and who wanted to eliminate all types of exploitation. The journey on this path, she maintained, began twenty years ago when her father founded the PPP with objective of safeguarding the interests of the oppressed and downtrodden people.

Paying tributes to her late father, she said that when dictatorship split the country into two in 1971, it was the statesmanship of her father Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who saved Pakistan and generated a new spirit, strength and confidence amongst the dejected people. “Today we have to rebuild and re-strengthen the country,” she remarked. She stressed that the “nation would become strong only when the people gained strength. And it was possible only when their basic needs were fulfilled.” Criticizing the policies of Zia government, she said, “Zia focused only on self-perpetuation.” She was convinced that these policies had left deep scars of retrogress on society and had divided the nation on ethnic, linguistic and sectarian

grounds. She concluded her speech with a quotation from American President John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech of 20<sup>th</sup> January 1961 when he said "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."<sup>3</sup>

The address was highly hailed by the people of Pakistan in general.

The circumstances in which she was to operate continued to be least cordial. There was an atmosphere of hostility, suspicion and condensation around her. For instance, when she went to her office, there was only one deputy secretary at her disposal. "For three days not a single file arrived at my desk," she remembered. "It was because he (President Ishaq Khan) had ordered all the files to go to him." After three days, she called General Aslam Baig and told him that she did not want to embarrass them publicly, because that would further strain her relations with them. "But I am the Prime Minister and I am supposed to be running the affairs of the State. So, why the files are not coming to me?"<sup>4</sup> She also rang the President and said, "Look, either I should issue an order to the cabinet secretary to issue a circular, but it would be humiliating, or else you yourself tell the cabinet secretary that there is a Prime Minister and he better start sending papers to her office," she remembered. It was only then that they began sending the files to her.<sup>5</sup>

While this was happening at home, her elevation was widely acclaimed by the international community. The messages of felicitations poured in from all over the globe. The world leaders including President-elect of United States George Bush warmly greeted her. China congratulated her "with a firm belief that relations between the two countries would be further developed and consolidated." President Francois Mitterrand of France said he would be happy to visit Pakistan. Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad wrote that her appointment reflected the wishes of the Pakistani people. President Suharto of Indonesia conveyed his nation's warmest felicitations on her elevation. So did Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.<sup>6</sup> The foreign office's mail desk was flooded with such messages from every nook and corner of the world. Pakistan was once again appearing on the democratic map of

the planet.

Perhaps, the most important of these messages came from Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of adjoining India, with whom Pakistan had three wars in past four decades. He wrote her a letter on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

“Simla Agreement,” he wrote, “signed by your father and my mother, provides the basis for our building together a relationship of mutual trust and friendship, which promotes peace and co-operation between our countries, in our time and for generations to come. You and I are both children of an era, which followed the partition of the subcontinent. I would wish to work closely with you for removing the irritants, which have needlessly vitiated relations between our countries in the past. We regard the unity and integrity of Pakistan as a vital element for stability and progress in South Asia. We trust you reciprocate this sentiment in regard to the unity and integrity of India.... We are confident that together we can make our shared subcontinent safe for us to work out our national destinies, in keeping with our national aspirations, the fundamental principles and ethical values from which each of us draws our moral sustenance. We trust you too are of this view. I look forward to working with you in every possible way to ensure that the people of India and Pakistan live together, strive together, build together the peace, prosperity and a glorious future for both of our countries. I would like to see us setting an example to the world of peaceful coexistence and friendly co-operation.”<sup>7</sup>

Knowing the importance of this peace initiative of a traditional adversary, she reciprocated with similar feelings for a peaceful subcontinent. “The democratically elected Government of Pakistan attaches the highest importance to developing good neighbourly, co-operative and friendly relations with India. We believe that the people of both countries want this. It is essential for peace and stability in our region. The historic Simla Agreement signed by your mother and my father provides an excellent basis for strengthening bilateral relations. I was with my father at the time of its signing, and as I look back over the past sixteen years, there is a satisfaction from the knowledge that this Agreement has enabled us to avoid conflict

and indeed, to make progress in some areas of co-operation. Your sentiments regarding the unity and integrity of Pakistan are greatly appreciated by me. Please have no doubts that I reciprocate them fully in regard to the unity and integrity of India," was her reply.<sup>8</sup>

After a long time the ice had started melting from the frozen peaks in the politics of the subcontinent.

The domestic scene needed her immediate attention. Every segment of national life was shattered. The institutions were reeling under the weight of unimaginative schemes and policies. Confusion was at an unprecedented level. The biggest irony was that the power-centre of the country was divided into a number of pieces, each one incapable of leading the country out of the mess. Since 1977's martial law, the army chief had assumed an extremely domineering role in the civil and political affairs of the state. Then, the amended Constitution of 1985 had given enormous powers to the President, including the power to dissolve democratically elected assemblies and government on his sweet will. After 1985, the position of the Prime Minister was re-introduced in body politic of the country, but it was least effective. As long as Zia was alive he held all the power and both the top positions with himself. After his death, three different personalities inherited the fragments of power structure. Thus, a new term 'troika' came into vogue to describe new political arrangement, where decisions were to be taken by this three-member forum, of which popularly elected Prime Minister was the weakest member.

This division of authority continued downwards. The senate, the upper house of Pakistan's bicameral legislature, continued with Zia's handpicked composition, as the elections of November 1988 were held for the national and four provincial assemblies, and not for the senate. In the National Assembly itself, her party had been denied an absolute majority, thanks to the establishment's machinations. The provinces inherited their governors from the caretaker set up and the President argued that the power to change them lied with him. As if this was not enough, the establishment managed to install a hostile government in the Punjab. The IJI government led by Nawaz Sharif adopted extremely adverse attitude in the biggest province



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of the country, towards her federal government. The government of Balochistan was also out of the folds of PPP. This clipped the wings of her government to bring about any meaningful social or political change in the country.

Then, in Sindh, where PPP was in power, and held majority in the assembly, the provincial government was hostage to the policies of urban-based MQM. During eleven years of martial law, the dictatorship had divided the society in a number of well-armed, well-organised and well-financed mafias, which controlled the respective areas of influence on the basis of violence. Day in and day out, these groups of militants indulged in massacres of innocent victims. These gangs of criminals had tacit support of the political groups who raised storm of hue and cry whenever the government tried to bring the culprits to the book. It was law of jungle, which ruled the cosmopolitan cities of Pakistan.

Before her assumption of office, establishment had packed the superior judiciary with some of the most die-hard anti-PPP and pro-establishment judges. Though the Supreme Court had ruled that a high court or a Supreme Court judge couldn't be appointed without the advice of the Prime Minister, and despite the fact that there had been no Prime Minister in the caretaker government, the President had appointed about fifty such judges. "Attorney General Mr Yahya Bakhtiar came to see me and said that we had to de-notify them in the light of it," she remembered. "So I said, Mr Bakhtiar I cannot do this till I talk to the Chief Justice. I called Chief Justice Haleem and he said, yes, that is the legal position. I issued the notification. But then the President cried out saying, no, these judges have wrongfully been removed. And they got these judges reinstated. This included Justice Abdul Qayoom who is trying me, Justice Ahsan, who is trying me," she remembered bitterly. "They always abuse the weaker in judiciary in eliminating their political rivals," she remarked.<sup>9</sup>

If this was the political scene, the economic conditions were still worse. In an article, a senior journalist M. Ziauddin depicted the state of economy just before assumption of office by her in these words. "Half way through the second quarter, the economy has

come from bad, at the end of first quarter, to almost worse, and the new government faces a formidable task in immediate run to enable it at least to complete the current financial year with its head above water.... The rate of inflation which had hit an all time high at about ten percent (official) in the first quarter jumped to around twenty percent (conservative estimate) immediately before the elections.”<sup>10</sup>

This was the state of affairs, that she inherited in 1988.

There was a view, held by a minority, within and outside the party, that she should not accept the offer to form the government in such hard times. Her own brother Murtaza Bhutto, who was in exile at that time, also held such perception. But she, a keen student of history, knew that the success lied in accepting the challenges and not in shying away from them on one pretext or the other. For eleven long years the people of Pakistan had been languishing under the chains. Hundreds of thousands were put into jails, flogged in public, and executed mercilessly for the crime of raising their voice for democracy. Now, a chance had come to at least lessen the misery. True, it was not a door but at least it was a window through which fresh air can enter to end the decade-long suffocation.

She accepted the challenge. This dawned a new phase of her struggle. She summed it beautifully, saying, “One journey has ended, another has begun. There are many promises to keep, many miles to go.”<sup>11</sup>

Her first order as Prime Minister was to release several hundred political prisoners. The President again came in way, raising a number of objections to the issuance of that sort of notification, ignoring the fact that he was bound by the Constitution to act on the advice of the Prime Minister. “When I was elected for the first term, I gave advice to the President, and in my opinion the President was bound to sign the advice, that all those who had been sentenced under martial law, their sentences be repealed. The President was reluctant to sign this. We felt that he was abusing the Constitution,” she remembered.<sup>12</sup> However, she was able to persuade Ghulam Ishaq Khan to abide by her advice, though a little compromise was to be reached regarding the letter and the spirit of the notification.

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She did not want her energies to be wasted in these unnecessary and uncalled for battles. Much work was ahead. The election of the Speaker of National Assembly required her immediate attention. The day fixed for this event was Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December. In a way it was first test for her to formally prove her majority in the Assembly.

On the appointed day, a large number of political workers, students and women occupied seats in the assembly chamber, hours before the commencement of session. A mood of excitement pervaded in Parliament House. The national press joyously reported rising interest of country's youth in the political process. Daily Dawn wrote: "On Saturday looking at the audience, in the overcrowded galleries (which used to be ruefully empty in the Zia and Junjo era) it was well nigh clear, that the young people had entered the mainstream of watching and responding to politics."<sup>13</sup> When the exercise was over, her party's candidate for the slot, Mr Meraj Khalid won with comfortable majority. First test was successfully over. Next was about to come.

Now, it was her turn to obtain vote of confidence from the Assembly in accordance with provisions of the Constitution, which required securing the same within sixty days of taking the oath of office. She could have waited till February, but she decided to fulfill this mandatory requirement well ahead of stipulated time. Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> December was fixed for the exercise. As she entered in the House, she was greeted with a standing ovation by people present in public galleries. It was a mark of respect for her struggle against dictatorship. This was unprecedented in parliamentary history of Pakistan that a leader was presented with a standing ovation in the Assembly. The rest was a formality. She was declared successful with 148 votes in her favour as against 55 negative votes.<sup>14</sup> She was now the constitutional head of the government for a term of five years, which would be curtailed to just one and a half-year, thanks to the culture of conspiracies in post-Zia Pakistan.

Same day the President was also to be elected. Ghulam Ishaq Khan was the consensus candidate of her party as well as IJI. "I resented him (Ghulam Ishaq Khan) even before I was elected because I had

heard how he was conspiring to prevent the Peoples Party from winning the election," she remembered.<sup>15</sup> She wanted Malik Qasim to be her party's candidate for the presidency. "General Baig rang me up and said that the President and the ISI had a meeting." Obviously President Ishaq wanted to retain the top slot at any cost. They could not trust a popular leader like her or her party to run the show on their own. But the problem with her party was that "we did not have the votes." So if PPP candidate loses, "then Ishaq would have an excuse to throw us out very quickly," she recalled.<sup>16</sup>

"We had votes in the provinces and in the National Assembly, but for the votes of Senate we did not know how they would go. I sat down in Niazi House and discussed with my colleagues. Over there Dr. Niazi was very much in support of Ghulam Ishaq Khan. He said that Ishaq was a bureaucrat and would be a neutral and impartial head. General Babar and Sherpao, to my recollection, also supported him. The majority of the people at that table thought that it would be politically wise to make Ishaq unanimous candidate in an effort to co-opt him rather than to begin with strained relations." "I personally felt that we should contest those elections. Even if we lose. Winning and losing was part of the game but in our sub-continent we sometimes take a different approach to winning and losing."<sup>17</sup>

Hence, as a price tag attached to the transfer of power to the elected representatives, Ghulam Ishaq Khan was elected, on the very same day, as President of Pakistan for next five years.

The hawk had entered in the highest office in disguise of a dove. With this an era of intrigues and conspiracies dawned in the presidency.

The first firework exploded in the backyard province Balochistan just two days after the oath taking ceremony of the President. The Governor of Balochistan, General Muhammed Musa, who was appointed by the President before her elevation, suddenly dissolved the newly elected provincial assembly on 15<sup>th</sup> December, less than a month after it was elected. "I am told that Mr. Zafarullah Jamali spoke either to the President or General Hamid Gul, (DG, ISI) and not to us, and went to dissolve the government," she disclosed.<sup>18</sup>

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The governor maintained that it was his prerogative to dissolve the assembly and the centre had nothing to do with this matter. Perhaps the ground for future dissolution of her government was being prepared.

The move was like a bombshell for her nascent democratic government that had hardly completed two weeks in office. The authority to appoint and remove the governors was withheld by the President. It was deliberately kept out of the ambit of the powers of the Prime Minister.<sup>19</sup> In the beginning on her advice two governors of Sindh and the Punjab were changed. "When I had nominated two governors in the first flash of victory, they had signed it," she remembered. "However, within few days they retracted and when I wanted to nominate another two to the other two provinces, they said, "no", this is the President's prerogative."<sup>20</sup> But strangely enough, entire blame for dissolution of the provincial assembly was placed on her shoulders, ignoring the fact that she was denied the authority to appoint or replace the governors. "I was unfairly blamed for that," she said.<sup>21</sup>

The opposition launched a well-orchestra propaganda against her government, safely sidelining the President and the governor from their attack. She offered them to help undo the infamous Eighth Amendment, which was the root-cause of all such ills and imbalances, but the offer was rejected and the hullabaloo continued unabated.

She was informed at that time by her faithful civilian intelligence agency that the move was a part of a sinister plan to create anarchy-like situation in the country by destabilizing the parliamentary system. She was told that the next move was the dissolution of NWFP assembly, where she had a majority. This was to be followed by the Punjab Assembly resigning in protest.<sup>22</sup>

Forewarned is forearmed. She had spent a long time in the opposition struggling against the dictatorship, so she was least likely to lose nerves on this calculated move on part of her opponents. Throughout the days of this crisis, she remained unruffled and resolute to tackle the imbroglio strictly in accordance with the constitutional and political methods.

First of all, as part of her rescue plan, she took into confidence her political alleys like Khan Abdul Wali Khan, Nawabzada Nasrullah and Moulana Fazalur Rehman and convinced them of her innocence in that sordid matter. Then she informed the media and general public of the deleterious plan to derail the democracy in so short a time. She advised the effected people in Balochistan to follow judicial course and seek remedy from courts. Accordingly, a petition was filed in a high court, which restored the assembly within few weeks. The first move to derail her government and the democratic order at the hands of her opponent failed.

But, the big game had just started. For her, the Punjab was made a worst battle ground, where Nawaz Sharif had virtually assumed the role as if of a leader of an enemy country rather than that of a chief minister of a federating unit. This was unparalleled in the history of Pakistan that a provincial government and that also of the Punjab, otherwise staunchest supporter of strong federation, was openly ridiculing the federal authority of the country.

On 12<sup>th</sup> December, the day Benazir secured the vote of confidence in the National Assembly, the provincial government of the Punjab issued a circular to all its local bodies forbidding them from cooperating with any federal government department or agency.<sup>23</sup> It was a little short of declaring secession from the federal structure of Pakistan.

Few days later another controversy between the federation and the province was allowed to flare up on the question of postings of senior civil officers. It was an old practice that the officers of the federal cadre were posted in the provincial administrations by federal government. The lower rung of bureaucracy, however, consisted of the employees of respective provincial service cadres. As per past practice, when federal government transferred few of its officers from the Punjab and posted few others in their place, the provincial government reacted very unkindly. The chief minister threatened to expel all the senior federal government employees from the province, numbering in hundreds, if the federal government insisted on the implementation of the orders.<sup>24</sup> Day in and day out venomous statements emanating from the Punjab government functionaries

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against the federal government appeared in the press.

This was a serious blow to very foundation of the federation and unity of the country. But, establishment remained unmoved continuing its hobnob with the belligerent chief minister. The President seemed quite encouraging towards this tendency by granting generous interviews to the opponents of the Prime Minister. All this was taking place just a week or two before the country was to host summit meeting of seven South Asian countries including India, with the objective to bring peace and prosperity in region.

She decided to visit Sindh and the Punjab before coming back to play host to the conference. Karachi was to welcome her first after her becoming the Prime Minister. As her plane landed in the twilight of 22<sup>nd</sup> December, the official security arrangements broke down at Karachi airport. Enthusiasm of the people was uncontrollable. Thousands of her admirers carrying banners and party flags broke security barriers and reached at tarmac where a long line of dignitaries waited for her plane. The enthusiasm and fervor was so high that few of the ardent workers climbed up a tall crane used for repairing jumbo jets and hosted party's tricolor flag over there.<sup>25</sup>

As she, along with her husband, alighted from plane, the airport premises resounded with slogans of Jeay Bhutto. It was a heart-warming welcome for her. She exchanged courtesies with the greeting rank and file. Her husband took over steering of a jeep that was to take them to Bilawal House, some thirty kilometers away from airport. As jeep started moving, her official escort was swept away by crowd. No official security men were in sight. She was once again in the loving ocean of masses. This long procession of buses, trucks, cars and motorcycles began moving towards city. On way to Bilawal House, throughout Shara-e-Faisal, the main thoroughfare of the city, large throngs of people waited for hours to have a glimpse of her.<sup>26</sup> This reassured her of the masses support for her cause.

After three days' stay in Karachi, she was scheduled to visit Lahore. Nawaz Sharif initially decided not to receive her at airport on pretext of going to Karachi that day.<sup>27</sup> It was a violation of the official protocol, as it required a chief minister to be present at the reception of the Prime Minister. But, then, those who pulled the

strings from behind told him to be present at airport on her arrival. A word from the presidency was enough to ensure his presence in Lahore at the time of her first official visit. When she reached at Lahore, Nawaz Sharif stood there and held talks with her apparently to evolve a working relationship between central and provincial governments.

While all this was happening on home front, she was preparing for three-day summit of seven South Asian neighbors under umbrella of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The venue was Islamabad. The heads of states and governments of member countries had confirmed to attend. It was her first official encounter with international leaders as an elected Pakistani leader. A situation had dawned where she, who had yet not completed her first month in office, had not only to represent her nation at conference but also to chair the proceedings. She was to take over the mantle of leadership of entire region in capacity of the chairperson of SAARC for next year. It was a challenge again.

Soon, the planes originating from all parts of South Asia hovered over picturesque Islamabad. Leaders started pouring in. They included Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India, President Hussain Muhammad Ershad of Bangladesh, King Jigme Wangchuck of Bhutan, President Mamoan Abdul Gayoom of Maldives, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal and President JR Jayewardene of Sri Lanka.<sup>28</sup>

It was for the first time since 1964 that an Indian Prime Minister had come to Pakistan on an official visit. A quarter of a century ago, it was Rajiv Gandhi's grandfather Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who had visited the country. Afterwards there was a big vacuum during which two countries had fought two wars – in 1965 and in 1971. The peace in region, inhabiting about a billion lives, depended entirely on the détente between these two traditionally rival countries. In this backdrop, high hopes were attached with this high-level meeting.

The inaugural session was held in the evening. She was formally elected as chairperson of the Association. Her first concern was peace, and she asked her counterparts in the region to make South Asia “free from the danger of war, with its nations directing all their



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efforts to combat poverty, disease and ignorance.”<sup>29</sup> She presented the view that the region could emerge as one of the “world centers of progress and prosperity.” She stressed the need for regional solutions in order to curb arms race, danger of nuclear proliferation and war. She stressed that, even the greatest military powers had come to realize that they could not carry the burden of a constantly spiraling arms race.

Amidst thunderous applause she told the assembly of various heads of state and government that her country believed in peaceful co-existence. “Wars never solve problem, rather they create it.”<sup>30</sup> She quoted examples of Vietnam and Afghanistan, showing limits of military power as an instrument of policy. She also gave example of the fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq, which had also “demonstrated the futility of war as a means of attaining national aims.” She observed that “unresolved disputes, mutual suspicions and rivalries” had divided the region’s countries in the past and kept them from coming together whole-heartedly in a joint effort for the greater good of their people.”

She reminded the participating leaders that they “owed it to their people to take a fresh look” at the things. “The truth was that our people faced the same common problems of poverty, disease, slums and ignorance -- and it is for the vanquishing of these enemies that we should direct all our efforts,”. She pointed out towards the irony of the situation in which some of the countries of region were spending too great a proportion of their national resources on maintaining large armies to face each other, which she thought could be diverted towards betterment of people. She stressed the need for considering new approaches “in consonance with economic and technological realities of today.” She also touched upon the important global issues and showed her satisfaction over peaceful solution of the conflicts in Cyprus, Western Sahara, Kampuchea, Angola, Namibia and Palestine as well as the developments in relations among the great powers.<sup>31</sup>

Her discourse was highly commended. Her address was formally adopted as a conference document.

Next day she hosted a luncheon session for the visiting dignitaries

at capital Islamabad's most beautiful scenic spot Daman-e-Koh, in the adjoining hills, overlooking the sprawling city. She, along with her foreign minister and senior officials was present to greet the leaders as they arrived after brief intervals along with their foreign ministers and other delegates. In this relaxed atmosphere, the leaders of the region went over each clause of proposed draft of Islamabad Declaration and joint press communiqué of fourth summit, earlier prepared by the council of foreign ministers. Just before lunch they finished off their work. They posed for a photograph with her and freely strolled in the area to enjoy breath-taking beauty of lush-green botanics.<sup>32</sup>

Saturday was last day of conference. Concluding session started in morning at State Bank building auditorium. The guests had occupied their seats twenty minutes prior to the arrival of the heads of state and government. She dressed in an emerald green Shalwar-Kameez and covered with a white woolen shawl, entered in hall to conduct 80-minute session. With her in chair, the summit declared the year 1989 as year against drug-abuse and decided to launch a program 'SAARC-2000 - a basic needs perspective' program in the region. It was resolved that member countries would focus their attention on drug related problems of the region.<sup>33</sup> The declaration required member countries to draw a regional plan with specific targets to be met by end of the century in areas of common interest such as food, clothing, shelter, education, primary healthcare, population planning and environmental protection. The summit also decided to declare year 1990 as 'SAARC Year of the Girl Child', and called for chalking out specific programs and activities to increase public awareness towards problems of young females.<sup>34</sup> With a woman Prime Minister chairing the proceedings, leaders of the region had suddenly become more concerned about welfare and uplift of female population.

Her guests from South Asian countries expressed their deep sense of appreciation for the outstanding manner in which she had conducted the meetings as chairperson of the summit. She was described as young, energetic and dynamic leader of Pakistan.<sup>35</sup> The leaders also expressed their profound gratitude for gracious hospitality extended to them during their stay in Pakistan. She, in her conclud-

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ing remarks, expressed her deep appreciation for the friendliness, cooperation, understanding and valuable contribution made by her distinguished guests during formal and informal deliberations. She assured them that her efforts would aim at supplementing national, bilateral, regional and global efforts to deal with serious problems being faced by the region. She also expressed gratitude for being elected as chairperson of the association.<sup>36</sup>

While the rest of the guests left for their countries, Rajiv Gandhi stayed on for some more time to conclude three treaties on bilateral relations between the two countries.

Both the young leaders of Pakistan and India had few things in common. Both were born after the partition of 1947 so had not witnessed the bloody trauma, the thoughts of which had haunted previous generations from advancing objectively. Then, both of them were highly educated and broad-minded individuals with a vision for future. In addition to that they were scions of two political families of their respective countries. Bhuttos and Nehrus still commanded imaginations of their respective nations. Those were their parents, her father and Rajiv's mother, who had signed the historic Simla Agreement in 1972 in capacities of elected leaders of the two countries.

These similarities were enough to set a common wave-length between the two leaders for attempting to lessen strains from bilateral relations. They met for few times during Rajiv's stay in Islamabad. The outcome of these parlays came in form of signing of three agreements binding the two countries not to attack each other's nuclear facilities, to avoid double taxation and to enhance cultural co-operation.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of Rajiv's visit, both of the leaders addressed a joint news conference, where they held that their parleys had led to a 'ground swell' of peace between the two countries. The signing of these agreements was a 'notable achievement' when viewed in the context of the two countries' almost event-less relationship since the Simla Accord signed in 1972.

A burden was lifted. An event had come to a successful conclusion. It was time to rest for a day before the dawn of a New Year that was to bring a fresh pack of triumphs and trials.

## Chapter 9

# Triumphs and Trials

(1989)

The New Year's sun dawned to her at her Karachi residence. It was Sunday. The mild winter of Karachi was highly pleasant and enjoyable. But, it was not the time for her to enjoy the weather.

The political atmosphere of the country was extremely hot. There were challenges all around. Her home province Sindh was in flames. The chief minister of country's biggest province, the Punjab, was in open rebellion, threatening the very foundations of the federation. The fundamentalists all over the country had raised a storm of hue and cry against her elevation and had declared her rule as 'un-Islamic' because of her being a female. The unemployment had touched the most alarming level. Wherever she went the armies of the unemployed youth gathered with written applications in their hands. Foreign relations were in disarray. Economy was in shambles. Miseries were abound. Each and every wound needed this doctor's immediate attention. She had to fight for the life and well being of the patient. The pressing urge for work! This was how she welcomed the New Year.

The political landscape that had emerged in the country was riddled with discrepancies, thanks to the powerful establishment's

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maneuvers not to hand over undiluted power to her Pakistan Peoples Party.

In Balochistan, Akbar Bugti had forged a fragile coalition with help of other political parties. In Sindh a coalition existed between PPP and MQM. Though her party had two-third majority and did not need MQM's support to form the government, but, in order to create a sense of participation among the urban areas of the province, MQM was taken on board. In NWFP also, more than one party had to run a coalition government headed by PPP's chief minister. Even at centre, PPP enjoying majority was cooperating with MQM and other political parties for running the government smoothly.

The Punjab, however, was converted into a bastion of all anti-PPP forces, despite the fact that almost equal number of voters had opted for her party in both national and provincial elections. She hoped that when the dust would settle down and the electioneering spirits would calm down, all elected political forces in the province, irrespective of their party affiliations, and would learn to co-exist and co-operate with each other. But this pious dream was not coming true.

By now, Sindh was going through an unprecedented wave of terrorism. The lawlessness had reached to the heights during preceding years. Her first priority, of course, was safety and security of life, honour and property of the people -- the law and order.

She called a meeting of her cabinet at Sindh governor's house at Karachi, where members of her federal cabinet assembled in morning. She believed in collective wisdom. For hours and hours, the cabinet discussed threadbare all ways and means to stop degeneration of society's social fabric and to curb menace of terrorism, drug trafficking, robberies, illegal arms and other such evils. The issues were analyzed, weaknesses identified, opinions presented and finally necessary decisions of immediate and long-term nature were taken. It was decided that social causes of the menace be eliminated. The law enforcement agencies were to be revamped in order to ensure the security and safety of public life and property.<sup>1</sup>

Then there was another meeting of Inter-Provincial Co-ordination Committee. The ugly legacies of martial law's dictatorial rule were

to be removed. It came to her notice that a large number of otherwise very promising students were rusticated from various government-controlled universities by Zia's dictatorial government, with a single stroke of pen, through Martial Law Regulation 60, because the students had demanded for democracy and had spoken for their right of self-expression. Thus their careers were hijacked and future blackened. She could not bear all this. She ordered for an immediate withdrawal of rustication orders.<sup>2</sup> When the parleys ended, it was well over sunset.

Next day she proceeded to the shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, a great Sufi mystic of the region. For countless generations, her ancestors including her father had been in a bond of love and reverence with this great Sufi saint of Sindh. Her presence there was continuation of that old tradition. Around her were throngs of people, who had never wavered through the eleven long years of dark rule. Old and young, men and women, rich and poor, all had come to have a glimpse of her. They considered her someone from amongst themselves whom they had voted to be their Prime Minister. She offered *fatiha* and laid a wreath before proceeding to Larkana to attend birthday celebrations of her late father. After the dawn of democracy, everything felt different. The atmosphere had changed. That killing suffocation was no more in the air. It was an air filled with freedom. A very clean and purified air to breathe.

After a day's stay at Larkana, as she reached Islamabad, her guest from Soviet Union, Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov was waiting for her with a letter from President Mikhail Gorbachov, "The changes that had taken place in Pakistan open new opportunities for improving bilateral relations and restoring them to the level that had been achieved under the late Pakistani leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto," read the message from the President of world's second superpower, with whom relations had touched the lowest ebb during Zia rule.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan's foreign policy was taking a proper shape, ending unnecessary tensions with the neighbors and other centers of power in the world.

But the vested interests, which had ruled the country for most of its life, had only thrived in confrontations. The new bent of for-

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eign policy was not of much liking to them. Mian Nawaz Sharif was playing as spokesman of this unseen 'establishment,' at that time. He criticized federal government for giving 'more attention' to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during SAARC summit.

"The public reaction to this attitude of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is not a positive one,"<sup>4</sup> the provincial chief minister commented while addressing the Punjab cabinet, ignoring the fact that as a chief minister of a province, he was not supposed to indulge in the matters of foreign policy. But perhaps it was not the time for observing such niceties. A decade later, in 1999, as Prime Minister of Pakistan, he would be accused by same 'establishment' for same crime, to give 'more attention' to the Indian Prime Minister, this time Atal Bihari Vajpai. But, those were different days. A special press briefing was arranged by provincial government of Punjab on 7<sup>th</sup> January to inform that though the chief minister believed that "his mandate was confined to the province of the Punjab, he could not remain isolated from an overall situation in the country."<sup>5</sup>

On fortieth day of taking oath of her office, she took her first trip abroad, an unofficial visit to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah. A large gathering of Pakistanis working in Saudi Arabia greeted her at Jeddah airport. "Today, we have a democratic government and I am to perform Umrah, to submit my humble self before the Creator to seek His forgiveness for the shortcomings and blessings for the people of Pakistan, for the stability of the country, for the national unity."<sup>6</sup>

Everyone was anxious to listen to her and her policies for the future, especially in wake of unending rebellious attitude of the Punjab provincial government and its chief minister. "We are determined to create peaceful conditions in the country where honour of all citizens will be safeguarded," she assured her audience that January in Saudi Arabia. "We believe in the Divine justice. Our doors are open to anyone who believes in serving Pakistan, because everyone has to live in the land... Pakistan's real destiny was that it should become an exemplary country, free of poverty and unemployment and that every one should live an honourable life," she shared her vision for future of the country with expatriate Pakistanis.<sup>7</sup>

But, this vision was hard to achieve, especially in view of praetorian opposition from the stubborn 'establishment,' which was being represented 'democratically' by Nawaz Sharif. The federal government had ordered for release from prisons of those persons who had been put behind the bars by the martial law government for their singular sin, of demanding for the restoration of democracy. Having been a part of that dictatorial legacy, and now working as the custodian of that regime's interests, Nawaz Sharif vehemently opposed this move calling it interference in the provincial autonomy. Even, the development projects sponsored by the federal government were termed as 'interference.'<sup>8</sup> But just a decade later, as the Prime Minister, same Nawaz Sharif would suspend the elected provincial assembly of Sindh and its duly elected chief minister, because of slight deviation from federal government's policies in utter disregard of the provincial autonomy!

Undaunted by all these irritations, she absorbed her fully in putting the country on the rails of progress and prosperity. Henceforth neglected areas were given due attention. The cabinet meetings were discussing the issues relating to health, education, and social welfare, instead of devising ways and means to silence the opponents. "She was the only Man in the cabinet," remarked Siraj Shamsuddin.<sup>9</sup> For a change, issues like controlling spread of fatal disease like AIDS were the subject of federal cabinet.

This won her and the country a great respect and honor in the international community. On 16<sup>th</sup> January, the American Congressman Stephen Solarz, who had been on a visit to Pakistan said: "We are leaving with renewed respect and admiration for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto." Talking to newsmen at the Islamabad airport, before leaving back home, Solarz said he had been highly impressed by Prime Minister's intellect and grasp of subjects.<sup>10</sup>

But, this praise brought out another allegation against her. The Amir (top leader) of Jamat-e-Islami said that the country was being driven towards "secularism" by the Prime Minister in an attempt to win the favour of 'Indo-Jewish lobby, backed by the United States.' To the bewilderment of press reporters, during the years of cold war, he said, "This is a big conspiracy against Pakistan and Soviet Union



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is also “a party” to it.”<sup>11</sup> How all these powers had converged to support her, was definitely not the subject of his further talk.

The United States was witnessing the inauguration of President George Bush as 41<sup>st</sup> occupant of the White House that year in January. So smooth transfer of power! Here in Pakistan, Benazir had to struggle extremely hard to keep the paper-boat of democracy afloat in muddy and stormy waters of conspiracies, confrontation and sycophancy. The establishment-supported chief minister of the Punjab had crossed almost all the limits of decency. When she went to Lahore on 19<sup>th</sup> January, the chief minister or any of his representatives even did not bother to come to receive her at airport, as required by the usual protocol.<sup>12</sup>

He went a step further, when he declared in an open public meeting that federal government could not erect even a single electric pole in Punjab without his permission. “He was reacting on Sunday to a report about installing electric poles in the rural constituencies and pledges of the construction of school, and college building and provision of Sui gas by the Federal Government as these Constitutionally could not install a single electric pole, provide gas connection or construct any school or college building in any province without the prior sanction of the provincial government,” daily Dawn reported him saying on 22<sup>nd</sup> January at Khanpur.

Despite all this, she was greeted with utmost enthusiasm and love, wherever she went in the Punjab. On same day when her provincial chief minister was speaking against federal government in Khanpur, a few kilometers away in Faisalabad, she was being accorded a warm and spontaneous reception. It took her motorcade about two hours to reach the destination, just twelve kilometers away. A large number of people had turned out on roads to greet her. The crowds standing on either side of the road, and some perched on rooftops of their houses, showered flower petals and warmly cheered her as she passed by them. She waved back to acknowledge their greetings. “The People’s Government was determined to establish an egalitarian society free from injustices, exploitation, poverty, hunger and illiteracy.” “It would be the earnest endeavor of her government that the houses of the politicians were not raided and their sleep was not

disturbed at night as in the past.”<sup>13</sup>

She once again approached the Punjab’s provincial government to at least agree to talk on a minimum agenda of just five points. The points were; war on narcotics, check on illegal arms, promotion of health, spread of education and checking the cost of living.<sup>14</sup> They were all purely social issues in nature. But, the response was negative. The provincial government was not even ready to talk on these vital issues. She had to go single-handedly. “Pakistan would no longer be a heaven for drug-pushers and narcotics barons,” she declared while inaugurating a four-day seminar on “drugs, law and justice” organized by the federal government in collaboration with US Drug Enforcement Administration. “Let this gathering send a clear message that entire Pakistan is united in the fight against drug proliferation.”<sup>15</sup> In the following days, her government adopted quite strict policies to check the menace of the drug and many big fish were arrested. The result was that during her entire tenure, this otherwise an ever-growing business went damper.

The realm of the foreign policy was one of the main concerns to her. The reason was obvious. Eleven long years of dictatorial rule had left the country isolated in the comity of nations. Her country had an image problem in international community, which considered it a primitive state engrossed in fundamentalist issues, miles far from the modern state characteristics. The policies of the past had strangled the prospects of foreign investment, leaving the country under crushing burden of debt and financial liabilities. She, being an Oxford and Harvard graduate of politics and international relations, knew well that in an era of globalization her country would stand no chance to progress and to prosper if it remained off the mainstream. She had to change the perceptions and tell the world that things in Pakistan have changed and now it is a modern, forward-looking state, a marketplace feasible for investment.

One of her major initiative was to regain the membership of Commonwealth. Since her coming to power, the foreign office in Islamabad was working overtime to negotiate the country’s re-entry in this Great Britain-led prestigious club of nations.

She had already met all the seven heads of the South Asian

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states on occasion of SAARC summit in Islamabad, and had leaped forward towards détente with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Then, the Middle Eastern wealthy Arab countries and the western neighbors were of the foremost importance in terms of religious, economic and geographical bonds. She had gone to Saudi Arabia and had parleys over there. In the beginning of February she received in Karachi her royal guest from United Arab Emirates, Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahiyah, one of the closest friends of her father. Now was the time to move to the giant in the North, the China.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February, she along with her entourage landed at Beijing airport, where she was received warmly and was taken to the Great Hall. China's support for Pakistan has been vital for almost entire period of its existence. Having strained relations with India and Soviet Union, China has been the only power in the region, which Pakistan could trust for support, solace and consolation. Though Soviet Union had started withdrawing its forces from Afghanistan, but a continued Chinese support was still needed to keep the process of withdrawal going on smoothly. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng greeted her at the entrance of the Hall. A formal gun salute was presented to her. After the welcome ceremony was over, she sat with her host to sort out a variety of issues ranging from technological assistance to the economic ties, and from demilitarization of Indian Ocean region to the cultural cooperation between the two countries. She had also a meeting with Deng Xiaoping, the top most leader and the architect of new China.<sup>16</sup>

Her attentive hosts were listening to her when a bad news came from home. At least five people were reported dead and scores of others injured, when an agitated and angry crowd of several thousand people, organized by her fundamentalist opposition in Islamabad, clashed with police during a public demonstration to protest against a book 'Satanic Verses' by Salman Rushdie, published in England last year!<sup>17</sup> She wondered what her government had to do with a book published a year ago in some other country, and especially when she was away on an important official foreign visit.

But, this was not an era of such niceties in Pakistan as yet. Islamabad witnessed possibly its worst rioting on that Sunday afternoon

when the protest demonstration turned into a running battle between rioters and police for about three hours. Unaware of intensity of forthcoming tornado, few unsuspecting policemen were caught by the crowd. When the police reinforcement came to the assistance of their beleaguered colleagues, a bloody scuffle took place, leaving quite a few bodies on the ground. She wondered what these innocent people had to do with Salman Rushdie or his book. She rushed back home.

When she was back, it was reported to her, that certain powerful intelligence agencies, headed and manned by fundamentalist elements, in collusion with the forces opposed to democracy were bent upon destabilizing the democratic government. The objective was to tell the people and whole of the world that democracy does not suit Pakistanis and that the political leadership was not competent enough to run the country. The efforts to discredit democracy and her government continued unabated.

Soon afterwards, her opposition created an unprecedented stir in the National Assembly. The country's highest elected law-making forum was reduced to a pantomime of rowdy scenes while a debate on foreign policy was going on.<sup>18</sup> Messages were clear. Bow before the ideologues of the diehard religious extremism, or the perils would continue to pour in. She did not bow.

Next day, she flew to Tokyo, where leaders from all over the world had gathered for the last rites of late Emperor Hirohito. On this occasion 163 countries had sent their top representatives to Japan, including US President George Bush, French President Francois Mitterrand, West German President Richard Von Weizsaecker, Prince Philip of Britain, Philippines President Corazon Aquino, King Hussain of Jordan, and others. It was perhaps the largest gathering of world leaders and the celebrities that year.<sup>19</sup> She was amongst them to pay last respects to Emperor Hirohito in a solemn time-honored funeral ritual held in bleak rainy weather at Tokyo's Shinjuku Gyoen Gardens. She watched the late emperor's fifty-five years old son and successor Emperor Akihito reading a farewell statement, and the crowd bowing before the Emperor's coffin at the climax of thirteen hours of state and Shinto-style imperial funeral

rites.

In that young age, she had already emerged as a celebrity, because of her struggle for democracy. All the important leaders found this an appropriate opportunity to hold parleys with this dynamic, intelligent and youthful Asian leader. Pakistan's case was being heard with utmost interest and attention. This was the time that she met for the first time with President Corazon Aquino, who alike hers had waged a determined struggle against dictatorship. Both the women leaders of two Asian democracies decided to remain in close touch with each other and agreed that the affinity between them should be reflected in the development of relations between the two countries.<sup>20</sup>

She was on her way back home, when she learnt that US Senate had passed a resolution to congratulate her on her assumption as an elected leader of Pakistan and paid her tributes for restoring full human rights and freeing all political prisoners in the country. The resolution praised her extraordinary political and personal courage "in the face of prolonged imprisonment and family tragedy."<sup>21</sup>

Back at home very primitive issues waited for her ...the status of women in society. While whole of the civilized world, including a number of Muslim states such as Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, had been moving ahead without gender prejudice, and with equal rights for men and women, the role and the status of a woman was still a debatable issue in Pakistan. While an enlightened class respected women, a conservative class still carried the traditional legacy of looking down at women with contempt and ridicule. Unfortunately, this class though small in size had a lot of influence and power at its command, unleashing it time and again in the name of 'traditions' and 'beliefs'

During last many years, especially during the dictatorial periods, a number of laws had come on the statue book discriminating against women. This was a matter of grave concern to her.

On the first day of March she announced her government's intention to repeal all such laws that discriminated against women.<sup>22</sup>

The next day, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, a so-called 'Supreme Council of the Muttahida Ulema' decided in Lahore, home to the rebellious chief

minister, to observe 10<sup>th</sup> March as a protest day to resent over her induction, being a woman, as Prime Minister. It was decided that the Ulema (religious scholars) would deliver Khutbas (sermons) during Friday prayers on the subject throughout the country on that day. The meeting advised her party (PPP) to elect some man in her place as the party leader and the Prime Minister!<sup>23</sup>

She knew who was behind this uncalled for move and why such things were taking place in Lahore only. Few days later, she gave her critics a well-reasoned reply. "Sovereignty belongs to God. Men and women are His trustees. The trustees vote for a government. Therefore, as the trustees have voted for government, that government has come into being by the will of Allah as the expression of His sovereignty. So, it is Islamic to have a government led by a woman," was her riposte.<sup>24</sup>

Though the controversy did not end fully well, but she chose to ignore such irritations. Her strategy proved correct and after some time these things died their own death.

She was a luminary all over the world. The BBC World Service invited her as star guest, and while sitting in Islamabad she had to respond live to the questions asked from the world over. The past programmes had guests like British Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher and the Indian Prime Minister Mr Rajiv Gandhi. Now it was the test of her wits. As the broadcast began, telephones started ringing unceasingly in London headquarters of BBC, where moderator Nick Worrell had to respond to the largest number of calls in the series. She was questioned on a variety of subjects, ranging from Salman Rushdie affair to Kashmir dispute and to a possible pre-emptive strike by India against Pakistan's nuclear installations.<sup>25</sup>

"The Rushdie book has been made a pretext to create anarchy in Pakistan as the previous government had even invited Rushdie to visit Pakistan", she said in a reply to a question by a Londoner. "Repeating blasphemy was in itself a blasphemy. You commit blasphemy when you propagate it. The best thing would have been to ignore the book." A caller from Vienna asked her how she would keep the army out of politics. Her reply was that the army wanted to ensure democracy in the country as democracy alone could keep the

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four provinces together.

To another questioner she told that Pakistan was fully capable of defending her nuclear installations. "We have just signed an agreement with India not to attack each other's nuclear installations." A caller from Northern UK asked her whether the decision of her father to pull out of the Commonwealth was right, she smilingly said, every daughter has to say that her father was right, but added, in 1971 the emotions were high. "But, later Pakistan herself recognized the state of Bangladesh and the cause of protest was no longer there," was her reply.<sup>26</sup>

While all this was going on, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's sympathetic ear remained exclusively for her opponents. Whosoever belonged to IJI, found the doors of presidency wide open for him or her. After every meeting of opposition's stalwarts with the President, the attitude of provincial governments of Punjab and Balochistan became more and more defiant towards her and the federal government. The government of Punjab threatened even to unilaterally expel all the officers of federal government stationed in the province,<sup>27</sup> in case federal government exercised its Constitutional right of transferring them within the department. Even Mujibur Rehman, the father of the Bangladesh, had not done so when East Pakistan was on the verge of secession. On much lesser note, the military action was ordered in the disenchanted East Pakistan in 1971. But, now perhaps things had changed. Or perhaps the dimensions of the political game had changed.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March she went to hold a two-hour meeting with the President. She told him that this trend of assuming an antagonistic posture by a provincial government against her government would not augur well for the country. Ghulam Ishaq Khan's reply was that he would try to narrow down the differences amongst the 'feuding parties,'<sup>28</sup> as if it was an international or inter-state conflict, and not the defiance of a provincial chief executive, created and nourished by the power-brokers of Pakistani politics, against the federation. But, on it there was no sign of worry on the face of Ghulam Ishaq Khan or Mirza Aslam Beg. Whenever she asked for using their good offices to ease the unnecessary tensions, she was advised by them to

get more accommodative. She wondered what else she could do!

By middle of the month, she undertook a tour of Lahore to personally extend the olive branch, yet again, to Nawaz Sharif. In his presence, she publicly stated that her government was committed to a policy of non-interference in provincial matters, regardless of the fact as to which party was ruling there. "The provincial governments should determine ways and means to run their administration in peace," she told reporters on her arrival. "A democratic era had dawned after a long night of dictatorship, but the people were not happy with the present political situation. The people, whether with the PPP or the IJI, or any other party, wanted tranquility and peace. They had given their verdict in the elections, and now wanted polemics to end," was her message that day.<sup>29</sup> She tried to make it clear to him that the federal government and her party had accepted the verdict of the elections with good grace and were not contemplating to bring any change in the political set up that way.

The response to this gesture of good will was an attack, within three weeks, on a National Identity Card issuing federal office in Punjab by 'unknown' assailants against whom the provincial police was not even willing to register a case.<sup>30</sup>

But, she had to move ahead. The country needed prosperity: more investment, more resources, more employment and more industries. During fourth month of her office, her government announced a new industrial policy that envisaged major incentives, including introduction of one-window facility for accelerating the pace of investment in the country. Under the new policy, Ministry of Industries was to ensure the provision of infrastructure to industrialists within sixty days of the approval of a project. The sanctioning procedure had been liberalized, and projects with capital cost up to one billion rupees were not to require sanctioning. A Board of Investment, headed by Prime Minister herself, was to monitor the pace progress of industrialization.<sup>31</sup> These were revolutionary concepts so far as Pakistan was concerned.

Her another bold initiative was in the realm of separation of judiciary from executive. Since the inception of Pakistan, and even before that, throughout the colonial era, the executive organ of the



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state was entrusted with judicial functions also. So a deputy commissioner, the district's administrative head, was also a district magistrate. Similarly an assistant commissioner was also a sub-divisional magistrate, and so on. This amalgamation of executive powers with the judicial ones, vested in the executive hands, obstructed considerably the realization of the concept of good governance.

Such an arrangement, as a matter of fact, was the negation of the very concept of justice. By the end of April, she took up this issue seriously and directed her law minister to examine the existing legislation in order that the judiciary may be separated from the executive. A big chunk of money was placed at the disposal of the Chief Justice of Pakistan for improvement of the judiciary. "We believe not only in the independence of judiciary, but also in the supremacy of law." "The days of hangman's knot, lashes and torture were gone for good," she assured them.<sup>32</sup>

The biggest challenge that her government accepted during her first tenure was perhaps her effort to curtail the role of intelligence agencies in the internal politics of the country. Over the years, Zia ul Huq had used the country's premier counter-intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to perpetuate his personal rule. While the agency's achievements as a counter-intelligence agency necessarily remained exemplary, its political cell had acquired a larger than life role for itself. The ISI's close interaction with the American CIA in Afghanistan, in conduct of one of the biggest covert operations in the world since the end of Vietnam War, had equipped the agency with required sophistication. The success of Afghan operation not only gave a fillip to the organization, but also encouraged it to take over the running of the Afghan policy from the foreign office.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps, there was nothing wrong in running the Afghan policy so long as there was a nod from political leadership of the country and there was an agreement between Pakistan and its allies about their aims in Afghanistan. After all, in some areas of policy the CIA and National Security Council in the United States assume greater importance than the State Department. But, under Zia, not only the ISI was encouraged to run the Afghan policy, but also to per-

form important internal 'security functions' under martial law to the extent that those functions often led to the serious abuses of human rights.<sup>34</sup>

Even after rule of Zia was over, the agency under its zealot chief continued to indulge itself in the internal political matters of the country, including running and backing the establishment's political parties and the personalities. This was hampering the growth of this premier agency on professional lines. Few of the commanding officers had turned themselves into ideologues of a new state ideology. The agency was not ready to adjust itself in light of the new national and international political realities. This was worrisome.

A month after coming to power, in January, she decided to objectively study the working of various intelligence agencies. Accordingly, a committee headed by Air Chief Marshal Zulfikar Ali Khan, a person with an impeccable professional record, was constituted to fulfill the task. The report it prepared was submitted to her by the end of March. The report reportedly gave high marks to ISI for the quality of its intelligence reporting and the success of its counter intelligence efforts in checking Indian subversion in Sindh and for its skillful handling of the assistance to Mujahideen. But it was also said that the report criticized the agency for dabbling too deep in domestic politics, which was something, totally outside its field of responsibility. The committee recommended putting a full stop to the practice of shadowing political parties except in case where there was a suspicion of foreign influence or funding involved.<sup>35</sup> This led the committee finally to recommend top-level changes in the outfit.

In this backdrop she decided to change the top spymaster, Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, who had been the inspiring force behind formation of IJI, on pattern of acronym ISI. The general had the reputation of an anti-democracy person. During 1983's Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), as an army officer, he had played pivotal role in brutally crushing the movement in Multan division.<sup>36</sup> This brought him to the notice of Zia ul Huq who viewed his performance with a mark of appreciation and rewarded him by his elevation as a commander of an armored division in Multan. He

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paid back the favour, allegedly by playing significant role in getting him 'elected' as President in 1984 referendum and in holding the 1985's party-less elections in his area smoothly and successfully.<sup>37</sup> His position had provided him an opportunity to develop his clout in the fundamentalists and extreme hardcore elements within the country as well as in Afghanistan during those hey days of US-sponsored Jihad. She replaced him with a retired lieutenant general, Shams Rehman Kallu, as the head of ISI.

Though the orders were implemented, but the new chief was not extended with whole-hearted support from his subordinate staff and colleagues. The activities relating to the sensitive matters shifted to other power centers.

This move on her part unleashed a number of powerful tremors in political set up of the country. The first ones to react were her political opponents in the Punjab, the IJI, saying "the politically-motivated changes in the sensitive institutions dealing with national security reflect complete disregard by the PPP for considerations of national security and defense."<sup>38</sup> This was followed by a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign against her government alleging sell-out of Kashmir to India and acting as Zionist agent, and so on and so forth.

But, this was just the tip of the ice-burg. The move acted like a catalyst. All the forces that were working against her behind the curtain came out in open. Firstly, it was mostly Mian Nawaz Sharif who was creating a series of troubles for her. Now, the Balochistan chief minister also came in open and expressed his resentment over her policies. He came to Islamabad and held meetings with the President and the army chief. On 13<sup>th</sup> April, after the meetings ended, he addressed a press conference, in which he hit hard on her proposed people's programme. Referring to his meeting with the chief of the army staff he said, "It was a routine meeting." Asked why the chief ministers of only those provinces meet the army chief where IJI or other parties were in coalition government, he counter questioned, "Why the Prime Minister meets the COAS."<sup>39</sup>

The attacks now further intensified. By the end of May, when she returned from Ankara after holding talks with Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, she found opposition forces crystallizing against

her. On 27<sup>th</sup> May, the two beleaguered chief ministers of the Punjab and Balochistan joined hands against her and addressed a joint press conference in Islamabad. They 'predicted' fresh elections, if according to them, the tense situation was allowed to continue. Nawaz Sharif was of the view that fresh elections were the best solution to the situation in the country, ignoring the fact that the elections were held a mere six months earlier and the political scenario of the country had not changed significantly since then.

Akbar Bugti, on his way to Quetta, had a stopover at Lahore airport, where his counterpart in the Punjab accompanied by some of his cabinet colleagues, had gone to receive him. Bugti, when asked if the confrontation of the two provinces with the federation did not pose a threat to the democratic process, said: "If there is some kind of danger, the Prime Minister has more at stake. We have nothing to lose."<sup>40</sup>

The crystallization of the forces against her continued. On 1<sup>st</sup> June, Ghulam Ishaq Khan received together Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, chief of National Peoples Party, a breakaway faction of her party. In the evening, it was decided by the IJI Parliamentary party which met under the chairmanship of Nawaz Sharif, to form a "Combined Opposition Parliamentary Party" (COP) with Jatoi as its chief. The parties being gathered under this umbrella had nothing in common except their contempt for her and her party. The objective was to dislodge her.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June her government presented its first-ever-annual budget. It had numerous new features aimed at social development. It provided for the establishment of a women's bank to ease the difficulties being faced by women in seeking banking facilities, and a housing finance corporation for extending loaning facilities to the poor people to build their houses. In backward northern areas, the mark-up rate was reduced to six per cent on financing for mineral exploration, hotels, food processing and other smaller projects. To provide fillip to export-oriented industries in Punjab, the establishment of dry ports at Rawalpindi and Faisalabad was announced.<sup>41</sup>

Top priority was accorded to the sectors of education, rural development and power-generation. The allocation for education sector saw an increase of sixty eight per cent over the previous

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year's allocations, with a big chunk reserved for primary education. It was hailed as a development-oriented budget. The Opposition had planned to bring the people on roads against her government after presentation of the budget, expecting that it would be tough one keeping in view of the stringent financial conditions of the country. But, the budget had been getting satisfactory response from the public and the move could not even take off. She had a sigh of relief.

This was the time for her to move to another front, her first state visit to Washington. There she had to discuss renewed US military and economic support for her country, Indian nuclear program and the Afghan issue with newly installed Bush administration. She was first foreign head of government that had been invited by President George Bush for a state visit. It "underlined the importance the US attached to its relations with Pakistan and to the triumph of democracy in the country."<sup>42</sup> She was about to embark, when she heard about the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the man who inspired an Islamic revolution in neighboring Iran, and who had been his country's spiritual leader for the past decade. She sent her condolences to Tehran. Passing away of such a great and popular leader next door would have far-reaching consequences in the region, she thought.

On 4<sup>th</sup> June she arrived in Geneva in the afternoon for an overnight stay. Next day she flew to Washington's Andrews Air Force Base. The star of the day was her nine-month old son Bilawal, whom a happy looking and radiant Benazir, wearing a turquoise silk Shalwar-Kameez with a white Dupatta, carried proudly down the gangway. Bilawal, wearing a navy blue and white outfit looked happy to be in the limelight. "She has brought her baby and good weather," commented an American pressman referring to the pleasant change of weather after a heat wave for the preceding ten days.<sup>43</sup>

Present at the airport were US Ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakley, his spouse, Phyllis Oakley, who had been a former deputy spokesman of the state department, and a large crowd of Pakistanis who had come from as far as Chicago, New York and New Jersey to welcome her. She handed over Bilawal into the arms of his Fili-

pino nurse and moved forward to her greeting hosts. Pakistani flags moved and welcoming slogans raised as she approached her countrymen assembled there. The applause gained momentum when she addressed them in Urdu and thanked them for receiving her. She then boarded a helicopter to be formally greeted by the secretary of state, James Baker, at the Washington Monument.<sup>44</sup>

Same day she had her first official meeting with President George Bush in the White House. Bush assured her of the United States' "continued commitment to assist Pakistan," in its security and its economic and cultural development. He congratulated her on her country's return to democracy. Following the meeting she and the President came to the East Room to brief the journalists about their parleys. In his statement Bush told his audience that he had expressed US's strong support for Pakistan's efforts to improve relations with India, and stressed the critical importance of avoiding regional nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. On Pakistan's nuclear program, he noted that she had assured him it was for peaceful purpose. He applauded her tough stand on eradication of opium cultivation.

"Let me note, too," Bush said, "the ceremony outside the Oval office -- the first since I have been the President -- was a wonderful way to welcome the Prime Minister. We just walked by the Rose Garden... And during her own detention, she struggled bravely to keep the roses alive, for as she observed, 'I could not bear to watch the flowers wither, especially my father's roses.'"<sup>45</sup> He then presented her with a bouquet of roses amidst an extended applause.

On her turn, she asserted that her presence there underlined the great importance that her country attached to the relations with the United States. "This is not only because geo-political realities require our close relationship, but most importantly, because of the ideals and the objectives that both the countries share," she observed. "Over the lasted years, Pakistan had been in the forefront of two great struggles, namely Afghanistan and the struggle against military dictatorship to establish a system based on democratic values and respect for human rights. In both the struggles, we received from the United States an unwavering support and it has, therefore,

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been my special pleasure and privilege to personally come over to Washington and thank President Bush and the people of the United States.”<sup>46</sup>

She told his audience that she had wide-ranging discussions on a number of issues and that she was convinced that this exchange of views would be of immense benefit to the bilateral relations that existed between the two countries and also to the cause of world peace. “We discussed measures to increase cooperation in the fight against drugs. We have already achieved some success in this direction in Pakistan, but much remains to be done,” was her assessment.<sup>47</sup>

On 7<sup>th</sup> June, she was bestowed with a singular honor when she addressed the joint session of US Congress and received a standing ovation from this highest representative forum of the great superpower. She was the first Muslim woman Prime Minister of the world to address the seat of real power of the free world, the citadel of democracy. This was the honor that even her father was not bestowed upon. As she, dressed in a fawn silk hand-blocked Shalwar-Kameez with a red and green lines scarf, escorted by the US Senators, entered in the centuries old hall, she was accorded a rousing welcome. “Tradition, history and a quiet dignity pervaded in the centuries-old hall whose walls resounded with applause that seemed nowhere abating as Bhutto stood to address,”<sup>48</sup> wrote a journalist present there. “Smiles and claps were showered profusely from all those present, even the press stood to attention and clapped their welcome to Bhutto.” Gradually silence descended to as her voice reverberated.

“Peace be with you. We gather together today, to celebrate freedom, to celebrate democracy, to celebrate the victory of those three most beautiful words in the English language: ‘We the people,’” The thunderous applause came. Slowly and softly she build the momentum, her voice, her expression, her delivery, all were in perfect rhythm, as she dexterously spoke, hardly glancing at the text that lay in front of her. She held the attention of all. “The time is ripe, my friends, to make miracles in Pakistan... The dictatorship of the past has given way to the forces of the future... So I come

to this land of freedom to talk about the future. The future of my country and the future of freedom everywhere. The future of our children, my child, and yours.” The applause was the longest. She was accorded a standing ovation for more than two minutes.

“For the dictators across the world, democracy is the greatest revenge, the verdict of history is the finest vindication.” Everyone listened to her with rapt attention, many moving their heads in agreement to what she was saying. Her husband Asif Ali Zardari clapped too along with the rest. In the visitors’ gallery sat her sister Sanam with her spouse and the rest of Pakistani entourage. For them it was a proud moment. A big privilege for Pakistan that her elected leader was one amongst very few all over the world addressing the joint session of Congress. Addressing the women of the world, she said, “As a representative of women, let my message be to them, from the villages of Balochistan to the universities of Lahore and Paris and Boston: ‘Yes you can.’” And applause again.

“I can declare that we do not possess nor do we intend to make a nuclear device. That is our policy.” Senators Teddy Kennedy and Stephen Solarz, sitting next to each other, gave a hearty applause. She said Pakistan was prepared for any negotiations to prevent nuclear proliferation in the region. “We will not provoke a nuclear arm race in the subcontinent.”

She called for the continued US support to the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan. “This is the time in Pakistan when democracy’s friends must come forward. Democracy in Pakistan must succeed to signal nations in political transition all over the world that freedom is on the rise.” Heads nodded in agreement. “The new government in its first days released political prisoners, legalized labour, and student unions and restored press freedom. It recognized the role of the opposition in a democratic society giving them free and regular access to state media,” she informed the senators and members of the House of Representatives.

She ended her discourse betwixt reverberating acclamation. It was hailed as “brilliant and powerful message” by the members of the US Senate and House of Representatives. It was the beginning of a great day for her.<sup>49</sup>



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In the afternoon, she was invited by the Secretary of State James Baker for a luncheon meeting to witness signing of an economic assistance agreement between the two countries, providing Pakistan 465 million dollars to help finance major education and housing programs. The officials of the two countries signed the agreement in the state department's Treaty Room, in her presence. The agreement provided 280 million dollars to expand the network of primary education, particularly for the women living in under-developed areas of the country. It was the largest primary education assistance program of USAID in the world.<sup>50</sup> Then, eighty million dollars were to be provided to improve the quality of nine selected higher educational institutions of Pakistan, to provide improved scientific and technological facilities, training and research. In addition to that, USAID had agreed to provide 105 million dollars to assist Pakistan to help boost the private sector. And a hundred million dollar 'Shelter Resource Mobilization Program,' designed to support Pakistan's private sector housing finance industry, was also agreed upon between the two countries.<sup>51</sup> This was a great achievement for cash-starved social sector of her country.

In the evening President Bush hosted a banquet in her honour in White House. "Let me simply salute your role in Pakistan's return to democracy," the President said to a loud applause. "Our goals are great goals, worthy goals, and together our countries have done much." He said that their discussions on important matters were "frank and meaningful" and that the cooperation between the two countries would grow.

Quoting Pakistan's great poet-philosopher Allama Iqbal saying, "Love is freedom," he said, "Madam Prime Minister, your entire life shows a meaning of those words."<sup>52</sup> Those were great moments. That was her day.

A smiling Benazir took up the mike. She said she looked forward to a new partnership between Pakistan and the United States with democracy giving a fresh dimension to it. "With the triumph of democracy, the relationship is now at the threshold of a new vitality," she said. "This springs from a reservoir of goodwill that has been nourished by our sustained joint endeavor in support of the

worthy cause in Afghanistan, the cause of freedom.” She said, she looked forward to the day when real peace and stability would return to Afghanistan with the transfer of power to a generally accepted government and the return of millions of refugees to their homeland in dignity and honour.<sup>53</sup> When banquet ended, everybody was feeling happy on the outcome of the parleys between the two countries.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June, she held talks at the Pentagon with the US secretary of defense, Richard Cheney, during which they discussed US military assistance program for Pakistan. The Bush administration had requested the Congress for about 240 million dollars in military assistance to her country for the forthcoming year. At the meeting Cheney reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to Pakistan’s security. Under the agreement reached between her and her host, the United States agreed to upgrade the store of inadequate and obsolete equipment still in use with Pakistan’s ground forces. She then attended a lunch hosted by Cheney at the Pentagon.<sup>54</sup>

As soon as she finished off her engagements at the Pentagon, she rushed to her alma mater, Cambridge in the Massachusetts, where more than twenty thousand alumni waited for her at annual commencement ceremony while it drizzled. She was the main speaker at the university’s 338<sup>th</sup> prestigious ceremony, where only celebrities were invited. She was also to receive an honorary degree of the Doctor of Law from her university. Hailing her as “one of the world’s most courageous woman and a symbol of hope for her nation,” Harvard University’s President handed her over the degree, bound in red leather, in tercentenary open-air theater of the campus. As she rose to receive the degree, the guests rose en masse to accord her a standing ovation as a mark of respect for her heroic struggle.<sup>55</sup> It was her own alma mater, where she had spent four years of her life learning the meaning of democracy and liberty. Today she was declared pass in the practical examination. She waved to the crowd as she was cheered.

It was very busy schedule for her in the United States. The vice President also hosted a dinner in her honor. The Pakistani community arranged a programme to listen to her. A number of newspapers and radio television channels recorded her interviews. Every minute was precious. Every minute counted. The image of the

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country was to be rebuilt as a progressing, democratic and a self-respecting nation in this most important country of the world. She was speaking at their wavelength. The Americans understood her and trusted her. The channel of communication was open. She had emerged as a beautiful identification of her nation. That was great.

Her last engagement in New York, on 10<sup>th</sup> June was the annual dinner of the prestigious Asia Society, an organization devoted to increasing awareness among Americans, the people of the vast and varied continent. The thousand-dollars-a-plate dinner was attended by more than thousand guests, majority of the big names in the United States. The meeting's chairman introduced her as a "talented, courageous and articulate leader." She was given a standing ovation when she was invited to address the gathering. "We seek not to choose between development and democracy, between peace and prosperity, but to recognize that in each case, we can not have one without the other," she told that night the gathering of leaders of business and industry, academics and diplomats. She defined her government's agenda as building a "new Pakistan."<sup>56</sup>

"We have a high rate of unemployment, infant mortality, and drug abuse to end, and programs of education, housing and medical care to begin," she said. She drew a loud applause when she said that her government had boosted the education budget by sixty-eight percent. "The new democratic Pakistan," she envisioned, "is one that is equally committed to civil liberties and civil order, meets security needs while fulfilling the basic social and economic needs of a people long deprived, builds infrastructure and industrial base needed to bring the country into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, strengthens the private sector, builds dignity and self-reliance in the work place." "The time is ripe, my friends, to make miracles in Pakistan," she invited the private sector to invest in Pakistan. When she ended her twenty-minute speech, coupled with sustained applause, her enthusiastic listeners again accorded her standing ovation.<sup>57</sup>

The visit had been extremely successful. Pakistan had achieved almost all the objectives. She flew back home, where the powerful establishment had already hatched a conspiracy to dislodge her in order to return back to the old backward order, which had brought the country to a brink.

## Chapter 10

# **In the Eye of the Storm**

(1989-1990)

She reached back to Islamabad by midnight on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> June. Even at that odd hour, many had come to receive her at the airport including the Speaker of the National Assembly, Malik Meraj Khalid, members of her cabinet, senior military officers, public representatives and elite of the town. They were all very happy over the outcome of her US visit. But, at the same time, her colleagues were a little perturbed over the political developments that had been taking place while she was abroad. The rumors were rife in the federal capital that the President in consultation with the forces that counted, and with full backing of the opposition, had made up his mind to strike out at her government. However, he was restrained, according to the speculations, not to imply any 'unconstitutional' mechanism to remove her. A semblance of a Constitutional outlook to pack her government was acceptable to those powerful quarters. In this backdrop, the meeting of almost all the top most opposition stalwarts with the President had taken place during the past few days. And they all had assembled under a grand alliance, a move which smelled some unholy design.

What she had done to deserve this treatment and all such scandal-

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ous machinations on part of the establishment? She asked herself. The people of Pakistan had elected her for five years. And hardly six months had passed since then that the powerful lobbies went after her. She had done all the good for her country. She had strained and stressed herself beyond limits to serve the interests of the state. Everywhere and wherever she went, in her own country or abroad, she was honored, loved and revered like a goddess. And there were a few self-appointed guardians of the ideology of the country who had made mess out of a great nation. They were plotting against her democratic government. This, she was unable to believe.

But, the facts spoke for themselves. The day she left for her engagement abroad, the 4<sup>th</sup> June, the leaders of almost all opposition groups in the National Assembly, right from Khan Abdul Wali Khan to Nawabzada Nasrullah, and Moulana Fazalur Rehman to IJI chief Nawaz Sharif, had announced to form a Combined Opposition Parliamentary Front (COPF).<sup>1</sup> As their head, they had chosen Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, a former PPP leader from Sindh, who had left the party to form his own splinter group, the NPP. He was not even been able to win a single seat from entire country including his home constituency in 1988 elections. Afterwards, he got elected in a bye-election from a safe constituency in the Punjab, thanks to his former colleague and his namesake Ghulam Mustafa Khar's act of friendship and benevolence. The only thing that endeared Jatoi to all these divergent forces was his belonging to Sindh, her home province, coupled with his abhorrence for her.

She had public support as well as courage to fight out all such conspiracies and plots. But, the timings of the formation of this alliance bothered her in particular. The budget was still in the Assembly. The opposition had already filed a vote of no confidence against deputy speaker of NWFP provincial assembly, where her PPP-led coalition was in power. Her former ally in the province, Khan Abdul Wali Khan's ANP, had distanced itself following her inability to appoint an ANP-nominated governor in the province. It was not her fault because the President had refused, point blank, to appoint the recommended person citing 'larger national security' interests. The refusal of the President had cost her in losing one of her ally.

She understood that the formation of an alliance at that juncture was aimed at boosting the confidence of her opponents, and taking some of the shine off her successful American visit, a factor that could explain the timing of the move.

She had to take corrective measures. On 13<sup>th</sup> June, she invited Khan and Begum Abdul Wali Khan on lunch to discuss the looming threat of a vote of no confidence in the NWFP. She was able to win over their support, as after the meeting, Begum Wali Khan, who was heading her party's parliamentary group of fourteen members in the provincial assembly, distanced herself and her party from the opposition attempt. A looming danger was averted. Few days later, her party showed its strength in the National Assembly, when it got the annual budget passed with 128 votes in favor against 80 in opposition.<sup>2</sup>

She again reverted back to her socio-oriented agenda. The drug trafficking was an enormous problem. When she took over in December, there were over a hundred organized drug syndicates operating in the country and over two hundred laboratories engaged in processing of opium into heroin, mostly in the tribal areas where writ of the state was very loose.<sup>3</sup> During her government's six months in power as many as sixteen heroin laboratories had been dismantled. This was quite impressive in view of the figure of just two laboratories destroyed during the preceding year of Zia government. The poppy growing in the NWFP had been brought down to about a hundred tons compared to previous year's double of that figure.<sup>4</sup> Where it won her national and international admiration, it earned her deadly enmity of the most powerful and resourceful drug mafias.

By the first week of July she shifted official residence and office of the Prime Minister from Rawalpindi, a town in the Punjab province, to adjoining federal capital, Islamabad. This accorded federal capital its rightful status for the first time since it was moved from Karachi to Islamabad in 1961. All the rulers down the line since Ayub Khan had continued to live and operate from Rawalpindi, in close proximity with the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the army, the bastion of power in the country. But, she decided to end that prac-

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tice and to shift to Islamabad's Sindh House, a rest house for Parliamentarians belonging to Sindh. It was converted into a makeshift residence of the Prime Minister. Similarly, a part of the State Bank building, which had served till 1985 as hall of National Assembly, was declared as Prime Minister's secretariat. This brought the Prime Minister's office and residence out of territorial limits of the Punjab. Now, at least her party's legislators could see her without fear of being arrested or harassed by the Punjab police.

Time approached fast to leave for her trip to England. Pakistan's re-entry in the Commonwealth club was on the top of her agenda. This visit had been planned in that perspective, and also to lure international investors to invest in Pakistan. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of UK had invited her for this official visit. She also wanted to benefit from the experiences of another lady Prime Minister. On 6<sup>th</sup> July, when her special flight, the Pakistan Airforce's Boeing 707, landed at London's Heathrow airport, it was already an evening time. As the engines of her blue and white plane stopped and she stepped down the gangway, a smartly dressed detachment of the royal airforce gave her salute. The senior British officers were present there to greet her. As usual a large number of Pakistanis, including women, from all over Britain had come to airport to greet her. Slogans were raised. Pakistani flags were waved. She was then driven to Ritz Hotel where she was to stay with her husband.<sup>5</sup>

Next day she was scheduled to address a conference of British and South Asian Trade Association (BASATA), an active and effective forum of overseas investors. She informed her audience of the measures taken by her government to deregulate economy, to allow private sector to operate in a free and open environment. Earlier, UK's Minister for Trade had introduced her to the gathering. She had been able to rekindle the interest of international business community to plan investments in her country.

In the evening, BBC television telecast her interview in which she showed her optimism regarding Commonwealth allowing Pakistan's re-entry in its folds. As per charter of this international body, only democratic countries were to be considered eligible for the membership. With her victory in 1988 election, Pakistan had

returned back to democracy and hence qualified for membership. It was now the decision to be taken by the club members jointly to grant membership to Pakistan, which was accorded two days later, when all the forty-eight members of Commonwealth allowed her country's re-entry into their ranks.<sup>6</sup>

In London her engagements included a reception given in her honor by Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace. When she reached there, accompanied by her spouse, the elderly queen herself received the couple. This was very same queen, at the time of whose coronation, she had been born in Karachi.

She also had a meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street and later had a private lunch with her at her residence outside London. The British iron-lady gave her a lesson of practical politics: "Never call for a mid-term poll if you can help it, but in the fourth year, when, instead of being resentful, the Parliament and voters are again getting keyed-up for fresh polls,"<sup>7</sup> not knowing perhaps that in Pakistan the politics does not move on such an orderly time tracks.

She had a breakfast meeting with leading British editors and senior journalists. The Speaker of House of Commons also hosted a dinner in her honor. But, perhaps most uplifting event happened when the head of her alma mater, where she had studied in the mid-seventies, saluted her for her distinguished achievements and conferred an honorary degree of fellowship on her.

While she was going through the grilling official engagements, two disturbing news came. Firstly, on 10<sup>th</sup> July, the armed assailants killed seven innocent persons in Lyari, her constituency and a party stronghold in Karachi. Who was behind it and why they are doing it when she was away on an official visit abroad? She wondered! Then the 'News of the World' flashed a lead story disclosing that a 'tiny super-spy' (bug) microphone and a transistor were found behind a wardrobe in her suite at Ritz Hotel where she was staying as the guest of the British government. If this was true, her enemies had not left her unattended even in London. However, the concerned quarters as well as the British functionaries denied the report. The matter was not probed further.



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Her next stop was Paris, where she had come on an invitation from French President Francois Mitterrand to attend the celebrations marking 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of French Revolution. A large number of heads of governments and states had arrived to participate in the bicentenary celebrations. It was an international gathering of the leaders from every nook and corner of the world. She moved shoulder to shoulder with the leaders of contemporary world including US President George Bush, German Chancellor Helmut Kohel, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Egyptian President Hosni Mubark and UN Secretary General Perez De Cuellar.

The ceremony, to celebrate the 1789 Declaration of Rights of Citizens, was arranged at Trocadero near the Eiffel Tower. After the ceremony was over, the French President hosted lunch in honor of the guests in the Elysee Palace where relations between North and South were discussed by the world leaders. Her grasp over the subject and vision of the future world impressed her attentive listeners.

As soon as the celebrations were over, she rushed back to Islamabad where Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who had also been in Paris, was due en-route Moscow to hold talks with her on a variety of issues concerning the two traditional rivals of South Asia. It was Indian Prime Minister's second visit within a span of just seven months. Prior to Rajiv's first visit, no Indian Prime Minister had ever visited Pakistan during the preceding twenty-five years. But now things had taken a positive turn and the two countries had established a channel of communication at highest level. On 17<sup>th</sup> July Rajiv came along with his wife Sonia Gandhi on a two-day visit to Islamabad.

On domestic front the problems continued. MQM was getting stranger by every passing day. Sindh, being home to both PPP and MQM, was burning in flames of hatred. For last three years every sphere of life in Sindh had been adversely effected. While new industrial investment had completely dried down, the production losses of existing units caused by riots and curfews ran in billions of rupees. There were reports from almost all the relevant agencies that MQM was behind all the turmoil and trouble. She was not ready to believe all these reports. She and her party had themselves been a

target of negative propaganda during the dictatorial rule of Zia. To sort out the matters herself, she invited Altaf Hussain for a meeting at Governor's House in Karachi on 30<sup>th</sup> July. The meeting lasted for four hours. Both the parties hammered out yet another agreement aimed at restoration of peace and normality in Sindh. This meeting also endorsed a code of ethics to be observed by the two parties.<sup>8</sup> What she did not know at that time was that the MQM and IJI had already almost finalized a secret agreement and the purpose of holding of these talks was just to keep her in dark.

The tensions between her and her rivals, which included the army chief, the President, the agencies, IJI, COP, in that order, came into open over the issue of Admiral Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey's tenure as chairman joint chiefs of staff committee. It started with a news item in a newspaper quoting 'sources' that a decision had been taken by her government to retire the chairman of the committee on 14<sup>th</sup> August at the end of his three-year tenure as an admiral. It also added that the President in consultation with the Prime Minister would appoint a new chairman. Ghulam Ishaq Khan was very prompt in getting issued a rejoinder stating that it was the sole prerogative of the President to appoint service chiefs, and that Admiral Sirohey would not be retired for next two years.

In the final count the President's word prevailed. But, it damaged considerably the already not-so-good relationship between her and Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

While this was all going on, she decided to visit Pakistani troops fighting in the highest battlefront, in the Siachen Glacier. The glacier, about 72 kilometers long and 2 to 3 kilometers wide lies in the north of Pakistan, a place of steep ridges, precipitous ravines, and vertiginous heights rising to 20,000 feet above the sea level. The place where the temperature remained below the freezing point even in summer, was the scene of battle between India and Pakistan for last many years. The Indian troops had occupied these Pakistani heights during Zia's time. Since then, Pakistani army had been fighting in extremely hostile conditions where the worst enemy was not the rival troops but the environment.

On 21<sup>st</sup> August, she boarded an Air Force C-130 plane for Skardu,

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the nearest airport to the area on her way to Siachen. Prior to her no head of the government had ever gone over there. Prime Minister Junjo had been there but not up to the frontline posts,<sup>9</sup> where very little oxygen was available for breathing. Nobody knew except her that she was having her second pregnancy! “I was expecting Bakhtawar. I was going to Siachen Glacier, where oxygen was very low. I was concerned but I was very careful not to disclose that I was expecting a baby. So I had to ask in very abstract terms what effects does the low oxygen have? Does it affect the baby first, or the mother first? I was told that the mother gets the effect first and then the baby. I said ‘good.’ If I get effected, at least my baby would not be effected,” she recalled a decade later.<sup>10</sup>

From Skardu, a Puma helicopter took her entourage to a place called Dansam, 9000 feet high, where Pakistan army had established a brigade headquarter. From there she was taken on to Gyeri and then onwards in the Bubble-Top helicopters to Ali Brangsa, a post 17000 feet above the sea level. “The men looked fit and cheerful and did not complain or tell stories of the hardship, which was there of every sort – the weather, the isolation, the lack of recreation, absence of electricity, the running water-- indeed the lack of every amenity,” recalled her advisor on national security Iqbal Akhund, who accompanied her to Siachen.<sup>11</sup> Her visit proved to be a fruitful exercise in boosting up the morale of her country’s troops fighting a difficult war.

The provincial government of the Punjab was just moving ahead with its center-bashing propaganda, with neck-breaking speed in the name of provincial autonomy. It had established its own bank, the Bank of Punjab, significantly with a logo depicting a rising sun, which used to be royal insignia of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, the last Sikh ruler of an independent Punjab.<sup>12</sup> Within two months many branches of the bank were opened in the nook and corner of the province. Shortly afterwards, the provincial revenue minister announced a scheme of establishing a separate television station with the name of Punjab Television. The province decided to set up its own version of the federal agency WAPDA, under the title of PDA.<sup>13</sup>

The federal ministers were being threatened for being arrested on their visits to the province. The federal government was thrashed mercilessly for every move in the realm of foreign affairs or domestic policies. In September three federal investigation agency (FIA) officers were arrested by the Punjab police while they were working on a case of suspected tax evasion at a factory owned by a Punjab provincial minister.<sup>14</sup> She could not allow the things to drift in that direction. Again she invited Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif over a dinner. The chief minister declined to have dinner with the Prime Minister!

On 11<sup>th</sup> September, on occasion of the death anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammed Ali Jinnah, Nawaz Sharif and his brand of IJI leaders addressed a public meeting at Lahore's historic Mochi Gate, where he himself and Shaikh Rashid Ahmed launched blistering attacks on her and the federal government. She was declared as an enemy of Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif led leaders declared, "We will dump the remains of Bhuttos in the Arabian Sea."<sup>15</sup>

The image of IJI was promoted as a Punjabi nationalist party protecting the Punjabi interests from Sindhi dominated PPP. Surprisingly, all the forces of establishment, antagonistic to the Sindhi, Balochi and Pukhtun nationalism, were silent over the propagation of this neo-Punjabi nationalism, that too on the state expenses!

If this was the state of affairs in the Punjab, unleashed by a person holding the position of a chief minister, the situation in Sindh was also likely to get out of the hand. Veteran Sindhi nationalist, GM Syed, was in open opposition to her federalist policies. The octogenarian leader of Sindhi nationalism described his concept of 'Sindhu Desh,' while talking to Dawn, saying that it would be an 'independent and sovereign state' having membership of the United Nations.<sup>16</sup> He was placed under house arrest later following an incident at Sukkur airport in which few of his supporters burnt the Pakistani flag. Questions were being asked why to arrest an octogenarian leader who had been a close confidant of the founder of nation, when an over-ambitious chief minister of Punjab could get away with more dangerous and insidious moves. She had no answers.

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The President's intrigues, meanwhile, continued unabated. His hobnob with her political rivals was increasing day by day, especially in the aftermath of Admiral Sirohey episode. Soon afterwards, Ghulam Ishaq Khan 'graciously' granted an interview to Nawaz Sharif, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and other opposition stalwarts. Next day, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, the honorable guests of the President announced that they were about to bring a vote of no confidence in the National Assembly against her government, the first-ever against any government in Pakistan's history.<sup>17</sup>

If it were merely a simple Constitutional matter, it was no problem for her. She could face it well. What worried her most was the top officers of elite intelligence agencies, supposed to be working under her, had started their desperate move to dislodge her through buying the loyalties of her party legislators.

These officers, in collusion with IJI leaders, held a number of meetings with her party legislators to 'buy' their support for a negative vote against her. A counter-intelligence agency, the Intelligence Bureau (IB), tapped the proceedings of few such meetings held between 28<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> October and presented her with an official note. In all, twelve cassettes were recorded by the IB in its operation known as 'Operation-Midnight-Jackal.' It provided irrefutable proofs of the involvement of the serving top intelligence officers in a conspiracy to overthrow a Constitutional and popularly elected government.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to that, the establishment made it sure that 'adequate' pressures be applied on her and her party from other dimensions as well. Thus, the Punjab police 'informed' the Speaker of National Assembly, and the Cabinet Division that one of her federal ministers, Malik Mukhtar Awan, has been declared as a 'proclaimed offender' and the chief minister has constituted a special team to arrest him. Other leaders of her party in the Punjab were also similarly declared proclaimed offenders. The noose was being tightened around her party leaders in the Punjab. She and the President had no meeting during last two months. When in a reception of Saudi Embassy the President and the Prime Minister came across each other, it made a news story for the next day.<sup>19</sup>

This was the time when she left for Kuala Lumpur to attend the Commonwealth meeting. As usual, her political opponents intensified their antagonistic activities in her absence. She had hardly returned back to Islamabad, when the Combined Opposition Party (COP) formally moved the no-confidence motion against her, claiming support of a comfortable number of MNAs. To her surprise, the MQM had ditched her and joined her opponents. Perhaps the most disgusting revelation for her was the discovery that while MQM was acting as her ally, it had already been in a secret 'marriage' with the opposition for quite some time. They had even settled a new accord with IJI, signed by Nawaz Sharif himself on 18<sup>th</sup> September, the day he had air-dashed to Karachi on pretext of having a meeting with former Muslim League Prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junjho. This lost to her sixteen important votes of MQM, which went to enrich her opponents.

Later, it was disclosed by Chuadhry Nisar Ali Khan, one of Nawaz Sharif's closest confidants and a front-ranking leader of Muslim League that the army chief had himself helped in getting sixteen MQM votes to the opposition against Benazir Bhutto at that crucial time. It had been no secret that Aslam Baig was very close to MQM chief Altaf Hussain, with whom he 'spent hours on phone,' as Iqbal Akhund quoted Benazir saying.<sup>20</sup> Ian Talbot held that, "according to some reports, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had been instrumental in a new 17-point accord of MQM with the IJI in which the repatriation of the Biharis figured prominently."<sup>21</sup> In some other country, or under some different circumstances even in Pakistan, the heads would have been rolled on such disclosures. But, here nothing happened. And all the concerned continued with their 'honorable' lifestyles.

The Punjab administration came into action at once. Many of the MNAs of her party were being arrested and detained on a variety of charges to prevent them from returning to Islamabad. It was reported in the press on 25<sup>th</sup> October that at least eight PPP MNAs, belonging to the Punjab were 'missing' and were suspected to be in custody of the provincial government in an obvious attempt to pressure them to support the no-confidence move. The relatives of

one such MNA informed that he (the MNA) had left his village a few days back for Islamabad, but had not reached there as yet. In addition to them, four more MNAs from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), who happened to be in a Lahore hotel, were shifted to the residence of a local IJI leader where they were lodged under tight security arrangements. The hapless MNAs announced to support the no-confidence move.<sup>22</sup>

To further strengthen his newly found friendship with Altaf Hussain, Nawaz Sharif air dashed to Karachi to meet with him at his Azizabad residence. There, they addressed a joint press conference, giving details of their hence-so-forth secret accord. Nawaz Sharif was so carried away in his sentiments for his new ally that he publicly declared that "Altaf Hussain had become the most popular leader of the country by dint of his devotion to a laudable cause and through his relentless efforts to make the Mohajirs a disciplined force." Just three years after, Nawaz Sharif, as a Prime Minister, would send army to 'discipline' his erstwhile ally's cadres. But in those hey days of alliance, the objectivity was the first casualty. Nawaz went a step further when he declared that "to be a Mohajir was a great blessing as it was in accord with the injunctions of Holy Quran and Sunnah and besides, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was himself a Mohajir."<sup>23</sup>

While former heavy weight boxing champion Muhammed Ali was addressing his fans in Pakistan, the temperature in the political ring of the country had already been sizzling. The MNAs had become the most sought after commodity in those turbulent times of Pakistan's political history. The Punjab government had herded many MNAs to the cool heights of Murree hills under the charge of Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Nawaz Sharif's very close confidant who would later be prosecuted along with him in the 'Plane Conspiracy Case' in the aftermath of October 1999 coup.

Shaheen Sehbaï, a senior journalist, gave an eye account in Daily Dawn:

"Sixty Opposition members of the National Assembly are enjoying lavish food and pleasantries in the cool and slightly chilly air of this hill station, but are cut off from the outside world physically by

police. The COP (Combined Opposition Party) MNAs are the guests of Murree's young and soft-spoken son of former Federal Minister Khaqan Abbasi, who died in the Ojheri Camp disaster, and whose seat was regained by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi himself.

"A visit to this hill resort on Thursday revealed that no one could enter the two hill-top hotels, Dilkusha and Brightland, where the sixty MNAs have been lodged.

"On Thursday all the 60 were herded into three Toyota Coasters and under police protection taken to Islamabad where IJI leaders, Chouedhry Shujaat Hussain, Shaikh Rashid Ahmed and Majeed Malik had to virtually shout their way through the police cordon to drive the coasters to the Assembly Hall.

"When we (newsmen) left for Murree in the afternoon it soon became apparent that the journey would not be without thrills. As soon as the Federal territory ended and Punjab began, a barrier blocked our way and the police would not let us go until they had seen our press cards. Identifying each by his newspaper, they waved us ahead.

"Three more check posts of the same strength and order made us feel we were entering a 'conquered territory' to meet some 'prisoners of war,' herded in barbed-wire camps. There were no barbed wires and prisoners but on all approaches to the two hotels, Punjab's Special Branch men and uniformed cops quietly told us to go back.

"After a long detour behind the hill, we somehow managed to reach Dilkusha hotel, again being manned by policemen instead of waiters and receptionists. 'There are no rooms available, as all have been booked by Mr. Abbasi,' a policeman told one of our colleagues trying to find a place for the night.

"Guards outside told us following some softly peddled probing that some PPP MNAs, including Fazaldad Wahla and Atta Mohammed Menaka, were lodged in the Hotel. Most of the other guests were IJI men from Sialkot, Chakwal and other areas.

"Then we tried to enter the Brightland Hotel located a few hundred yards downhill but the gates were closed to all visitors. We sent our visiting cards and were told by cops on duty that no one was there to receive us.



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“Walking down to the Murree Mall we soon located the host of all the distinguished guests, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, in a roadside hotel with local stringers of newspapers.

“We have sixty people here but none of them has been kept against his will,” Abbasi told us. “They are free to go if they want and we have brought them here to protect them from being kidnapped by the PPP.”

““Can we meet them?” I asked the Murree MNA. ‘Why not. Give me a few minutes and I will call you,’ he said and drove to the Dilku-sha hotel, just a couple of hundred yards uphill.

“About 30 minutes later, a Pajero came but picked up all the local Murree newsmen to the MNAs hotel, leaving us behind, who had come from Islamabad. A driver returned after another 15 minutes to tell us that Mr Abbasi will see us after a press conference with the Murree newsmen was over.

“We protested that we also want to participate in the press conference but the directive was that we will be seen separately. Afterwards we waited and waited until it was too late for us to reach Islamabad in time for filing story.

“The Murree Mall, stacked with police pickups and vans, fire tenders, official cars and smart traffic cops, reminded us repeatedly that to enter the two hotels where these ‘prisoners of politics’ had been persuaded to hide, was almost impossible, despite the best wishes and soft promises of the host.

“The MNAs, it appeared from outside their political hideout, would be enjoying an all-bills-paid holiday for another week, joined by the company of heavyweights, like Mr Nawaz Sharif, Mr Jatoi and Choudhry Shujaat Hussain, at intervals, until the vote is over.”<sup>24</sup>

On first November, the day of the voting, the National Assembly was hub of activity. The diplomatic gallery was full to its capacity. A large number of women had turned in to witness the outcome of the move to dislodge the first woman Prime Minister. The first to enter the hall were the members of the opposition. Her party members started moving into the hall after the entry of Speaker Meraj Khalid. When all the members were seated, she entered, wearing

a green Shalwar-Kameez and white Dupatta. The treasury benches gave her an extended standing ovation. The proceedings started. The opposition speakers, one after another, launched a tirade against her. She kept on taking notes profusely.

When, it was her turn, she answered, point by point, on all the allegations, points, issues raised by all the speakers from the opposition. Her address was not limited to the members alone. It was also addressed to the people of Pakistan. When the voting took place, the move was defeated.<sup>25</sup> The vote of no confidence failed. She had once again defeated the forces of establishment. Her party members were jubilant.

With hindsight, how she viewed this move, was described in her statement before the Supreme Court some time later. She held: "The no-confidence motion was moved by none other than the President and others whom I shall not name. Members of a sensitive intelligence agency were videotaped going to MNAs and telling them they must get rid of the PPP, they must get rid of the Prime Minister... the name of the operation was Operation Jackal... MNAs were picked up in Punjab government cars... and taken to safe houses... the country saw on television that Khurshid Cheema from Sialkot was produced in Parliament by the IJI and crying 'bachao, bachao' (save me), dashed to the PPP side and stated that his life had been threatened... before the no-confidence was moved, MNAs belonging to the IJI and those who had been unwillingly picked up from the PPP Parliamentary party were taken in Punjab government cars to Punjab government rest houses in Murree and other places and the money of down-trodden and oppressed people of the Punjab was spent to feed and look after these MNAs. IJI came with briefcases full of money to tempt PPP MNAs but they honorably refused."

This failed exercise of no-confidence move on part of her opponent did not end the era of conspiracies. Barely a few hours later, Akbar Bugti claimed that the next round against her would be more "forceful and might be fatal for her." Talking to newsmen at Balochistan House, he said that the drama was not yet over and "you would be witnessing more surprising things in the future." He said there was no doubt that she had survived now but "would be in real

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trouble shortly and nobody would be there to save her.” The Balochistan chief minister told a reporter that in the game of boxing one has to face many rounds and the real success was when someone knocked his opponent down. “And perhaps we would do the same next time.”<sup>26</sup>

That they did in August next by getting her government dismissed by Ghulam Ishaq Khan, when they failed in all of their ‘democratic’ attempts.

Nawaz Sharif’s centrifugal tendencies continued unabated. On 16<sup>th</sup> November, he inaugurated the Bank of Punjab, under the aegis of his provincial dispensation. Two weeks later, the Punjab government made it known that it will set up a provincial television station of its own “to inform the public of development activities being carried out in the province, restore Islamic values and bring an end to obscenity.” Few days later, he announced that the Punjab government would conduct a thorough investigation into the tragic plane crash in which President Zia and his colleagues were killed. “We will unfold the facts of the accident, which the PPP government has put in the cold storage since its coming to power,” he charged.<sup>27</sup>

This followed with a war of advertisements in the national press. Sizeable advertisement emanating from the provincial government targeted the policies of the federal government. The moves were so blatant that the monthly Herald, an English language serious journal asked whether Nawaz Sharif was the “Prime Minister of Punjab?”<sup>28</sup> Under him, the Punjab had become a separate country, rather an enemy country to the federation represented by her. But, she had to show patience. She knew it very well that all these incitements were to provoke her, so that her reaction could provide the establishment a reason to fold the entire democratic setup. She had to be extra careful to handle the situation so that the over ambitious army chief should not find an excuse to bring the country again to the dark alleys of dictatorship.

The bewildered chief minister went a step further when he directed all the commissioners and deputy commissioners to block the execution of federally funded development programs throughout the province. The deputy commissioner of district Jhang went a little

farther and demolished the projects already completed under the program. This was serious violation of the federal authority. The President's response came few days later in form of a pat, by hosting a lunch in honor of Nawaz Sharif, on 27<sup>th</sup> December. As continued the practice of undermining the authority of the federal government at the hands of the 'rival' chief ministers; so continued the lunches and dinners of the President in their honor.

In January she gave birth to her second child, this time a baby girl, Bakhtawar.

On 13<sup>th</sup> February as the evening prayer-call resounded over the Potohar terrain, she attired in a sea green Shalwar-Kameez, and accented by an enveloping beige woolen shawl, entered the Senate hall. Thumping applause greeted her, which she acknowledged with a broad smile and a nod. Outside, it was a cold and wet evening. Three days of incessant rain had spread like a wet blanket over the green meadows. Senator Javed Jabbar, the future federal minister of General Pervaz Mushruf's government, rose from his seat and welcomed her. "This is a moving moment and in our tumultuous history democracy was snatched away from our body politic. Precious lives were lost, yet thousands continued to contribute to the cause of democracy. The Prime Minister has made a special contribution."<sup>29</sup> The sentiments were responded with thumping of the desks. The leader of the opposition, Muhammad Ali Hoti, also welcomed her. Her speech was a short rendition. "All the four provinces are represented in the Senate. I would like the governments of the four provinces to participate in a new endeavor, to face the challenges and arrive at a synthesis for national development."<sup>30</sup>

The 23<sup>rd</sup> March symbolized the passage of Pakistan Resolution, at the site of the present Minar-e-Pakistan. In 1990, it was the fiftieth anniversary of the resolution passed in 1940. She, being the symbol of the federation of Pakistan, wanted to address a rally on this historic site. The Punjab government refused the Prime Minister of Pakistan to address the people of Pakistan from the grounds of Minar-e-Pakistan on the Pakistan Day! Because the chief minister wanted to address a rally at that same place, on that same day, and at that same time. "The thwarted Pakistan Prime Minister had to settle

for a premature celebration some three days earlier,” noted monthly Herald.<sup>31</sup>

Her march towards a progressive and liberal Pakistan, however, continued. Women emancipation was on her agenda. On 21<sup>st</sup> March, country’s national airliner, PIA, inducted, for the first time, two women pilots for flying passenger aircraft. This was unthinkable in the preceding years. But, after coming to power she had directed that no discrimination on the basis of gender be allowed, and wherever was possible, the women should be encouraged to join national mainstream. In this background, PIA had selected few women for the technical and ground courses. In addition to that, under her directive a women’s bank, The First Women’s Bank (FWB), was established to provide loaning and other facilities to the oppressed gender. A woman police force was raised and women police stations were established in the country in order to save hapless women of the highhandedness of under- educated male police officers. A fixed quota for women was reserved in the sparsely represented government service. During her second tenure she appointed a number of women as the judges of the high courts, again for the first time in Pakistan’s history.

But, the emancipation of women in a traditional society like that of Pakistan is a complex phenomenon and requires decades of the efforts to bring an end to the harsh and discriminatory treatment reserved for the fairer gender. Most of this repression did not originate from the formal legal code as much as the male-chauvinist social customs. President Zia, in his quest for gaining legitimacy, had granted legal sanction to some of these pre-historic repressive measures, which later became a part of the Eighth Amendment, passed by his self-created Parliament. She had not enough votes in the Assembly to repeal the discriminatory law.

More than just adding or deleting the laws on the statute book, in any case, it was important to work for the economic independence of the Pakistani women folk. “But, how many women in the rural areas and among the poorer classes can even understand what such laws mean or are in a position to claim the rights that they confer? What our government has to do is to improve the economic condi-

tion of women, create jobs for them, and give them economic independence. The rest will follow!”<sup>32</sup> Iqbal Akhund quoted her saying during a course of discussion.

Her next priority in the social context was the state of minorities in the country, which had been at the receiving end especially during Zia rule. It was time to reassure them of their rightful position in the democratic Pakistan. She went to a representative gathering of the minorities to assure them that “no further erosion of their rights” would be allowed. Amidst renewed cheers, she declared that she regarded them an equal partner in the national endeavors of reconstruction and development in keeping with the dictates of Quaid-e-Azam. Besides, the minorities would continue to have full freedom in respect of their faith, belief and worship.

During all these days and months, the political front remained hot. Next bone of contention between the federal government and the Punjab chief minister was the continuation of ‘speedy trial courts,’ established by past dictatorial regimes, to pass on harsh punishments to hapless victims without giving them adequate opportunity of defense. Her government, considering them an improper dispenser of justice, had let them cease to exist by not renewing the ordinance or passing the act in the assembly. This infuriated Nawaz Sharif’s provincial government, which approached her federal government, in April, for restoration of so-called speedy trial courts “so that the people could be provided with quick justice and the culprits could be taken to task without delay.”<sup>33</sup> The communiqué warned that in case the federal government failed to respond, the provincial government would set up such courts on its own.

Irony of the Fate is that Nawaz Sharif, an ardent supporter of these courts, would himself be tried by similar court in the aftermath of his removal from the government in October 1999!

By mid of May she undertook her week-long ‘journey of peace’ to several Muslim countries including Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, North Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Her visit to Sana, having a population of half a million, the capital of highly conservative Yemen, proved to be very interesting. The same was the case with most of the Yemenis, wearing traditional daggers on their bellies,

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to see a modern young Muslim woman-leader from Pakistan amidst them. As she and her spouse arrived at the Grand Mosque, the Mayor of Sana presented her the key to the city. A large crowd of mostly men watched and cheered, as not many women were allowed to move on the streets without a complete veil. She was told that the daggers, worn by men, were mostly traditional family property and represented the male dominance. "It is a useless weapon, but some times people do fight with it," she was informed. "There is no other use."<sup>34</sup>

She went round the Grand Mosque and later saw the old Yemen bazaar where condiments, cloth and Yemeni handicrafts were sold. She held formal talks with Yemeni President Mr Ali Abdullah Saleh, a villager by birth and without formal education even at the school level, and Prime Minister Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani, a Colorado University graduate, the man behind the economic strength of the country.

Wherever she went, from Tehran to Tunis, she was greeted warmly and Pakistan's point of view was listened to with interest. Though her opponents had criticized her for undertaking more than required foreign visits, the fact remained that it was not a one-way traffic. An almost equal number of heads of state and other dignitaries also visited Pakistan.

On her return back to Pakistan, she was again confronted by another problem of immense dimensions. This time it was an incident that took place in the ethnically sensitive Hyderabad city of Sindh. The provincial authorities had launched a clean up operation in the Pucca Qila, a fort built by the eighteenth-century Kalhora rulers of Sindh, following reports that a large number of illegal arms and ammunition had been dumped over there. When the police raided the hideouts, the militant cadres went into hiding and instead a procession of children and women having holy Quran on their heads came out. When the situation seemed to get out of control, the police fired upon the mob, instantly killing some persons.

At that point the army contingents from Hyderabad cantonment moved in without any formal request from the district or provincial administration. Rather, they came out in opposition to the provincial

police force. On reaching the spot, they commanded the police to clear out immediately. This humiliated the police considerably, but had no other way except to comply with the instructions given to them by the army. Admiral Sirohy and General Baig, both senior most commanders of the armed forces rushed to Hyderabad 'to be with the troops' as if the troops were facing a foreign invasion or some major threat to the nation! A week later, a high-level meeting took place with her in chair and army chief attending. To everybody's surprise, the general announced that he had sent troops into Sindh and that the situation would come under full control within four weeks.<sup>35</sup> This was all without the permission, and even knowledge of the federal or provincial governments.

Now the question arose under what Constitutional arrangement, the army would be operating in Sindh. There were two such articles dealing with such situation. Under article 147, it was provided that a provincial government may, with the consent of the federal government, request the armed forces for assistance to restore the law and order, when the circumstances so demand.

Another article, 245, went many steps further so much so that when the army was to be called under this article, the high courts would be considered to cease to have jurisdiction in that region for as long as the military was exercising the authority. In other words, it was a sort of martial law. The army chief wanted to have powers under this article, while she was ready to co-opt army under article 147. The reason was clear. Already the Punjab and Balochistan governments were out of her folds. If Sindh also went under army, with absolute powers to arrest, try and sentence people in the military courts under military laws and procedures, the people of Sindh would have been the worst sufferers yet again.

Rumor-mills started working overtime with the speculations that her government was about to be dismissed. The opposition stalwarts were openly discussing the dates of the eminent packing of the government. The IJI leader Shaikh Rashid Ahmed clearly said: "I hope and pray that the PPP presents its third and the fourth budget, but I do not think so." All these efforts were being made and the threats hurled so to bring her under pressure that she should hand over the



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province of Sindh to the military authorities.

But, she resisted the move and refused in clear terms to hand-over any area to army under the article 245. In order not to leave any ambiguity, she addressed a press conference in July, saying "Article 245 is invoked when a province 'misbehaves' and Article 147 when the army is called in to assist the civil administration to meet the law and order situation in a province. And the second point of difference between the two situations is that when Article 245 is invoked the fundamental rights are suspended while they do not when 147 is invoked." She made it very clear in that press conference that the army had all the powers it needed to effectively assist the Sindh administration for restoration of law and order situation. "In any case, it was up to the political government to decide how best to meet a situation like the one obtaining in Sindh, and be tackled without alienating the population further," she said.

This was not acceptable to the powers that be. The die had been cast. General Asad Durrani later reported that the decision to end her government was taken on 21<sup>st</sup> July in a meeting of corps commanders at Rawalpindi.<sup>36</sup> The President was already antagonized with her. So was Aslam Baig. Mr. Roedad Khan, who coordinated the operation between the President and the army chief, reported:

"Towards the end of July 1990, there were firm indications that the President had taken the fateful decision to dissolve the National Assembly and sack Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her cabinet. The Chief of Army Staff, General Aslam Beg had been taken into confidence and his agreement secured. Logistics and other details were worked out in a series of meetings with Major General Asad Durrani, Director of Military Intelligence, who represented the COAS."<sup>37</sup>

The President in consultation with his legal advisers drafted the dissolution order. "While all this was happening and the President's advisers were burning the midnight oil in the Presidency, Benazir Bhutto was blissfully ignorant of the axe which was about to fall on her government and went about her business as if all was well," reported Roedad Khan. "But, in order to reassure herself, she sent Happy Minwala, her Special Assistant, to call on the President, to

find out if there was any basis for these rumors, and what had led to the deterioration in her relations with the President. The President assured Happy that he had no intention of doing anything against the Constitution which was perfectly consistent with the action he was about to take.”<sup>38</sup>

This was a plot of a third class thriller, acted upon by high and mighty of the land without much shame or remorse. Roedad went on to say: “Between 1 August and 6 August, we were apprehending a pre-emptive move by the Prime Minister, but with every passing day and with D-Day approaching and nothing happening, an eerie feeling gripped us all. Why was the Prime Minister not making any move? Was she going to spring a surprise? What if she went on air, addressed the nation, and disclosed that a plan was afoot to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the elected government? The element of surprise would be gone. How would the President then react? Would he call off the operation or go ahead and dissolve the Assembly? How would the country react?”<sup>39</sup>

As a smoke screen over the actual designs of the establishment, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi announced on 4<sup>th</sup> August that the Opposition alliance would move a second vote of no-confidence against her during the next session of the Assembly, which was expected to start from 8<sup>th</sup> August. Believing the word of such a senior politician, she called a meeting of her close associates to discuss the move. There was nothing to worry, it was concluded in the meeting. The party, it was said, had enough strength in the Assembly and could face any eventuality. But, they were unaware that the President in collusion with the over-ambitious army chief had decided even to discard the façade of the democratic norms, and was to use the most controversial piece of legislation enacted under martial law to end her democratic government after merely completing one-third of its tenure, just 20 out of 60 months.

Finally the D-Day arrived. The army chief formally put all his corps commanders on “Red Alert” on 5<sup>th</sup> August. A day later on 6<sup>th</sup> August, the President came on television to read out a 23-page ‘charge-sheet’ against her government in a nation-wide address. He announced dismissal of her government. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi,

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chief of the Combined Opposition Party (COP), was appointed as the caretaker Prime Minister. He dissolved the National Assembly and two provincial assemblies of Sindh and the NWFP where PPP was in power.<sup>40</sup> The Punjab and Balochistan legislative assemblies were not touched, obviously because there were anti-PPP governments. Two governors, Fakhurddin G. Ibrahim of Sindh and the Punjab's Tikka Khan, who had been appointed on her advice, were also removed. The two others belonging to the President's camp were allowed to continue.

The move was preceded by a smooth military operation in the capital, which cut off Islamabad from the rest of the world for several hours until the change had been completed. Troops surrounded the Prime Minister's House in the battle-dress. They took over all key installations, including the Radio and TV stations and the foreign office, and even local phone calls were not allowed. A Constitutional coup d'etat had taken place. A new era of struggle had dawned. A new phase of an unending trial had begun.

## Chapter 11

# Testing Times

(1990-1993)

The news of the dismissal of her government at the hands of a trusted establishment hand, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, spread like a jungle fire. Pakistan again entered into a phase of uncertainty. Once again the peoples will was subjugated through the barrel of gun and palace intrigues. Once again the world was given a chance to think of Pakistan as a "Failed State." Yet again in Pakistan's history of mere four decades a 'state of emergency' was imposed, forfeiting the fundamental rights of the hapless citizens.

Opposition had been inducted into the governments at all the federal and provincial levels. They had staged a victory without a fight. In a country where morality has still to acquire a rightful place in politics, the Opposition was jubilant over their assumption of power through the back door. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, a person who had not been able to secure his own seat in the general elections, took over as the Prime Minister, in what people called "a dream come true." Others jokingly called him a "Perpetual Prime Minister in Waiting."

The 'caretaker' cabinet consisted of diehard opponents of her party like Ellahi Bakhsh Soomro and Senator Sartaj Aziz, two leading

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stalwarts of the IJI, who had been in General Zia's cabinet also. Then there was Malik Naeem, yet another active IJI leader, who had been selected by Nawaz Sharif to represent him in the provincial reconciliation committee in its negotiations with the centre. No less significant was the inclusion of Chuadhry Shujaat Hussain, leader of the IJI Parliamentary Party in the dissolved National Assembly. Besides them were Begum Abida Hussain, Zahid Sarfraz, Gen. Majid Malik, Rafi Raza, and the President's special hand to prosecute her in the name of accountability, Roedad Khan.

The establishment went ahead with its plans. Sindh's Governor, an upright former judge of Supreme Court, Justice Fakhurddin G. Ibrahim, was replaced with a former interior minister of Zia ul Haq. The new Governor immediately dissolved the elected provincial assembly and appointed Jam Sadiq Ali, one of the most controversial figures of the country, as the chief minister of Sindh. The task given to the "caretaker" chief minister by his mentors was to crush Benazir Bhutto, her family and her party, ignoring anything and everything that was related to decency and democracy. He was an excellent choice for the role of a tormentor, which he would play to the utmost satisfaction of his gurus in Islamabad and Rawalpindi till his death in March 1992.

Same was repeated in the Punjab, where her appointed Governor Tikka Khan was replaced with a diehard Nawaz loyalist Mian Azhar, who would eight years later revolt against Nawaz Sharif. But those were the honeymoon days between the two. In the first instance Nawaz Sharif was not touched and continued as the chief minister. However, after some time the establishment realized that if he has to be brought in as the next Prime Minister, he would have to leave the position of the provincial chief minister. But, his removal was not like that of the Sindh and NWFP chief ministers of her party. He was accorded a royal departure, and his nominee, who also happened to be his personal staff member, Ghulam Hyder Wyne, was appointed as his successor.

She received the news of her dismissal calmly. The adversities had not been something new to her. She had been grown with them. But, her mother was quite disturbed over these developments. She had

seen her husband facing all these trials and tribulations. And she had solidly stood beside him during those extremely testing times. But, her daughter! Was she also to be subjected to same sort of treatment? This bothered her much. When this night of darkness was to end in Pakistan? When the self appointed custodians of national interests would stop playing with the honour and blood of the country's leaders, she wondered.

Benazir Bhutto called a press conference immediately that evening in the Prime Minister's House. She was angry but confident. "The Dissolution Order is arbitrary and with ulterior motives," she began with a short, prepared statement. "It is unfortunate that an elected people's government has been sacked and an unrepresentative government installed," she said. She refused to accept the decision and called it "a Constitutional coup d'etat." But she told her party cadres to remain calm and composed and not to react, so that "they do not get an excuse to bypass the political process." She dismissed the charges "as a pack of lies." "They talk about accountability. They must be made accountable for their deeds of the last 12 years,"<sup>1</sup> she thundered. Nobody in the corridors of real power listened.

As soon as the set up was in place, hunt for her and her party started. On 7<sup>th</sup> August, just a day after her dismissal, the caretaker Prime Minister directed interior ministry to examine the proposal "to establish special courts to try the PPP ministers and advisers on the alleged charges of corruption and nepotism," reported Daily Dawn.<sup>2</sup> The accountability was just for her party. All others were not to be touched.

The political wing of the interior ministry remained busy throughout the day to contemplate the proposal of establishing such special courts as early as possible. "We have received the directive of the caretaker Prime Minister to help set up special courts for trying the PPP ministers and many others who are allegedly involved in the blatant cases of corruption and nepotism. We have also been directed not to spare anyone including the closest relatives of the ousted Prime Minister, was the response of interior ministry.<sup>3</sup> The political wing of the ministry had been asked to also gather informa-

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tion and documentary proof through intelligence agencies, so that solid cases of corruption and nepotism could be initiated against the PPP ministers and advisers.<sup>4</sup>

Her and her family was barred from leaving the country by the new government. Instructions were conveyed to all the airports in the country that she, her husband, her mother and any other member of her family should not be allowed to leave the country, as if she was not a former Prime Minister of the country, but an absconding fugitive. When journalists contacted the caretaker minister Ellahi Bakhsh Soomro to confirm the news, he remarked, "If there has to be an accountability, then such steps will have to be taken."<sup>5</sup> A young woman in her thirties was the target of the State apparatus.

While this was happening on one side, a strange phenomenon was taking place on the other hand. The poor people of Pakistan were least influenced by all the propaganda going on against her. When she reached Karachi next day, a large number of people were there to greet her with slogans "Ya Allah Ya Rasool, Benazir Beqasoor" (Swearing on God and the Holy Prophet that Benazir is innocent). At the end of her tumultuous welcome from the airport to her private residence Bilawal House, she declared that the presidential action was "as an insult to the people." She told her highly resentful party cadets that the President had imposed "rejected elements" on the nation "through backdoor." "We have not done injustice to anyone, nor committed excess against anybody. We have, with all the patience in the world, tried to serve the people, but President Ishaq has taken resort to unconstitutional and undemocratic methods,"<sup>6</sup> she told her audience.

To the independent observers, the government tirade against her was highly questionable. Writing in Dawn on 8<sup>th</sup> August, Shaheen Sahbai observed:

"The mess notwithstanding the PPP Government was ensuring some basic norms of democratic polity. She was allowing full freedom to the press, government controlled media was feeling much at ease and the amount of coverage the Opposition was getting can only be

compared to the total blackout of the Opposition in the new caretaker government now.

“Fundamental rights were assured to every citizen and instead of picking up on political foes, through the muscle of the government machinery, her own husband was constrained to move the courts to clear his name.

“The free political atmosphere she ensured, provided the Opposition, now saddled in the Government and behaving quite differently already, with an opportunity to continue its tirade against her and her family. That was the crucial difference between full democracy and a guided democracy the present system can be related to.

“The charges of corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency do not stand a chance when basic norms of the entire system are changed, for the benefits of a few. Junijo was sacked because of corruption but who believed the then President? Many may believe the corruption charges against Benazir’s ministers, and they should be punished, but personally the lady from Larkana has remained untainted. She has not been involved in any charge personally and so she can come up with a new team that is if charges against her colleagues are proved.

“But the basic question is who should carry out the accountability process. The credentials of the caretaker cabinet are not clean enough to do that. Most of the ministers are the product of the Martial Law days when corruption of the sort Benazir is accused of was as much a norm as it is today. She in fact inherited it from those days and may only have added to its gravity, if proved so. So if accountability has to take place, why only for 20 months. Fairness would demand that it begin way



back in the fifties.<sup>17</sup>

Rumors were spread that the Punjab has gone against her. How could that be? She wondered. These very people of the Punjab had withstood with her the torture and terror of Zia era for eleven long years. Even before that it was the citadel of support for her father. They had never wavered their support for the high ideals, she and her father were harbingers of. How could they change their stance after hearing few slogans of 'Jag Punjabi Jag' from few of the most dubious characters of Pakistani politics? She never believed the rumors.

On 18<sup>th</sup> August, she went to Rawalpindi for the first time after her removal from the government to meet with the senior party members. On airport a crowd of tens of thousands had gathered to welcome her without any formal call. She felt mist in her eyes. The people raised slogans absolving her of every blame the establishment was trying hard to stick on her. A huge procession followed her to Ghakkar Plaza in Rawalpindi, where she was to hold the meeting. It took her three hours to cover five kilometers because traffic snarled up as the crowd milled around. There was persistent demand that she should address them. Finally, she had to appear in the balcony of the plaza to speak to them. "I am ready to fight," she told her cheering followers. "I do not need a certificate from the President. I need the certificate of the people of Pakistan," she told the highly charged and emotional crowd that had taken hold of the entire vicinity. "We shall continue the struggle for restoration of a democratic and equitable socio-economic order in the country," was her promise to the people.<sup>8</sup>

Three days later she went to Lahore. Thousands of enthusiastic workers of the party had gathered at the airport since the morning. The romance of the people of the Punjab with Bhuttos had not dimmed. As she emerged from the lounge, flower petals were showered over her. She rode a jeep, which started its journey at a snail's pace towards the city. Thousands of her supporters moved on foot with her jeep, chanting slogans, declaring her innocence of every allegation leveled by Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Besides the

workers-on-foot, there was every mode of transport, buses, wagons, cars, carts, and motorcycles carrying the PPP flags, her portraits and banners with slogans of “Benazir Beqasoor” and “Jeay Jeay Benazir.” This followed her everywhere, wherever she went.<sup>9</sup>

When it was realized that leveling of allegations had not been able to keep people away from her, the establishment moved ahead with another lever: the judicial prosecution. On 19<sup>th</sup> August, the ‘caretaker’ government set up a special cell to prepare cases against her and her party’s leaders. This special cell was to work in the Presidency, under the very nose of veteran Ghulam Ishaq Khan, and was to be headed by Minister without portfolio, Roedad Khan.

In blatant disregard to any semblance of neutrality, and to keep Nawaz Sharif undisturbed of the accountability process, the caretaker minister Rafi Raza declared that accountability would remain confined to the federal level. “No province has been touched and there is no investigation going on against former Punjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif,” Mr. Raza told a selected group of reporters, shortly after his return from the President’s House on 16<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>10</sup>

The special cell headed by Roedad Khan brunt mid-night oil in the Presidency to identify ‘initially’ fourteen cases against her and her ministers within no time. The reports were that the cell is working on a reference based on sedition charges against her and her former minister Aitzaz Ahsan, for passing on ‘vital information’ to the Indian authorities. These cases were to be tried by the ‘Special Court No.1’ incidentally headed by Justice Rafiq Tarrar,<sup>11</sup> close associate of Nawaz Sharif and his family, who would be elevated to the Presidency in 1997 by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The Head of the Special Tribunal Justice Rafiq Tarrar went to see President Ghulam Ishaq Khan,<sup>12</sup> why, is anybody’s guess.

She strongly reacted to these news reports relating to preparation of sedition charges against her. “Any such reference by the President would mean that, after having sacked the democratically elected government on spurious charges, which he could not substantiate, he was now seeking new means to eliminate the leadership to secure his objective of imposing a government of his choice on the people

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of Pakistan.” She said the allegations were not only “false and outrageous” but “indicate the kind of desperation which has seized the Presidency and the caretakers.” “To plant stories attacking the patriotism of the former Prime Minister and the leader of the largest political party, and of any of her colleagues is an insult to the sentiments of those millions of patriotic Pakistanis who voted her into power as the Prime Minister.” She pointed out that “at no stage did the President level such a charge when she was in power.” “For 20 months he maintained a silence, which has now been broken by inspired stories to add to the smear campaign against the former Prime Minister of Pakistan,” she added.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to her, the cases against her husband Asif Zardari, ministers Jehangir Badr, Chuadhry Aitzaz Ahsan, Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat and Ahsanul Haq Piracha had been “finalized for immediate trial.” Rest of her ministers and former legislators were ‘forewarned’ by the Special Cell to be ready for trial. To meet with the added work, eleven more special tribunals were established by the end of August.

She considered the special tribunals as lever to purchase the loyalties of her party and a bid to horse-trading. It was to make scared the chick hearted comrades of her party in the name of accountability. She called them ‘Kangaroo courts to blackmail PPP.’ Her party’s stance on this selective accountability was unambiguous, declaring that the “PPP does not accept the formation of these special tribunals although its members are ready to appear before any ordinary court and before the people.” The Central Executive committee of the party called for setting up of a judicial commission to inquire into the performance of all the Presidents and the Prime Ministers of the country, in order to include also Zia ul Huq, Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Muhammed Khan Junijo in the accountability net.<sup>14</sup> The demand went to deaf ears. Finally, the Central Executive Council of the party decided to challenge the formation of special courts in the higher judiciary.

The first week of September brought a looming threat of the arrest of her husband Asif Ali Zardari. Sindh High Court granted pre-arrest bail “for one day” against two sureties of a million rupees each,

which was later extended for few weeks time. Meanwhile, on 16<sup>th</sup> September the 'caretaker' chief minister, Jam Sadiq Ali, asserted that his government had completed sixteen cases of "financial crimes" against Asif Ali Zardari and other PPP leaders. It was a clear signal that if you would get bail in one case, we would institute dozen others.

And this victimization on the name of accountability was going on at the hands of establishment's appointee Jam Sadiq Ali, who had been a fugitive of law for eleven long years, and against whom cases relating to corruption and violence were pending with the Federal Investigation Agency since 1970s! There was an interesting news item regarding Jam's efforts to get the cases against him withdrawn and get more registered against Benazir Bhutto and her husband. It read:

"ISLAMABAD, Sept 16: Sindh caretaker Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali met here on Saturday the Director General of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Mr. Wajahat Latif at the latter's office and discussed with him the possibility of withdrawal of two cases of alleged corruption and violence pending against him (Jam) with the FIA since 1970s.

According to sources close to the FIA, Jam also discussed with the FIA chief the progress being made in various investigations being conducted into the alleged cases of corruption and misuse of power by the former Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto, her cabinet colleagues and PPP members of the defunct National Assembly.

Sources said that Jam Sahib apparently wanted the FIA to withdraw the two cases against him while he was still a member of the caretaker set up. One of the cases against him pertains to the infamous firing incident on Hurs in Sanghar and the other relates to alleged bun-

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gling of millions of rupees when he was a member of Sindh Cabinet in the 1970s.

With regard to the on going accountability, the DG, FIA is said to have told Jam Sadiq that FIA has no more evidence of alleged corruption and misuse of power against the former Primer Minister, her cabinet colleagues and defunct legislators of the PPP beyond what it has already been forwarded to the competent authorities.

The FIA chief is said to have made it clear that the FIA was conducting no investigations against any of the former ministers who have not yet been named in any corruption cases.<sup>15</sup>

This was the integrity of the person who had been placed over the heads of the people of Sindh by a person like Ghulam Ishaq Khan. The only thing that made Jam so dear and near to the establishment was his unbounded hatred for her and her party coupled with the quality to terrorize and torture his victims. So much so for the selection of “right man for the right job!”

She and her party decided to knock the doors of the superior courts for justice. Accordingly, several Constitutional petitions were filed in the high courts of Sindh and Balochistan under article 199 of the Constitution challenging the validity of the order of 6<sup>th</sup> August issued by the President and all acts, done in pursuance thereof including installation of the caretaker cabinets. The Sindh High Court admitted the appeal and constituted a full bench headed by Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah for hearing.

The establishment was not sure about the forthcoming decision of the high court in view of Chief Justice’s unpredictability. Hence a new ploy was effected. The Chief Justice was sworn in as the acting Governor of the province, sending the Governor Mahmood A. Haroon on an “Umrah.” This trip abroad of the Governor was extended and extended till the return of Sajjad Ali Shah on the bench

had no “adverse” effect. In Lahore they had Justice Rafiq Tarrar as the Chief Justice, who ‘legitimize’ the dissolution order through a full bench verdict, just about a little before the promised polls, on 14<sup>th</sup> October.

While this process of accountability was going on, the caretaker set up was busy in sorting their financial and other interests. The Caretaker Prime Minister wanted to venture into a lucrative business sector, to establish a sugar mill in his home district. The sponsors wanted it to be located in PM’s home district, the act that was not permissible according to the agricultural and industrial policy then in force. But, the obliging chief minister of Sindh issued a No Objection Certificate, giving a green signal for the setting up a sugar mill, whose sponsors included the caretaker Prime Minister and his brothers.

The election campaign of IJI in the Punjab started with ethnic overtures, on the basis of Punjabi nationalism. Syeda Abida Husain, the caretaker federal minister for information and broadcasting and a leading light of IJI was one of the active propagator of the theme of ‘Punjabi-ism’ and played on anti-Sindhi sentiments in a series of speeches. While addressing a public rally in Jhang on 18<sup>th</sup> October, she declared that Benazir’s father had deprived the Punjab of its share in the river Indus and that Benazir had made the Punjabi settlers in Sindh “flee their hearths and homes.” “Those who turn to the Punjab for votes and work against it, forfeit their right to be elected from here,”<sup>16</sup> she pleaded the masses. In another public meeting, she maintained that the Punjab ‘had always given sacrifices for others’ but had been deprived of its right of leadership in the country for the last forty-two years, which resulted in political confusion besides creating chaos and promoting provincialism, regionalism and factionalism in the country.

By the end of September, the establishment intensified the ‘game’ of references against her. The Accountability Cell in the Presidency filed numerous references in different courts, located in the different parts of the country. These references related to such matters, like award of consultancy of Karachi Electric Supply Corporation, to ‘proposed’ allotment of land for a hotel project in Islamabad, the

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act that had not taken place in actual.<sup>17</sup> After the hearings of almost all these references over a period of about two years, finally she was acquitted in all these cases by the courts.

But, in those crucial days, when election was just above the head, she kept on receiving the show cause notices and personal appearance notices from different courts like snowballs in snowfall. The otherwise lethargic court procedures were transformed into 'lightening trials' for her due to active persuasion from the Presidency. If one day she was to appear in Lahore High Court, the other day she had to appear in the Sindh High Court in Karachi. After many references against her, the President moved a reference against her father in law, Hakim Ali Zardari, a former MNA.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October, the caretaker government arrested her husband Asif Ali Zardai, who was contesting elections against caretaker Prime Minister's son, Ghulam Murtaza Jatoi from Nawabshah constituency. He was arrested in connection with an alleged kidnapping case of Murtaza Hussain Bukhari, a Pakistani philanthropist living in Britain.<sup>18</sup> Asif had to taste jail for the first time in his life, an inevitable price for marrying a person like Benazir.

While facing all this, she had to attend not only her own election campaign but, also of her husband, and other candidates of her party. Wherever she went, in different parts of the country, the common people greeted her like a goddess. Hundreds of thousands people came out, whether it was Sialkot in the Punjab, Lyari in Karachi, Peshawar in NWFP, Quetta in Balochistan or Sanghar in the interior of Sindh. This was enough to give sleepless nights to caretakers, who despite putting all their resources to malign her, were not able to bring any visible dent in her support base.

During one such public engagement, an attempt was made on her life at Gujar Khan on 1<sup>st</sup> October. While her jeep was inching at a snail's pace due to large crowd, an unknown man, walking alongside her vehicle, took out a pistol from his pocket. But before he could aim it at her, the workers and supporters of PPP got hold of him and overpowered him.<sup>19</sup> The campaign went on unaffected till 22<sup>nd</sup> October, when, in the Shahdra Chowk of Lahore, she ended it amidst thousands of emotionally charged supporters and workers of

her party. All the signs showed that she had the potential to stage a comeback. But, the establishment was not going to allow this to happen.

Years later, the chief of ISI at that time disclosed the secret on oath how he and his organization had stolen the elections of October 24. Lieutenant General (retired) Asad Durrani, who headed the ISI in 1990, admitted later under oath that he had distributed 140 million rupees obtained from Mehran Bank to various politicians belonging to the opponents of PPP, including Nawaz Sharif (3.5 million), Jatoi (5.0 million), Jam Sadiq (5.0 million), Jamait Islami (5.0 million) Junijo, Pir Pagara, Abida Hussain and many other leading names.<sup>20</sup> The objective was to influence election results in favour of Nawaz Sharif. Apparently, the ISI operation in 1990 not only had the blessings of the President and the wholehearted participation of the caretaker Prime Minister, but was also known to the army chief.<sup>21</sup>

The army chief of that time, Mirza Aslam Baig also submitted a written statement in the court confirming that the ISI had supported 'certain candidates' during the 1990 elections. This disclosure coming from horse's mouth, seven years later, on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1997 confirmed the truth of her apprehensions and accusations that the establishment wanted to keep her away from politics.

On the night of 24<sup>th</sup> October, the election results started pouring in on television. While the difference in the percentage of votes obtained by her party and Nawaz Sharif led IJI was less than one percent (36.65% and 37.27%) her party could secure only 45 seats as compared to IJI's 115 seats in an assembly of 207.<sup>22</sup> It seems that the money had been properly utilized. In this background, Ian Talbot was compelled to say, "Election rigging, like selective accountability, is a tradition deeply rooted in Pakistan's history." That very night she addressed a press conference in Larkana, where she protested over the election rigging. She said the next Parliament would not be the peoples elected Parliament but it would be the President's Parliament.

But, who cared what she said or did. Three days later, on 27<sup>th</sup> October same act was repeated in provincial assembly elections. The only visible difference was the degree of election violence with



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at least 34 people killed and over 100 injured. The deaths occurred mostly in Punjab where 15 persons died in election clashes. Seven were killed in Sindh, six in Balochistan and six in the NWFP. But, the biggest casualty was the credibility of elections in Pakistan.

With almost same percentage of votes secured by two major parties, through prudent planning by the establishment, her PPP was almost eliminated from three provincial assemblies. The Punjab was wholly delivered to the IJI with 208 seats out of total 240. In the NWFP, IJI got 32 seats and its ally ANP got 21, making a tally of 53 in a house of 80. In Balochistan the cake had been split in a number of parties, mostly closer to IJI.<sup>23</sup>

In any case, even according to the results of these 'stolen' elections, as she called them publicly, her party secured the highest number of seats in Sindh Assembly, 47 in a house of 100. It emerged as the largest party in the house. The second largest party was MQM, which got 28 seats. Remaining seats went to smaller groups and independents. It was democratic right of her party that it should have been invited to form the government. But, unfortunately the norms of decency and democracy had not been that strong. In a bizarre show of 'carrot and stick' Jam Sadiq was allowed to form government over the heads of the majority party PPP.

The result was that Nawaz Sharif led IJI formed governments in the federation as well as in all the four provinces. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif were very cordial to each other. There was no challenge from any quarter. She had been successfully sidelined in the political process. Her husband was in jail. A tormentor in the form of Jam Sadiq Ali was there in her home province to make the lives of her and her sympathizers as miserable as possible.

If the justice would not have been the domain of the Nature, Benazir and her party had been finished off in that month of October. But, it seems that there is some supernatural force, which comes into action and turns the tides, when it is most unexpected. This became evident in her case some time later when she, most unexpectedly, again occupied the central stage of Pakistani politics. But, those were very disgusting and disappointing times for her, when

everything looked bleak and without any silver lining.

She decided to face these adverse circumstances with courage and to play it cool. In a meeting of her party's central executive council, it was decided that the party would discharge its duties as an Opposition party in the legislature. However, its MNAs elect will take oath under protest. It was resolved that the party would agitate its grievances regarding the rigging of the polls through political and legal means and will not go for confrontation. The reason behind the decision was that she did not want to create conditions, which might be used as a pretext for the imposition of another martial law.

In the first week of November she rose to address, as the Leader of the Opposition in the newly elected National Assembly. "I rise in this august House to welcome a new day in the chequered history of parliamentary democracy... I am not oblivious in my mind of the dark and confounding night that extended between August 6, 1990 and November 4, 1990 and enveloped the entire nation in gloom and despair. But I do not intend to enter into any recrimination today."<sup>24</sup>

"I propose only to welcome the new Administration, to extend to it the support of the Opposition, to the extent that its policies are designed to further national interest, to remind it of its express electoral commitment to the people and only to caution it in some respects to avoid the policies of its immediate caretaker predecessor and its visible and invisible patron... I welcome first of all the new Administration in the hope that it will try to increase the democratic pace available to civilian representative institutions and not be deterred by the fact that others before its time may have fallen in pursuing this goal. It is still the only goal to be pursued. In it alone lies the key to the integrity and solidarity of the country. Only in such pursuits, therefore, will it be acting in the national interest.

"We wish the new Administration to follow the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute and they will have the full support of the Opposition Benches because it is an issue which is close to the hearts of both the former Prime Ministers who belong to the Pakistan Peoples Party.

"The economy is yet another serious challenge before the new Administration... They have an absolute majority in the Senate. And

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as is evident from the President's speech on the election eve, they have his unqualified blessings. There are then no impediments in their way. They can choose to serve the people in the manner they have promised to do so.

"The new Government can rest assured that the Opposition will act as a conscience of this august House. It will be the voice of reason, the spokesman of the poor, the toiling and the land less. It will be custodian of the rights of women and minorities of the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised. There are million of voters, Mr. Speaker, who feel today that they have been deprived of their right to franchise. They felt it when a government chosen by them was dismissed by the will of one man on 6th August 1990. They feel it today when a new day in the history of a parliamentary democracy is dawned. The Opposition and I will be their voice.

"They ask many questions and they get no answer. How is it, they ask Mr. Speaker, that a difference of only 0.02 per cent in the total vote tally of the two major contesting alliances transforms itself into 145 National Assembly seats for the IJI and 45 National Assembly seats for the PDA, particularly when in most constituencies the IJI candidates won by a margin of 20,000 to 50,000 votes. Why should all constituencies won by one alliance show an unbelievable high count of number going far beyond the actual turn out while constituencies won by the other alliance show a count more in consonance with the actual turn out. Why should a candidate be denied the rights of an instant official count right to inspect all the ballots?

"Why have the results been announced and notified on the basis only of what has already been known as the preliminary unofficial count at the polling stations. Why should there be a duly notified cell in the Presidency equipped with calculators, computers, hot lines, parallel and in addition to the Election Commission? Why must Pakistan Television wait upon approval from this Cell before announcing any results? Who manned this Cell and why? Time and truth will provide the answers to these questions.

"Certainly, Sir, time and truth will provide the answer to these questions, even though the Election Commission and the Caretakers may have none, though some of the question contain the answers

within themselves. I will not presently go into them, for surely, this House jealous of its own composition will go deep into these on the basis of the adjournment motion posted by some distinguished members yesterday. Surely, too the new Prime Minister and his Administration will itself be keen to wipe this bold new question mark in the minds of Pakistanis. I trust they will endeavor to clear the cobwebs of doubt that exist and we will support them in this effort, to clear the cobweb.

“Let me, through your good offices, Mr. Speaker, also caution them. Technically, they are a new Administration but in some ways this is only a technically new Administration, most of the Chief Ministers are the same as in the past. It is now up to the new Prime Minister to transform this apparently technical transfer of power into a substantive transfer of power and to depart from the policies of repression, persecution, discrimination launched by the Caretakers. The new Prime Minister does have a new opportunity. He can make a new beginning. The Caretakers mark a valiant campaign of victimization, involved political opponents in criminal charges fabricated through arrests without charges, torture and intimidation. Thousands of people including bankers, civil servants, businessmen and party workers were affected.”

Criticizing the accountability law, she said: “Why was this law chosen, Mr. Speaker? It was chosen because under it referring authority was to make a charge sheet and appointed the prosecutor also himself, and not the Chief Justice nominated the judge for the Special Court. He also prescribed the procedure by promulgating the rules there by restricting adjournment, reversing the presumption of innocence and tampering with the civilized norms of evidence. Head, he was to win, tail the respondent was to lose.

“The members of the Opposition Benches are not afraid of accountability. We are accountable to Allah. We are accountable to history and accountable to the people of Pakistan, to the ordinary courts exercising ordinary jurisdiction not to Special Courts applying special procedures.

“Mr. Speaker, the so-called process of accountability, it was not done in good faith, only the members of the democratic government

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were targeted. The light of accountability did not shine on the opponents of the democratic Government. It was obviously for a malafide purpose and it is meant to discredit, it is meant to tarnish the reputation of leaders who selflessly served this nation, who left the comforts of their own home to endure long nights and even longer days in prison cells, who bore the pain of the whip lash on their backs, who stabbed death in the faith and did not flinch because they believe in the rule of law, because they believe in the rights of freedom of the people and they believe in a free society. Those who undertook this discreditable exercise have no honour... They knew not the words of Othello.

“Who steals my purse steals trash. It is something, it is nothing. It was mine; it is his and has been slaved to thousands. But he that filches from me my good name, robs me of that which enriches him not but makes me poor indeed.”

“This unfortunately was the caliber of the IJI caretaker. We from the PDA are here today. We are here today despite our reservations about the results. We are here today for a national purpose and for a national course. Politics is an objective sign and political leaders despite their differences must strive together for the strengthening of the political system. To us democracy is not only a way of governance, it is a value. Democracy requires tolerance and it places an equal responsibility both on the Treasury and on the Opposition Benches. We hope that the new IJI Administration will discard the ill-advised policies of the Caretakers and redress the grievances voiced about disqualification tribunals, the release of political prisoners, the end of political victimization, the end of economic victimization, the withdrawal of politically motivated cases against bankers, businessmen, civil servants and political opponents.

“We hope that they will lift the State of Emergency and not seek to de-stabilize the Government of Azad Kashmir. It is such policies which can foster the atmosphere for a by partisan approach on the more crucial national issue which confront the nation today. Such policies can lend greater strength and greater durability to the entire political system, such policies can give greater longevity to this House because standing here, Mr. Speaker, I see that there are

three elected Prime Ministers in the period between 1985-90 when in fact the normal tenure should have meant that there would have been only one such Prime Minister and we believe that if such policies are pursued, Mr. Speaker, not only will this House have longevity but we will give the new Prime Minister and the Treasury Benches our full cooperation.”<sup>25</sup>

It was an olive branch that she offered to Nawaz Sharif, on the beginning of his career as the Prime Minister of the country. Unlike his predecessor, Nawaz was fortunate to have such an understanding and cooperative Opposition. It seemed in those hey days of end 1990 that everything was going for him.

In addition to that, as a head of government, he had three distinct advantages over her. Firstly, he had a secure power base in the Punjab, he had perfected the art of patronage during his stint as chief minister, and he had his ‘handsome’ election victory and formation of like minded governments in all the provinces and centre.

With all these advantages, his biggest disadvantage was his intellectual poverty and lack of financial prudence. It was a tight rope for him. He came under attack for the first time in 1991, when the co-operative societies scandal came to surface in his home province. With this drowned an amount of twenty billion rupees of the small farmers and other depositors, who had deposited their small savings with these societies, mostly owned and operated by the leading lights of IJI. They had in turn advanced and invested these amounts in financially infeasible projects as a lever of political patronage. Amongst the principal beneficiaries of this largesse were the family business concerns of the Prime Minister and his federal ministers. The surfacing of this scam washed away much of the sand under the feet of the newly installed Prime Minister, without any effort of the Opposition.

Not very long after, Nawaz Sharif shot in his foot, once again in financial context, when his Government placed advertisements for sale of foreign currency bearer certificate (FCBC) in the major US, European and Japanese newspapers, inviting the general public to buy high-interest five-year bonds, which could be purchased without the identity of the purchaser or disclosure of the source of the

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income. In most of these countries the scheme was immediately branded as a charter for laundering the drug money. The US was on verge of boycotting Pakistani banking system because of blatant violation of US banking laws. High officials from Pakistan were rushed post-haste to Washington for damage control. Finding no other way, the Government of Pakistan had to withdraw the scheme unceremoniously.

Besides his intellectual problems, Nawaz Sharif's second most important disadvantage was his over-indebtedness to an over-imposing President, and an over-interfering establishment. They had been privy to the secrets, and in fact instrumental in his political rise from an ordinary scion of a traders' family to the position of a Prime Minister. The concerned quarters also knew the secret behind the sky-rocketing of his family's business fortunes that had grown from less than \$10 million to \$400 million in just a span of few years. This had left very little moving space for him.

The President single mindedly pursued her and her immediate family's victimization through his appointed chief minister Jam Sadiq Ali, who had in turn appointed Ghulam Ishaq Khan's most controversial son in law, Irfanullah Marwat, as the minister of home department, giving under his control police, and other coercive agencies. Irfanullah Marwat allegedly turned the Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA), a police outfit, into a den of criminals, headed by his kinsman Sameeullah Marwat.

A prestigious English monthly Herald carried a detailed report on the activities of CIA under the President's son in law, revealing, to the astonishment of the national as well as international readers, a catalogue of torture and murder within CIA's precincts and showed how its operatives were engaged in such crimes as car theft, kidnapping and gang rape.<sup>26</sup> The Amnesty International gave worldwide publicity to these reports. In another report of Amnesty International, published later in June 1992, details were given of the mass arrests of hundreds of PPP workers on the alleged charges of the terrorism and linkages with the Al-Zulfikar organization.<sup>27</sup>

The real target of all this intimidation and coercion was Benazir. The things touched the heights when on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1991, at

around 7.30 in the evening, five masked men broke into the Karachi residence of Veena Hayat, a close friend of Benazir Bhutto, and allegedly gang raped her. The victim belonged to a most respectable and affluent family of the country, being the daughter of veteran Muslim Leaguer Sardar Shaukat Hayat, who had been a close aide of Quaid-e-Azam. Veena charged that Irfanullah Marwat had sent the men. Evident purpose of that ugly incident was perhaps to scare Benazir, and to tell her those next times it could be her.<sup>28</sup>

The character assassination went side by side. One day Nawaz Sharif's minister for religious affairs publicly declared her a 'Kafir' (unbeliever or infidel), while on the other day, the Prime Minister's closest ally in Sindh, his chief minister called her a 'terrorist.'<sup>29</sup> This all seemed a part of a calculated attempt on part of Jam Sadiq Ali, with full backing and support of Ghulam Ishaq Khan, to destroy the PPP's power base in the province.

When a court acquitted Asif Ali Zardari from the charges of fraudulently obtaining a bank loan, he was immediately booked and detained in another case, in May 1991, on the charges of the murder of his political opponents. She herself also faced numerous charges.

How fair were the proceedings of these cases going on could be judged from the comments of Lord Gifford, a member of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, who had attended proceedings against her. He commented that the charges had been brought for political motives and the proceedings were misconceived and partisan, and seemed to compromise the judiciary.<sup>30</sup>

However, the signs of change started appearing on the political horizon by the later half of 1991. The Prime Minister was getting increasingly weary of the dominance of the President in every matter. The things came to a head in August 1991 at the time of the retirement of the chief of army staff Mirza Aslam Baig. The bone of contention proved to be the appointment of his successor. The Prime Minister had his own list for the position of the new chief, while the President wanted his favorite to be in the saddle. In the final count the choice of the President prevailed and General Asif Nawaz Janjua, who had been corps commander of Sindh, was appointed as the new chief. This left bad taste in the Prime Minister's mouth.



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Four months later, in December 1991, the President came to address the joint session of the Parliament. The Opposition led by Benazir staged protest inside the Parliament House by raising slogans of 'Go Baba Go.' For a former bureaucrat like Ghulam Ishaq Khan, this construed an insult and humiliation. He expected Nawaz to come to his rescue, which did not come forth, giving the President enough reason to doubt the loyalty of his handpicked Prime Minister. Ghulam Ishaq Khan's closest aide later narrated this event in his book:

"The first indication that all was not well between the two came on the occasion of the President's address to the joint session of the two Houses of Parliament in December, 1991, when the President was subjected to insults and humiliation and shouts of Go, Baba Go, by the entire opposition led by Benazir, in full view of the entire diplomatic corps, Service Chiefs, and the national and international media. I was shocked when Nawaz Sharif and his party, as if according to a pre-arranged plan, did not protest, made no move in defense of the President, and remained silent spectators throughout this disgusting spectacle, which they seemed to relish. Despite this, for a full half an hour, the President faced Benazir's onslaught all by himself and continued with his address."<sup>31</sup>

In March died the President's main legionnaire in Sindh, Jam Sadiq Ali. With him went his inhuman tactics and temperament. This provided a breathing space to her party workers. In May, weary of the extremely deteriorating law and order conditions in Karachi and increasing phenomenon of loot, plunder and terrorism in Sindh, army undertook a crackdown in the province against these elements. This alienated MQM from the Nawaz government, which was engulfed in a sort of isolation by that time.

In order to gain sympathy and goodwill of Benazir, the government softened a little towards the Opposition. This led to her election as Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the National Assembly. This measure did not go well with Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who had started detesting his Prime Minister by then. Furthermore Nawaz Sharif's silence on the issue of the government's support for Ishaq's re-election as President further infuriated the old man in the

Presidency.

But, the most important development, which strained the relationship of Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Nawaz Sharif to irreproachable level, was the appointment of General Abdul Waheed Kakar as the chief of army staff, following sudden death of General Asif Nawaz Janjua on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1993. The new incumbent was the President's choice, which did not go well with the Prime Minister, who started his campaign for the repeal of Eighth Amendment, the source of the President's power of appointing service chiefs.

The circumstances brought her again in the pivotal position. She had the unique position of turning the balance of power in favour of any one of the two contenders, whosoever she chooses. Both the feuding camps, that of Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Nawaz Sharif, wanted her support and were ready to go to any length to please her. In this backdrop, when a court granted bail to Asif Ali Zardari, the government 'actually' released him and allowed him to leave for London. This was the time when she herself was also in London to give birth to her youngest child, Aseefa. Nawaz Sharif sent her a bouquet along with felicitations. Ghulam Ishaq Khan agreed to induct her husband Asif Ali Zardari as a minister in the caretaker cabinet that was to be formed after the dismissal of Nawaz Government.

The war of nerves went on amongst the two of her adversaries for next few weeks. Finally Nawaz Sharif could not bear any more and went on television to address the nation, on 17<sup>th</sup> April, in which he directly accused President Ghulam Ishaq Khan of conspiring to overthrow him and held him responsible for a host of wrongdoing. He alleged that, "hurdles are being placed in my way to serve the nation and that all efforts to help the country are being subverted by unscrupulous and dirty politics of those who are supposed to be guardians of democracy and symbol of Federation and that a lot of pressure, threats, intimidation, and blackmail all of which aimed at forcing me to step down was being exercised." He declared that he 'would not resign', would not dissolve the National Assembly, and would not take dictation.<sup>32</sup>

This provided the President with the necessary justification to dis-

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solve the National Assembly and dismiss the government under the clause 58(2) b, on 18<sup>th</sup> April, citing that the business of the State could not be run in accordance with the Constitution and leveling almost same set of charges under which he had previously dismissed Benazir's government in 1990. A caretaker set up was established with Balkh Sher Mazari, a former Muslim League loyalist, as the caretaker Prime Minister.

A day later, on 19<sup>th</sup> April, Nawaz Sharif went directly to the Supreme Court and filed a petition against the dismissal of his government. The Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Naseem Hassan Shah took up the matter on most urgent basis and handed over verdict within about a month's time, on 26<sup>th</sup> May, declaring in a 10-1 verdict that the dissolution was not within the ambit of powers conferred on the President by the Constitution. The majority decision reinstated Nawaz Sharif Government and National Assembly. The only dissenting judge, Syed Sajjad Ali Shah, observed:

“I would like to point out here that in the case of Tariq Rahim the situation was not so bad and Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto had not made any speech to the nation criticizing openly and in public the person and office of the President. In the absence of such speech apparently situation of open confrontation had not arisen as in the present case, which means that grounds for dissolution in that case were to be considered on their merits. Although the grounds were fewer in number than grounds in the present case and material in support of grounds quantity and quality-wise was far inferior but even then order of dissolution passed in that case was upheld and not in the present case.

“From the Full Bench of 11 Judges, which has heard the present case, 7 Judges are same who heard the previous case of Tariq Rahim in the Full Bench of 12 Judges of this Court. From those 7 Judges, six upheld the order of dissolution passed by the same President dismissing

Government of the Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto dissolving National Assembly. Three more Judges of the present Bench maintained order of dismissal of the Government and dissolution of the National Assembly while hearing Constitutional petitions in the High Courts at Lahore and Karachi. So from the present Bench of 11 Judges, 9 Judges having upheld order of dissolution in the previous case of Tariq Rahim are now of the view that in the present case material in support of grounds of dissolution is not sufficient and order of dissolution is without lawful authority and of legal effect.”<sup>33</sup>

The judge was very straight when he pointed out to an important aspect of the case saying,

“Seemingly it so appears that two Prime Ministers from Sindh were sacrificed at the altar of Article 58(2)(b) of the Constitution but when turn of Prime Minister from Punjab came the tables were turned.”<sup>34</sup>

The Supreme Court decision should have brought the tussle between the President and the Prime Minister to an end, but this could not happen. Both the camps hatched conspiracies to undermine each other. The immediate casualty of this recklessness was the decency, fair play and harmony. The country was plunged into an unprecedented state of confusion, chaos and disorder. In July, the situation became unbearable and threatened the very fabric of the survival of the State. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, an emergency meeting of the army’s corps commanders decided to intervene. The Army’s formula for resolving the crisis at first appeared to call for the mid-term polls. A meeting of the feuding President and Prime Minister under the army chief’s tutelage was arranged in the Presidency on 18<sup>th</sup> July to find way out of the crisis.

One of the eyewitnesses to that meeting, Roedad Khan, described what he saw over there:

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“I witnessed the drop-scene of this sordid drama. The country stood on the edge of a precipice. The President and the Prime Minister, the main characters of the tragic drama, who had been in a state of total confrontation since the beginning of the year, were about to take their last bows. When I entered the President’s Office, it appeared as if two heads of hostile countries were meeting with each other in an atmosphere charged with high tension and filled with recrimination, and, what is worse, in the presence of their subordinates, the COAS Gen. Abdul Waheed, Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Ghulam Muhammad, and Javed Ashraf Kazi, DG ISI. The Prime Minister was assisted by Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Abdul Majid Malik, who was doing most of the talking. The President, who was also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Pakistan and the Prime Minister, the two civilian pillars of the state, were at each other’s throats. It was disgusting. I felt very depressed...”<sup>35</sup>

The truce brokered that day entailed an arrangement under which both the warring President and Prime Minister had to go, along with entire existing federal and provincial set ups. The elections for the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies were to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October, respectively. An ‘agreeable’ caretaker Prime Minister had to be imported in form of Moin Qureshi, who had been a senior vice President of the World Bank. The Senate Chairman Wasim Sajjad was appointed as acting President. The cabinets “shared two things in common, first a lack of political involvement and ambition and secondly expertise in the field of business,” noted Ian Talbot.<sup>36</sup> She and Nawaz Sharif both had been consulted through all this process and the arrangements were effected after their nod.

It was for the first time in the history of Pakistan that the elections were being held under the supervision of the most neutral dispensation, on which the outgoing government, the Opposition, the President and the army agreed. The following months saw her and her

rivals in usual electioneering all over the country. The results of the fairest elections returned her to power again, to be the Prime Minister.

Again the history was created in Pakistan that an 'ousted' Prime Minister had been returned to power a second time. She stood where she was before her removal in 1990, in fact in much stronger position as she had no rival chief minister in any of the four provinces, and she was free to choose her own President. The loser had been President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who was eliminated from the scene once for all, and humiliated by the very person he had brought in destroying each and every shred of justice, neutrality and decency.

## Chapter 12

# **The Great Betrayal**

(1993-1996)

By the end of 1993, the stars were shining favorably above her. She had returned to power in a stronger position than ever before.

The greatest victory that she thought she had secured that winter was elevation of her nominee Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari to the Presidency. Leghari had worked with her as one of her trustworthy associate for last many years. When the question of the next incumbent for the top slot came up, she could not think of anyone else but him. Following the debate and decision by the party high command, her spouse Asif Ali Zardari campaigned vigorously, day and night, to muster support for the party candidate against Nawaz Sharif's candidate, the acting President Wasim Sajjad. The result of this effort was such that President Leghari won by 274 to 168 votes in November 13 presidential election.<sup>1</sup>

She took a sigh of relief, not knowing that the drama of Julius Caesar and Brutus is going to be replayed once again in the history; and that within three years she would say to Leghari, "You too!"

But, those were the happy days, when all was going well. The President was more than happy with her and his old colleagues who had elevated him from a middle-level district management officer in

the civil bureaucracy to the top most position in the country. The rest of his batch-mates were still struggling hard to become additional secretaries in the federal government. And he had out-shined them all by becoming the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A great honor for him indeed.

He had struggled against the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution under her leadership. In his first public exposures as the President, he was again and again making it clear that he was against the clause of the Constitution that gave him the powers to dissolve the elected assemblies and dismiss the chosen government. This was a welcome sign. The Sword of Damocles was removed, she thought.

Few months later, Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was elevated as the next Chief Justice of Pakistan. Justice Shah was not the senior most judge in the judicial hierarchy and three other judges preceded him in seniority. Though, she had high regards for him as a judge, but was not in favour of his out of the turn promotion to head the judiciary. But, the President and a number of other aides advised her for elevation of Justice Shah.<sup>2</sup> "I admired him what he had done in giving judgement against the dismissal of our government in 1990. But, still I wanted to go along with the senior most Justice,"<sup>3</sup> she remembered. Finally, she bowed before the collective wisdom of her colleagues; and endorsed the proposal of Justice Sajjad Ali Shah's out of turn elevation to head judiciary.

Besides the President and the Chief Justice, she had all the chief ministers of her choice in all the four provinces. The Nawaz-led Opposition was in doldrums. The only problem that she faced was that she had no two-third majority in the Parliament, so that she could bring some far-reaching changes in the Constitutional foundations of the country. But, whatsoever was there, was enough to get her moving towards the eradication of the chronic ailments threatening the social fabric of the society: poverty and lawlessness. These were certain areas, where she had to concentrate the most.

But, now the problems of another sort had started.

The first and foremost being that the country was on the verge of being declared as a 'Terrorist-Sponsoring Nation', thanks to the reckless support to fundamentalism and wrongly pursued foreign



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policies of her predecessor's government. The image of Pakistan had nose-dived to be perceived as a sanctuary of international terrorism.

Then, the international aid and trade channels opening in Pakistan had almost dried down. The International Monetary Fund had imposed stringent conditions for release of the next aid installment. In past, mostly during the non-representative rule in the country, the rulers had resorted to heavy borrowings from international aid agencies in the name of development. That had been an extreme extravaganza in the spending, most part of which ended in the personal accounts of the close clique of the dictators. This had increased the country's repayment obligations to a breaking point. About half of the total annual earnings went away to meet this obligation alone.

With this, the defense expenditure consumed more than three fourth of the remaining economic cake of the country, leaving an extremely meager amount for health, education, and development of social sector. In these circumstances, the release of aid on soft terms was the only way out to save the country from a possible default.

The IMF's prescription to get out of these economic ills had been to reduce the budget deficit, which in turn placed inevitably the burden on both the consumers and the business groups. With the passage of time, the business lobby had evolved itself into a powerful and politically well connected lobby. Whenever, there had been any move to document the economy, there had been widespread protestations all over the country bringing the economic wheel to a grinding halt. Unfortunately, the Nawaz-led political opposition extended all sort of moral and political support to the traders who were on the warpath with her government on the issue of imposition of the General Sales Tax (GST).

Bad politics started when by the autumn of 1994, Nawaz Sharif led 'train march' from Karachi to Peshawar to press for the demands, which also included wrapping of economy related initiatives taken by her government. This was followed by a general strike on 20<sup>th</sup> September. Two weeks later Nawaz called for a 'Wheel-Jam' strike on 11 October.<sup>4</sup> In all these endeavors, the business community solidly supported the Opposition, morally as well as materially. She

faced all these machinations calmly. Nawaz Sharif would face the consequences of his those actions, when he himself would come to power in 1997 and try to impose the same GST that he had opposed during her tenure.<sup>5</sup>

In the Parliament also, Nawaz Sharif's policies were losing the air of decency and decorum. The things touched the lowest ebb, when on 14 November 1994, on the occasion of customary annual ritual of President's address to the joint session of Parliament, the Nawaz-led Opposition tried to physically assault President Leghari and the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The Opposition had smuggled a number of banners inside the Parliament House, inscribed with indecent language, which they unfurled in the hall to the great embarrassment of the members. As if this was not enough, the Opposition hurled verbal insults on her and the President.<sup>6</sup> The Opposition was trying to uproot the very plant of fragile democracy in Pakistan, which had just taken root after a long time. Her calm and composure saved the situation from further deterioration.

While on one hand, she had been trying to woo IMF to release vitally needed cash to meet the immediate obligations, she was also trying hard to attract foreign investment in the country. The most starved sector was that of energy. Because, not only the country desperately required more energy, there was considerable potential for it to be exported to the neighboring countries. In this respect, a gigantic beginning was made with official visit of US Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary at the head of a large delegation of international power producers (IPP) in October 1994. The sojourn resulted in the signing of nearly four billion dollars worth of memorandum of understanding.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan had started appearing on the world's economic map again.

In the beginning of the next year, she had her valued guests from Capitol Hill: the US First Lady Hillary Clinton and her daughter Chelsea. Their high profile visit to Pakistan greatly helped in altering the world community's perceptions about Pakistan. In foregoing few years the country had mostly made headlines in the international media in connection with terrorism and drug trafficking. Hillary's visit considerably changed these perceptions and highlighted

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Pakistan as a liberal, modern and forward-looking country.

The American officials accompanying the first lady went out of their way to argue that the country is far more than the sum of recent ominous headlines about it. "Clearly, things are not perfect here, but it is not necessarily the apocalypse either," remarked Robin Raphel, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for South Asia. About her, Raphel added, "Her view of where the country wants to go makes a lot of sense to us."<sup>8</sup>

In April, she proceeded on a state visit to the US, on the invitation of President Clinton and the first lady. She was at her best while addressing her US audience. Throughout her visit, she projected an image of Pakistan as a moderate Islamic state, open for business and willing to assist the West in its struggle against the extremism and the menace of drugs. She also wanted the US to realize its unjustified stance over withholding Pakistan's money paid for the purchase of the US F-16 fighter planes. US was neither returning money, nor letting the planes go to Pakistan, on the pretext of alleging Pakistan to be a nuclear-threshold state.<sup>9</sup>

"We have honored our contract with America. We want America to honor its contract with us. We want the United States to respect its obligations, act honorably and return the money. The planes or the money back. Plain. Simple. And fair. And then let us, at long last, move on to a new mature relationship, based on mutual interest and mutual respect," she told her audience at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies a day before her meeting at the White House with the American President.<sup>10</sup>

"Planes or money," was her persistently repeated campaign slogan during her visit. Wherever she went, whether to Capitol Hill to lobby congressmen or the Pentagon to meet Defense Secretary William Perry and top US military officials, the demand was very much the same. In every meeting she held with leading American business executive, this message remained as the focal point. Again, when she finally met President Clinton, the discussion centered on this crucial point, which had constrained relationship between Pakistan and the United States to cold storage since 1990.<sup>11</sup>

Everybody present at the White House news conference on April

11, was surprised when President Bill Clinton admitted frankly that Pakistan had been treated unfairly. "I think no American President has ever said this, and I am saying that I believe it was unfair," he said.<sup>12</sup> He also promised to work with Congress to see that some sort of remedial measures were taken, "the first clear indication that the US administration was now convinced about Pakistan's new role in the region, and is prepared to do whatever it could to support the country," remarked Herald.<sup>13</sup> The logical outcome of her April visit came in form of the passage of Brown Amendment by US Senate, easing the restrictions on Pakistan on 21 September, incidentally the 7<sup>th</sup> birthday of her son Bilawal.

The next main objective of her visit was to attract the foreign investment for her country. "Trade, not Aid," was her slogan in this regard.<sup>14</sup> She was invited as the main speaker at the investors' conferences in New York and Los Angeles. She came equipped with projection charts and billboards to convince American businessmen to invest in Pakistan. The interest of the US business executives had developed considerably. During her visit, a signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding was arranged, where more than two dozen chief executives of the leading American companies came to sign the papers in her presence for intending investment. "Bhutto managed to win \$6 billion worth of tentative U.S. business commitments to invest in Pakistan," wrote TIME magazine.<sup>15</sup> Four secretaries of US administration also attended the ceremony, marking a high level of renewed US interest in Pakistan.

The next objective perhaps the most important of all she had in mind during her visit to US, was related to Pakistan's image in the global community. Until her coming into power, Pakistan was living under a constant threat of being placed on an incriminating list of the countries that support terrorism. A successful Indian campaign in Washington, coupled with unhindered activities of certain fundamentalist Islamic groups, operating in the country, had made many in the US administration and the Congress seriously considering of making Pakistan an international pariah. But this perception began to change when she came up with her new strategy.

Even before she arrived in the US, she had done enough to con-

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vince the world that Islamabad could play a role of frontline state against terrorism and the drug trafficking. In this regard, she had ensured the swift extradition of some high profile alleged terrorists to the countries with whom Pakistan had an agreement on extradition of criminals. She had re-initiated the investigations in the killing of two American consulate officials. And her government had handed over two major drug barons, Mirza Iqbal Baig and Anwer Khattak, to the US authorities in recent past. A favourable impression had also been created by Pakistani participation in the UN peacekeeping forces in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia. All these measures had a positive effect on the public opinion in West and rest of the world.

Back at home the most important challenges for her welcomed her: widespread terrorism, drug-trafficking and sectarian killings. Again like poor state of economy, it was none of her doings: she had inherited them from the past. Worst hit of the menace of terrorism was her birthplace, the city of Karachi. Zia government, in a bid to weaken the MRD movement in the post- 1983 scenario, had sowed the seed of urban terrorism in 1984. Since then, the law and order conditions had only worsened. No government had been able to bring the violence under control. The city of Karachi had become a den of urban terrorism, where highest degree of anarchy reigned. Time Magazine wrote:

“Pakistan’s largest urban area (pop.10 million) and principal seaport remains almost a Beirut-style parable of the ease with which a formerly gracious city can fall into wretched turmoil. Drugs racketeering and outright political warfare rule in the place of civil authority. Upcountry, the mountainous and desert fringes of Afghanistan and Iran have become bases for Islamic zealots hoping to turn their homeland into a theocracy and export their cause overseas by whatever means are at hand.”<sup>16</sup>

This biggest port city of Pakistan and the nerve-center of the national economy had witnessed startling scenes of violence so

much so that as many as 26 dead bodies wrapped in the gunny bags were thrown on the streets of the city in one day's violence. And when the dead bodies of the innocent people in gunny bags were examined, it was revealed that the fascist elements had drilled the bodies of ill-fated alive persons making deep holes into their flesh mercilessly. As a result of the continuous lawlessness in Karachi, more than 70 per cent of the business concerns in Karachi were shifted to other urban centers of the upcountry.

She tried at first to resolve the issue politically, through negotiations and agreements with the MQM, which represented a larger portion of the urban population of the province, particularly, Mohajirs, who had migrated from Muslim minority provinces of undivided India in the aftermath of the partition of 1947. But, in spite of all possible political endeavors, a smooth relationship could not be established. The political accords between the two were signed, effected and broken time and again. But what was worrying her the most was not the non-cooperation by the urban based organization on the political front, but the law and order of Karachi being trampled under the feet of the criminals.

The urban terrorism in Karachi had become a chronic issue of Pakistan which was addressed by everybody, the police, rangers, army, the PPP, PML (N) and all other interim rulers, but in vain. During Nawaz Sharif's rule, in 1992, the army was given absolute control of the province to stem out the terrorism and lawlessness. But even this had not brought in the desired results. She did not want army to meddle in policing duties for long, as she thought it would be counter productive for both the army and the civilian institutions. She decided to restore the law and order in the province and its metropolis, Karachi by having a selective civilian crackdown against militant elements, who were arrested and the insurgency died down, even though chief minister Abdullah Shah's brother lost his life.

And it was not only in Karachi that she was confronted with an issue of terrorism. Side by side with the urban terrorism, she went ahead against religious extremism in the upcountry, the dacoit phenomenon in the rural part of Sindh and sectarian killings in the heart of the Punjab. But, it proved to be a more difficult task. The reason

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was that during Zia era millions of dollars were pumped into religious organizations to produce a cadre of youth that could fight the proxy wars of various neighboring countries, in the sacred name of Islam. In November 1995, a bomb blast took place in the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad. She once again realized how nurturing of such elements at the hands of the state in the past had turned the country into a breeding ground of criminals.

But, something gravest had happened in the meantime. An attempted coup by the religious extremists in the army was aborted, because of timely information gathered by the intelligence agencies. A group of middle-ranking officers, headed by a major general posted in the General Headquarters (GHQ) of army in Rawalpindi, in collusion with a brigadier, a colonel and other officers had acquired a big quantity of contraband arms and ammunitions from the black-market in NWFP.<sup>17</sup> The officers working in sensitive sections of the army, allegedly, wanted to overthrow the incumbent military leadership of the country, with ultimate aim of removing all the politicians from the scene and putting into place their own particular brand of Islamic system of governance. This sent a wave of chill down the spine of the nation.<sup>18</sup>

Monthly Herald wrote: "But what we know for certain are two facts: the officers had been intercepted with four million rupees worth of contraband weapons, and all had extremist religious views. Were the officers stockpiling weapons for a possible overthrow of the present army leadership? Did the next step in their plan involve the ouster of the Benazir Bhutto government? Or were these soldiers the members of a self styled "Jihad Force" that had taken upon itself the task of "liberating" Kashmir? More ominously, were they hatching a plot to bring about an Islamic revolution?"<sup>19</sup>

But, before any move could have been taken, the plans were discovered and the officers were arrested and court-martialed. Soon after their arrests, the country's right wing religious lobby immediately launched a vigorous campaign to portray these officers as "patriots" and "true Muslims". A large number of statements were issued in their support, demanding for their immediate release and reinstatement.

While, this fight against terrorism and extremism was going on, a new war started by the closing days of 1995. This time it was she own appointed President Farooq Leghari. The occasion that brought these contradictions open was the appointment of the new army chief following the retirement of Abdul Waheed Kakar. "For some strange reasons, whoever occupies Islamabad's most prestigious house on the hill seems to ultimately adopt exactly the same line of action," opined an English monthly in its February issue, comparing the similarities amongst Presidents Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Farooq Leghari for their interference in the matters of political governments.<sup>20</sup>

The appointment of General Jehangir Karamat as the next Chief of Army Staff, was at the best, a consensus decision reached by her, her close aides and President Leghari. She was astonished to see that the President was giving this impression that General Karamat was his 'choice' which he had made while exercising his discretionary authority to appoint the chiefs of armed forces.<sup>21</sup> She wondered what impression he was trying to create, and on whom? The only plausible explanation that could explain President Leghari's strange behavior was that perhaps he wanted to bring the new army chief under his personal obligation.

But, how could she take up with her own selected President. She thought better to ignore it.

The strange things didn't came to an end. President Leghari, whose name was allegedly involved in infamous Mehran Bank scandal, all of sudden, started writing letters to her questioning many of her policies. This practice had been a hallmark of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who before dismissing the elected government, used to make a number of such presidential communiqués to the PM secretariat, in a true bureaucratic style. "Of late, the President seems to have acquired a flair for writing letters to the government, like Ghulam Ishaq Khan," observed Herald.<sup>22</sup> But, why he was behaving like this, was incomprehensible for her.

The things moved still further. In March, a Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah delivered a verdict in the famous 'Judges Case.' The petition that had challenged the appoint-



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ment of the judges, including three women judges<sup>23</sup> for the first time in Pakistan's history to higher judiciary during her tenure, was filed in November 1995. The appointments were made strictly in accordance with the Constitution. Under the same clauses of the Constitution, all the governments, including that of her predecessor Nawaz Sharif, had been making the appointments with impunity.

The judgement delivered by the bench got a mixed response. It also created controversy. In fact, the heat generated by the judgement became so intense that at one point, two former Chief Justices of the apex court presented radically opposed views on the verdict. While the former Chief Justice Naseem Hassan Shah, who had given verdict in favor of Nawaz Sharif, endorsed the verdict; another former Chief Justice Muhammad Haleem was of the view that the judgement had created a serious Constitutional dilemma. "By the order the Constitution ceases to remain intact as an organic law for the governance of the country," he wrote.<sup>24</sup>

She also viewed it as an attempt to rewrite the Constitution. Many of the people including her party leaders were literally stunned, especially those who had earlier thought that since Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah had been appointed to his post by the incumbent government despite his not being the senior most judge at the time of his appointment, he would never issue a verdict of this nature.

The verdict created an opposite reaction in the Opposition, which went through a wave of jubilation. At that time nobody listened to her, while she was pointing out the inherent contradiction in the judgement. That it had asked for removal of all the judges, who were appointed without observing the principle of seniority, the judgement remained silent in case of the Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah himself, who was allowed to continue in his post. Only a year after her removal, same brother judges would revolt against Justice Shah citing his delivered judgement and pointing out towards his being junior.

Month of June brought the annual budget. The compulsions to meet the repayment obligations and country's defense needs, left a little bit of the cake for development and civil administration. International aid agencies had pulled their hand from advancing the

money anymore. In this scenario, there was only one option, and that was to broaden the tax base and document the economy. This measure was of the least liking to the powerful business lobby. The things deteriorated further, when rightist Jamiat-e-Islami called for a strike on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June against the budget. Three demonstrators lost their lives in the scuffle with the police.

Soon after this, a bomb explosion at Lahore airport intensified the already volatile situation. This, apparently a sectarian incident cost the life of a Sunni sectarian leader. It was soon followed by an attack on the Iranian Cultural Center, after which a former Pakistani Ambassador to the United States claimed that Saudi Arabia and Iran were fighting their 'proxy war' by whipping up sectarian violence in Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> She had to reap the sour fruits of the policies of General Zia, who had divided whole of the society into ever-conflicting factions so that nobody could question his continuing rule.

Meanwhile, the President had considerably distanced himself from the government. He had raised his political profile significantly. Whenever he found an opportunity, he openly criticized her government, displaying his disagreement with her administration on a number of key issues. This attitude on part of President Leghari encouraged the otherwise divided and demoralized Opposition to fill their flanks and come up as a united force to challenge her. Within no time, the two Opposition alliances sprang up. A sixteen-party and an eight-party alliance demanded the President to dismiss her government using 58(2)-b clause of the Constitution.

The Opposition had initiated a new strategy. Previously, they were targeting her and President Leghari together, considering them one and the same. Following indications from the President that all was not well between him and her, they brought tangible change in their attitude towards Leghari, dropping him from their hit list for time being. "The President can play a crucial role in bringing about a change," now Nawaz Sharif's point of view. The President also reciprocated these sentiments by stating in his newspaper interview that he could use his powers to dismiss the government under the Eighth Amendment. This was for the first time that he had openly referred to his powers under the controversial amendment.

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Initially she dismissed all these happenings and speculations as not something serious. She was not inclined to doubt her own President's sincerity. However, by late August, she started feeling uneasy about his strange behavior. Outwardly, it was calm everywhere. All the Opposition attempts to dislodge her had fizzled out. Jamiat-e-Islami's 'march' against her government had failed. Strikes were overcome. Parliamentary democracy was intact.

There was no visible reason for her to feel uneasy. But, her sixth sense was telling her that all was not well. "By September 3, I sent General Babar and Sherpao to him to find out what he is up to," remembered Benazir. "They came back and told me that he is fine and he said, even if the military puts gun to my head I will not sack the Government. My entire life I have spent against the Eighth Amendment and how can I ever use the Eighth Amendment. I have been elected against the Eighth Amendment. She is my sister, I am a Baloch. How could I do this with my sister?"<sup>26</sup>

But, it seems that the President had already made up his mind to sack her government. It also seems that the move on his part had a silent nod from the powerful establishment. She was all-alone again in the cruel game of power. President Leghari just wanted to have a justified ground on which he could take the action. That justified ground came in form of the assassination of her brother Mir Murtaza Bhutto in mysterious circumstances at the hands of police in Karachi on 20<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>27</sup>

How it happened and who was behind it, is still shrouded in mystery. The unfortunate incident was followed by a series of accusations and counter accusations aimed at her and her husband, as well as President Leghari and his associates. But, one thing is quite clear, that the high-profile killing of her brother harmed her the most. It benefited her adversaries in the same proportion. She was the person who not only lost her only brother but also lost her government. She later said it was part of a conspiracy: "To kill a Bhutto, to blame a Bhutto."<sup>28</sup>

And on the night Murtaza was assassinated, President Leghari was reported to have said, as revealed by her later " ...that night my brother was killed; and that is the night when General Jehangir

Karamat told the President, 'Are you still going to go ahead?' He said, 'Yes'... I have gone too far to turn back.' I think, it was the part of the plan to overthrow my government. There was a series of events that took place from that day."<sup>29</sup>

Next day, on 21 September, while she was mourning the death of her brother, President Leghari sent a reference to the Supreme Court designed to expedite the March 20 judgement concerning the power to appoint the judges to the superior courts. Less than a week later, President Leghari met Nawaz Sharif for the first time since he had assumed the Presidency, and their five hours discussions concluded with a statement in which the President significantly mentioned Article 58(2) b under the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, the curtain fell on 5<sup>th</sup> November, when the world's attention was focused on US Presidential election, where Bill Clinton was contesting for his second term, the President in Pakistan dissolved the National Assembly and dismissed her popularly elected government once again, citing oft-repeated allegations of corruption and mismanagement. She was taken by surprise. She phoned him, and he said, "I am so sorry." "At that time I thought of General Zia because my father rang him up on July 5, 1977, and he said, 'I am so sorry,'" commented Benazir Bhutto.<sup>31</sup>

A betrayal again. This time from her erstwhile lieutenant. She would have asked: "Leghari, you too!"

## Chapter 13

# **The Odds Again**

(1996-1999)

The political scene in the country, in the closing weeks of 1996, was dominated by three partners of an informal alliance: President Farooq Leghari, Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah and Army Chief General Jehangir Karamat. She had brought them all. And they were all after her. The creation had revolted against the creator. Not knowing that if they would undermine their originator, not very long after, they themselves would cease to exist. Perhaps the creator may survive and can have a second or a third chance, but the creation was doomed to disappear. The next three years proved this to be true, when all those who had been part of an alliance against her were removed most unceremoniously by the very person whom they had brought in after ditching their benefactor.

But, in those hey days of the pomp and glory, the power and pelf, unmindful of the verdict the history was giving on them, the characters crossed their limits to persecute and prosecute her and her party. The establishment chose Malik Meraj Khalid, the Rector of Islamic University of Islamabad, as the caretaker Prime Minister. But, he was to play a puppet in the hands of Farooq Leghari, who was to play the shots. Leghari's brother-in-law Dr. Zubair Khan was taken

as a federal minister. Rests of the cabinet members were also chosen by him, mostly from his former batch-mates in the Civil Services Academy in 1964 or the leading lights of the former Opposition. Because of this, the cabinet was nicknamed as the "Batch of '64."

In Sindh search began for another tormentor, who could cut her and her party to a size. A person of Jam Sadiq's credentials was required. The choice fell on Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, who was sworn in as the caretaker chief minister of Sindh on 6<sup>th</sup> of November. Incidentally, there were a number of cases registered against the new CM, including that of an attempt murder as well as a case of sedition. An Urdu weekly humorously wrote that the "Chief Minister of Sindh is wanted to the Police of Sindh."<sup>1</sup> But, there was no time for the establishment to go into such details. Similar set ups were repeated in the rest of the provinces and the country limped ahead towards the promised elections to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1997.

Though the date was set for the elections, the doubts nevertheless were created regarding the holding of the exercise or not. One cause of uncertainty was the statements emanating from various functionaries of the State, openly saying that the caretaker set up would continue for next two years,<sup>2</sup> during which a ruthless accountability would be ensued against the former office holders of the government, meaning she and her associates.

The other cause of this state of skepticism was the appeal pending in the Supreme Court against dissolution of the assemblies and dismissal of her government. In the previous case of dissolution, in 1993, when Nawaz Sharif was the victim, the court had restored the government and the assembly in just 35 days of the act of dissolution, and had held that the presidential order was illegal. Most of the judges hearing the present appeal were the same who had given the 'historic' verdict of 1993. In view of this, it was being expected that as the circumstances and charges were similar, the court would set aside the dissolution order. But, perhaps the persons asking for the justice had changed and so had the court's priorities.

First of all, the petition against the dissolution was returned back by the court on the charge of using "intemperate" language in the application. When the redrafted petition was submitted, it was

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returned again with some other objection. Finally it was accepted for hearing. But, then the court decided to hear the pending petition filed against the Eighth Amendment first, before taking up her petition. After a long wait, when the hearing of the 'preferred petition' came to an end, to everyone's surprise and dismay, it was declared that the Court would observe the winter recess and thereafter take up Benazir's petition. But, here also she was denied a full court hearing, which had been given to her predecessor and many wondered how a smaller bench could overturn the law as interpreted by a full bench with regard to the right of a President to dismiss a government.

The most valuable time was being wasted like this and the nation was left lurking in a state of quandary about the forthcoming future. All three months passed by in this suspended confusion and finally, just four days prior to election, the Chief Justice announced to a packed court that all the charges contained in the Presidential proclamation of 5<sup>th</sup> November stood substantiated and the dissolution and dismissal stood legal and legitimate. This decision of the court, where denied relief to the petitioner regarding the past act, also sealed her fate for the future prospects of winning the elections few days later. "Its timing, just four days before the votes were to be cast, undoubtedly damaged the PPP's prospects," observed Ian Talbot.<sup>3</sup>

While, the battle was going on in the chambers of judiciary, her victimization at the hands of the administration continued unabated. Her husband was taken into custody within hours of the removal of her government. A number of high ranking officers of her time were also hauled up and taken to 'confession rooms' by various agencies, where confessions of their alleged deeds were extracted from them.<sup>4</sup> These 'disclosures' then made the stuff of the next day media stories. The state controlled electronic media went an extra mile ahead to malign her and the PPP, leveling a host of accusations which were yet to be proved in the courts of law.

Beneficiary of this witch hunting, obviously, was Nawaz Sharif, who otherwise coming under the definition of 'loan defaulter' under President Leghari's own promulgated law stood disqualified to contest the elections. But, to benefit him the President amended the law. This prompted the caretaker law minister Justice Fukhruddin

G. Ibrahim to resign from the post. In addition to Nawaz Sharif, the government encouraged two other newcomers in the political arena: Imran Khan assisted by his photogenic wife Jemima, and Murtaza's widow Ghinwa. While, Imran was hailed as the third force in addition to Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, Ghinwa was tipped to get the sympathy vote following her husband's assassination, dividing the chunk of erstwhile PPP votes. Benazir's opponents saw Ghinwa as a useful spoiling factor.<sup>5</sup>

Under these conditions, the elections were held on the appointed day. How far were they fair, could be evident from the example of just one constituency in Larkana district, from where the son of the caretaker chief minister was contesting. The *Newline*, a prestigious English language magazine, reported that the "entire official machinery of Sindh has been left at the disposal of the CM's son to ensure his victory at Ratodero (Larkana Constituency)."<sup>6</sup>

A police officer, who had been suspended twelve years back, was not only reinstated but made in charge of Ratodero police station as its SHO, evidently to render help in securing the seat.<sup>7</sup> The obliging CM issued a letter of recommendation to the election returning officer of the constituency for his son's admission in a medical college.<sup>8</sup> At an appropriate time, in the evening of the election day, the returning officer returned the favor by declaring an unusually high number of polled votes, some two thousand, of the PPP candidate as 'invalid.' Resultantly, the chief minister's son won the seat with a margin of just 278 votes!<sup>9</sup>

The reporter of the monthly contacted a number of people of the area, "most of them," he reported, "stated that undoubtedly there was pre-poll rigging during elections." The efforts at influencing the elections were so obvious that a daily newspaper "Sindh" congratulated the chief minister in its editorial on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, a day before holding of elections. "The Sindh caretaker chief minister should accept felicitations on the victory of his son, in advance," the newspaper wrote.

On the Election Day, the poorest turnout of voters in history of Pakistan was recorded. The independent observers estimated it to be somewhere between 17 to 20 percent. The President himself admit-



ted it to be around 26 percent. But, the final official figures declared it to be 35.92 percent! Commenting on this point, Ian Talbot wrote, "Disquieting anomalies nevertheless remain over the figure of a 35.92 per cent turnout, which conflicts with the physical evidence of deserted polling booths in many parts of the country on 3 February... Moreover, the official final figure did not square with President Leghari's statement on Pakistan Television as the results were coming in that the turnout was around 26 per cent... Procedural defects nevertheless called the absolute fairness of the polls into question. Moreover, the atmosphere of the caretaker regime was far from impartial."<sup>10</sup>

The results were most unexpected. Benazir Bhutto's party was reduced to a virtual non-entity. It could capture 19 seats as against 135 of Nawaz Sharif in a house of 207. In the Punjab provincial assembly, it was declared to have secured only three seats in comparison to Nawaz's 211 seats. It was only in Sindh, where PPP had been shown to secure majority at 36 seats; almost half the number it secured in 1988 elections. In remaining two provinces also the party was effectively cut to size. It was in this background that she leveled allegations of 'Computer Rigging.'<sup>11</sup>

Despite this all, her's was the one amongst the only two parties, which had representation in all the five assemblies of the country, keeping intact the national character of the party. Ghinwa Bhutto, who was trying to establish a splinter group proved to be non-starter, facing herself defeat at the hands of Benazir's mother in Larkana, and other candidates of her party securing just one National Assembly and two provincial assembly seats in Sindh. The fate of Imran Khan was the worst. He had put up 150 candidates for National Assembly and 300 for provincial assemblies; from amongst whom not even a single including himself could return!<sup>12</sup>

On 17<sup>th</sup> February, President Farooq Leghari administered oath of the office to the newly elected Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, not knowing that he is putting the last nail in his political coffin. Speaking in the assembly, the new Prime Minister promised to "adopt a path of mutual trust and understanding with the opposition." She as the Opposition Leader wished him well and hoped he would com-

plete his term in office, reiterating again her stand regarding the rigging and the 'engineering' of the election results. She also said she would consider accepting the chair of the National Assembly's foreign affairs committee if the government offered it.<sup>13</sup>

Nawaz Sharif's unexpectedly high margin of victory, termed repeatedly as 'heavy mandate', which had given him a two-third majority in the National Assembly, had entirely changed the rules of the game in the power structure. With his brute number in the legislature, the Prime Minister had replaced the President as the most powerful member of the troika. "Now there is no question of the power of the Prime Minister being curtailed," asserted Nawaz's close aide and his Information Minister Mushahid Hussain. "With his massive mandate, he is now in the driving seat." A new game had started.

Who was going to be the target of this un-riddled power, was anybody's guess. There was just one political party and its leader, the PPP and Benazir Bhutto, who was the only political challenge for him. Then, this rivalry was not confined to the politics alone. For Nawaz Sharif and his family, it was a blood feud running between them and Bhutto family for last quarter of a century. After all Benazir Bhutto's father had nationalized his father's industries and business interests in 1970s. He remembered how his father had felt when he was told of the nationalization of his iron foundry. It is true that within few years, when her father was toppled in 1977 by his army general, Nawaz's father had fully supported the military dictator, who had sent Benazir's father to the gallows. It was the price of that support that the generals had made his father's son, he himself, a minister in the provincial cabinet. Then he had risen to the level of a Prime Minister, of course with the help of an ever-obliging establishment. But, he knew his weaknesses.

He was not a leader. He lacked communication power, intellectual depth, and the vision, which are the hallmarks of a leader. He knew that he lacked them all. Benazir was an omnipotent challenge for him. She was to be eliminated.

What a best time it was that her former colleague, President Farooq Leghari was on his side and ready to cooperate in eliminat-

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ing her from politics once for all. The best course of action for finishing off the political opponents, for any government throughout the history of Pakistan, has been to put few charges of corruption against anybody, forge a few documents, and give a wider publicity to the charges through media. The opponent is finished. After all this was not for the first time. It had happened in the past many a times. The victims had disappeared without a trace. She could also be made like this.

The unveiling of this policy started with the formation of provincial governments. Despite all efforts on part of the establishment, her party had secured majority in Sindh legislative assembly. From all counts, her party had to be invited to form government in that province. But, Nawaz Sharif and Leghari were not even prepared to give that much room to her. Not even a single government from amongst the five in whole of the country! The Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif, which had secured 17 seats in a house of 115 in Sindh, was made to form the government with Liaquat Jatoi as the chief minister. MQM's support was won over on the promise of moon. The minority ruled the majority in Sindh.

Henceforth, Ehtesab, the process of accountability was put into motion with establishing an 'Ehtesab Bureau' under one of the most trusted friend of the Prime Minister, Saifur Rehman, one of the most corrupt businessman who had a small shop in Lahore few years back and who had become a billionaire in no time without a known track.<sup>14</sup> He was to perform accountability of her and her party. The set was ready for the oft-repeated drama. But, at the moment there were certain other pressing engagements to look after.

Not known much for financial prudence, Nawaz Sharif came out with some very simplistic solutions to the country's serious debt problem. He appealed to Pakistan's expatriates to deposit a thousand dollars each with Pakistani banks to help the country repay the debt. He hoped to mobilize some 20 billion dollars through the new scheme. Most of the independent observers maintained even at that time that not only is the assessment exaggerated, but also the gimmick was not going to provide a solution to a complex problem. The scheme so hailed as the cure for all the economic ills of the coun-

try, died an ignominious death in due course of time. Even to this day there is no trace where the money collected under 'Qarz Utaro, Mulk Sawanro' (Retire the debit and prosper the country) went. The financial blunders had started.

Within months, through Thirteenth Amendment in the Constitution, the new Assembly struck off the infamous Eighth Amendment, which was responsible for pre-mature deaths of four elected assemblies at the hands of three Presidents since 1988. Benazir, unreservedly, supported her rival in repealing this loathsome piece of legislation inserted by a dictator. Farooq Leghari received the news in a shock. His cutting edge was gone for once in less than five months of sacking his erstwhile party leader Benazir Bhutto.

After effectively making the President a lame duck, and riding on the wave of euphoria on the basis of his unprecedented majority in the legislature, Nawaz Sharif turned his attention to curbing the freedom of the legislators to take sides on their own. Through the enactment of Fourteenth Amendment, within few weeks of the passage of Thirteenth one, he ensured the continued support of his party members in the Assembly after blocking way of the legislators to cross the floor. Another safety valve was removed.

Now came the turn of judiciary. During Benazir's government, when the Chief Justice had strained relations with the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, as the Leader of Opposition had extended his fullest support to the warring Chief Justice. When, Nawaz Sharif came to power, in the beginning he was all honey and milk with him. There were numerous photographs published in the newspapers, showing the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice sitting together, passing on pleasantries and exchanging broad smiles. But, soon the time for smiles was over. It took less than two months when the perceptions of the two about each other came under a sea change.

Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah had perhaps thought that Nawaz Sharif is another Benazir Bhutto, with whom he could get away with anything. The root cause of the crisis, that cost Justice Shah his position, was embedded in the doctrine of the judicial activism, which he had been exercising for quite some time. The moral power of judiciary was with him, coupled with presidential support. The per-

fect understanding between the President and the Chief Justice was a great source of strength for both the pillars of establishment.

On the other hand Nawaz Sharif already had the power of money. Now, he had found the power of his 'heavy mandate.' He was not in a mood to tolerate any adventurism on part of any of the gentlemen.

Following his old practice, when the Chief Justice took notice on his own initiative of certain complaints regarding Nawaz government's handling of a wheat shipping contract from the United States, Nawaz Sharif did not take it lightly. Encouraged by Farooq Leghari, Justice Shah ordered to open the long pending cases relating the Prime Minister concerning the distribution of residential plots by him during his tenures as the chief minister of the Punjab and as the Prime Minister in 1990-93 period.<sup>15</sup> This further infuriated the Prime Minister. It was a free fall of the deterioration of relations between the two.

In July, Justice Shah issued Suo Motu notice to the government on killings in Karachi, and in August on the ongoing sectarian violence in the Punjab. The matters took an ugly turn in August, when Nawaz Sharif tried to introduce a parallel judicial system through formation of summary trial courts. Under this legislation, almost absolute powers, including the right to shoot to kill and indemnity for acts done in good faith, were given to the police and other state agencies. This invited condemnation from national and international quarters. For Justice Shah, it was the right moment to strike on the fast flying and powerful Prime Minister. Justice Shah called Nawaz Sharif to his court as a respondent: the act that enthused the least a heavy mandate Prime Minister like Nawaz Sharif.

Within no time Nawaz extracted his revenge from Justice Shah with 'compound interest' by, first dividing the judiciary and then setting a large group of the Supreme Court judges against him. The things took an ugly turn when, a circuit bench of the Supreme Court in Quetta declared Justice Sajjad Ali Shah as 'under suspension' from the position of Chief Justice and called for a full bench hearing of the petition that challenged his appointment. The Peshawar bench of the Supreme Court followed the suit, tilting the balance heavily against Chief Justice Shah.<sup>16</sup>

This created two parallel Supreme Courts in the hapless country. Justice Shah must be wondering what had happened to his brother judges, who had wholeheartedly supported him in his fight with Benazir Bhutto. They had never looked back at that time. But, now he was being ridiculed and humiliated by the very same judges. There must have been no answers available to him at that time.

The war went on between the 'rival' Supreme Courts. In the final stages of the crisis, as a last rescue the bench headed by Justice Shah revived the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, giving the President authority to sack the government. Within minutes of this pronouncement, another bench, comprised of a much larger number of his 'brother' judges struck down the decision and reinstated the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, taking back these powers from the President.<sup>17</sup>

The closing weeks of 1997, when Pakistan had just celebrated its golden jubilee, saw one of the most ugly spectacle of its half-a-century life, when a group of unruly protesters brought in especially from Lahore and other parts of the Punjab, arranged by the leading lights of ruling Muslim League, physically attacked the Supreme Court. The demonstrators were searching for the Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, with sticks in their hands to physically assault him. A journalist came running to inform the Chief Justice, who was conducting hearing of some case in his courtroom. Justice Shah immediately retired to his chamber to save himself. The administration did not stop any assailant. On the contrary, the demonstrators went to lunch at the official Punjab House in Islamabad after the 'successful operation.' The circuit cameras of the Supreme Court recorded all this, and even the film was shown on BBC television. But, to this day no action has been taken either by the executive or the judiciary.<sup>18</sup>

The ruthless Prime Minister had succeeded in outwitting two of his three benefactors. President Leghari and Chief Justice Shah, both had to go in one stroke, in less than ten months since Nawaz Sharif's assumption of power. The next incumbent in the Presidency was retired Justice Rafiq Tarrar, who had been a family friend and had always sided with the 'family' during the hard times. A soft Chief Justice Ajmal Mian occupied the pivotal position in the Supreme

Court.

The other institution that felt the heat of the heavy mandate was the press. When Najjam 'Sethi, the editor of a reputed English weekly of Lahore, *The Friday Times*, did not fall in line with the government, he was made target of the worst kind of victimization. On the pretext of the contents of his speech in which he had spoken of need for resolution of the outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, a case of sedition was registered against him. In a mid night raid on his house by the secret civil agencies working under the Punjab government, the hapless editor was subjected to humiliation and physical assault, before whisking him to an unknown destination. The press knew for the first time the degree of savageness and vindictiveness of the government. The editor's journalist wife, in whose presence all this sordid matter took place, made an international case of her husband's arrest. Even the US Government had to intervene and appeal for the release of the editor. After weeks of persuasion, and mounting pressure from all over the world, the government budged to release him.<sup>19</sup>

Another target of this state persecution was Jang Group of Newspapers, the largest media establishment of the country, running the largest circulated Urdu daily and a number of other dailies and periodicals. The government was angry that few of its columnists and editorial staff members, including Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, the former and the present Ambassador to US, Mr. Irshad Ahmed Haqqani, a renowned journalist and columnist and an upright man, and twelve more of that ilk, were not following the line given by the government. All of them were seasoned journalists and had their independent outlook regarding the issues in the country. Even dictatorial regime like that of Zia ul Haq had overlooked Irshad Ahmed Haqqani's independent and pro-democracy writings. But no more so!

The editor-in-chief of the Jang Group, Mir Shakil-ur-Rehman, received a call from Saifur Rehman, chief of Nawaz Sharif's Ehtesab Bureau, directing him to remove fourteen journalists from service, to observe complete blackout on any report to do with the finances of the Sharif family, and to bring changes in the editorial policies, especially regarding Sindh situation and controversial Sha-

rial Ordinance. The helpful chief of accountability also suggested the replacements of the to-be-sacked journalists, suggesting replacing Dr. Maleeha Lodhi with one of the speechwriters of the Prime Minister. The non compliance of these instructions was supposed to result in the Ehtesab or accountability of the Jang group and its editor-in-chief under a host of charges including that of tax evasion to the tune of two billion rupees and irregularities in the newsprint quota.<sup>20</sup>

Mir Shakil-ur-Rehman was wise enough to tape the conversation between him and Saifur Rehman. Unable to oblige the accountability chief, the Mir chose to go to Karachi press club and play the cassette of the conversation. It was an information bomb of nuclear proportions. Saifur Rehman was heard in his distinctive voice and manner outlining the demands for compliance by the newspaper group.

The highlight of the recorded conversation was the part, where the editor reminds the accountability chief that the income tax appellate tribunal has given verdict in group's favour, and Saifur Rehman replied, "This was because of our leniency. We did not give him (the Chairman of the Tribunal) the instructions. If we had given him the instructions, even his father could not have given that decision."<sup>21</sup> So much so for the independence of the judiciary.

The press was stunned.

Next day came the answer from Saifur Rehman, not denying the conversation, but saying, "Mir Shakil-ur-Rehman had secretly taped the discussion on audio cassette, it was highly unbecoming, unethical and violative of the Telegraph Act..."<sup>22</sup> Promptly, a case under sedition charge was registered against the hapless editor. The Group received more than eighty official notices, concerning various alleged irregularities.<sup>23</sup> The government demanded well over two billion rupees from the Jang Group in back tax, fines and damages. The state-controlled television came up with numerous current affairs programmes, in which the guest speakers discussed "the threat to democracy being posed by the Jang Group."<sup>24</sup>

If this was the attitude with the people who were no threat to his rule, one could understand Nawaz Sharif's desperation and degree



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of vindictiveness in dealing with his erstwhile rival, and real threat to his power, Benazir Bhutto. The hell was let loose on her. Nawaz Sharif entrusted the charge of breaking her will to his most trusted lieutenant, Saifur Rehman. All the resources of state with unlimited powers were placed at his disposal to bring her to submission. A sickening drama in the name of Ehtesab or accountability was initiated under a man of the most doubtful integrity. Writing about the Ehtesab and its dispenser, Saifur Rehman, the Monthly Herald wrote:

“It [accountability] is being run by a man [Saifur Rehman] whose claim to the job rests solely on his own familiarity, indeed expertise, of the Byzantine routes to plunder. A man whose personal business empire has run up a loan portfolio of over one billion rupees, money belonging to the taxpayer which is not being returned on the grounds that interest is Haram [forbidden] in Islam.”<sup>25</sup>

The state-controlled media was the first weapon to malign her on account of her alleged ‘criminal acts.’ The radio and television declared her and her imprisoned husband as the state enemy number one. Their condemnation exceeded that of India. Everyday, in the main news bulletin, the television would disclose startling stories about her lifestyle. One day, the television claimed that Asif’s polo horses used to eat marmalade and honey and used to drink milk! People were stunned to know that Ehtesab Bureau people had such a poor knowledge of zoology.

Few days later she challenged in the National Assembly to bring that horse, which ate honey and marmalade and drank milk. There was a meek smile and a stunned silence.

The Ehtesab Bureau under Saifur Rehman sent about five references against her. With each new exercise, a storm was raised in the media against her alleged wrong doings. The filed cases related, from award of contract for pre-shipment rights to a Swiss based company SGS, to the appointments made in PIA by the manage-

ment of the airliner. Her husband was made co-accused in all cases except the PIA appointments. Additionally, other cases were also made against him. She and her family was the target of ruthless accountability.<sup>26</sup>

It was in this background that the country's prestigious English monthly wrote:

“The government's Ehtesab process hardly requires any analysis. The facts speak for themselves. Learned judges of the superior courts, sitting as members of Ehtesab benches, have wondered aloud if the entire exercise is only aimed at targeting one family in the country. Initiated by the Leghari government with suspect motives, the process has suffered from a distinct lack of legitimacy from day one.”<sup>27</sup>

Barring few exceptions, many of the judges chosen to prosecute her belonged to a particular school of thought. Most of them owed their appointments to Nawaz Sharif and General Zia ul Huq. On many occasions, while she was in power, she had opposed their continuation in the judiciary because of their lack of neutrality earning their ill will. She pleaded that her cases be heard by impartial judges, but in vain. The judges also, in their wisdom, found it fit to continue hearing cases against her despite questions being raised about their neutrality.

It is beyond the scope of this book to go into details of the cases filed against her and the conduct of the honorable judges. However, few facts about just one case, in which she was declared disqualified by a bench of Lahore high court in April 1999, must be interesting in order to understand the circumstances responsible for delivery of the judgement.

The case was heard by a two-member bench. One of them was removed as a judge when she was the Prime Minister. Same judge's father, while sitting as a judge of the Supreme Court, had imposed death sentence on her father. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif issued that judge and his wife “Diplomatic Passport,” giving him distinc-

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tion to be the only judge in whole of the country to have a diplomatic passport.

It may look funny, but it was a fact that when her case was shifted to another bench of Lahore high court sitting in Rawalpindi, some 300 kilometers away from Lahore, the enthusiast judge traveled to Rawalpindi personally to hear her case, although he was not a member of the Rawalpindi bench. When she objected, expressing dissatisfaction that a judge with close links to her rival Nawaz Sharif should not be sitting on the tribunal hearing her case, the Judge responded that, had he seen her statement earlier, he would have denied bail to a member of her party who had appeared before him.<sup>28</sup>

The second judge on the tribunal, was not a confirmed judge at the time of the proceedings against her and was confirmed following the rendition of the judgement against her.

The decision in this particular case did not add to the reputation of Pakistan's judiciary and judicial institutions. A number of international jurists examined the case and the proceedings as well. Not a single one could agree with the verdict. Two former Chief Justices of US courts, Mr David Harwell of South Carolina and Mr Burley B. Mitchell of North Carolina, examined various aspects of the case and reached to the conclusion that "Ms Bhutto's conviction was not obtained following a fair trial before an impartial tribunal, and her conviction is thus utterly inconsistent with the most minimal of due process guarantees."<sup>29</sup> The evaluation report said:

"It bears reiteration that the proceedings against Ms Bhutto have not been evaluated or tested against the full panoply of rights guaranteed to an accused under the United States Constitution, statutory provisions, or common-law protections. Rather, consistent with the established framework for testing foreign convictions in the United States courts, the proceedings have been measured against only the most basic and rudimentary of due process guarantees.

“As so measured, however, the proceedings must be found seriously deficient. In our opinion, no United States court would accept the judgment against Ms Bhutto for any purpose. No verdict obtained following a trial before a tribunal so redolent of bias against the accused and in which the accused was so blatantly denied the opportunity for meaningful assistance of counsel and the right to present a defense should be accorded respect in any jurisdiction that adheres to the rule of law.”<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, another international legal luminary, Sir John Morris, former Attorney General of United Kingdom, observed, “There are a number of specific instances where there are strong grounds for believing her trial to be unfair.” He concluded saying that “the court was very unsympathetic, if not biased against Ms Benazir Bhutto.”<sup>31</sup>

Still two other prominent UK lawyers, Mr Hodge Malek and Mr Andrew Tabachink, evaluated the legal position of the case and after detailed study reached to the conclusion that:

“We consider that there is serious doubt as to the reliability and fairness of Ms Benazir Bhutto’s conviction. Our view is that, on the evidence with which we have been provided, an English Court would quash the convictions and dismiss the charges against her on the basis that none of the essential elements of the charges has been proved beyond a reasonable doubt. In our judgment, it is also the position that the proceedings against her were conducted in a highly unfair and prejudicial manner. We consider that the procedural irregularities in this case were so serious that they would in and of themselves persuade an English Court to overturn the Trial Court’s decision.”<sup>32</sup>

The sufferings touched the heights and took a form of physical tor-

ture when, in her absence abroad in May 1999, her incarcerated husband was subjected to dreaded torture at the hands of the police. Few police officers, known as experts in inflicting physical torture, were specially flown from Lahore on the instructions of Saifur Rehman. Confessional statements were to be extracted from Asif at 'any cost.' Asif's resistance to sign the papers infuriated them to the extent that they got his mouth wide open and deeply incised his tongue with the help of a knife. The deep incision resulted in profuse bleeding.

It was then that a senior police officer of Sindh, who finally lost heart and said that the man had to be rushed to the hospital. This way, Asif was taken to Karachi's Aga Khan hospital at 2.00 O' clock in the morning. The doctors on duty at that most modern hospital of Pakistan, running under Paris-based Aga Karim, reported that he was brought to hospital with bleeding continuing from his mouth. Dr. Amir Razi confirmed that the blood was sprinkling down and the loss of blood was high.

The police claimed that he had bitten his own tongue. The doctors immediately refuted the explanation saying that the injury was a deep one, about three centimeters long in a straight line, and on the dorsal part of the tongue, which could be inflicted by a sharp-edged weapon. On a petition, the high court constituted a judicial inquiry committee to find out the real cause. The judge conducting the inquiry confirmed recently that the "injuries on Asif's tongue were due to police tortures and not of a bitten tongue."<sup>33</sup>

The Government of Nawaz Sharif then introduced the 15<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment in the Parliament, seeking enforcement of Shariah as the supreme law of the land. The move was designed, it was widely suspected, to vest him with unfettered powers as Amirul Momineen (the leader of the faithful), a designation adopted by the rulers in early Muslim era. She and all the other political parties including Altaf Hussain's MQM united to oppose this scheme tooth and nail. The minorities and women were especially apprehensive of the move and genuinely considered it as a step towards 'Talibanization' of the Pakistani society.

He made all his efforts to get this amendment passed, but Benazir and her like-minded leaders did not budge. To persuade Altaf,

Nawaz went personally to London to get his support. But, Altaf knew very well where this move was going to take him, his party and the people. He refused to be party in that move. On return, the Prime Minister dismissed the Sindh coalition government, having MQM on it, on some flimsy excuses. The provincial assembly was suspended and a federal minister was sent from Islamabad to assume the charge of de facto chief minister with designation of 'Advisor to the Prime Minister on Sindh Affairs.' This advisor, in turn took some more un-elected 'advisors' to function as his de facto ministers, who were officially designated as 'The Advisor to the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Sindh Affairs.' That this arrangement had no Constitutional basis, was never a consideration for the federal government.

This was the state of affairs, when Nawaz Sharif committed the fatal mistake, which removed him from the political scene: the conflict with army. After destroying each and every state institution, one by one, he began to consider himself as the greatest power of the land. So far, he had no direct conflict with army, though there had been 'skirmishes' with army in October 1998, which cost the then army chief, General Jehangir Karamat, his post.

The bizarre manner, in which the top commander was forced to resign, shattered the morale of the army. Though General Pervez Mushraf occupied the slot after unceremonious departure of his predecessor, Nawaz Sharif kept the post of chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff committee vacant so that the new army chief should remain under a constant threat of being 'elevated' to the post of chairman.

Following army operation in Kargal, in the Kashmir territory occupied by India, the differences increased between him and the army high command. The operation was carried out with his own consent and approval. But, then when it backfired, he just tried to put blame on the army absolving himself fully from the responsibility. He went to such an extent that his government tried to make the military a scapegoat for the failure. The men in uniform did not like this. The distrust was born.

Though on the face, it seemed that the matters have been resolved amicably. But it proved to be a façade only. Nawaz Sharif had

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acquired enough experience of 'dealing' with the institutions to his advantage. He thought to replay the game he had played with the judiciary and he expected the same results by dividing the army's high command. But, the corps commanders proved to be shrewder than he had thought of them. Few army officers that he had been able to influence were signaled out and kept under a check by their colleagues. He misunderstood the inherent cohesion and strength of the institution of army. In the final count this misunderstanding cost him very heavily.

The Wheels of Fate had turned. All the characters who had ruled high in the land just three years earlier, President Leghari, Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, General Jehangir Karamat, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Saifur Rehman and other such characters had disappeared in the sands of time. There was no trace of their might left. She had again survived the hurricane.

## Epilogue

In the aftermath of 12<sup>th</sup> October, the country is again standing at crossroads. Politically this marks the end of honeymoon period between the establishment and the establishment's nurtured politician Nawaz Sharif. For eleven years, from 1977 to 1988 the civil and military elite of the country had prepared Nawaz Sharif for the role of confronting Benazir Bhutto in political arena. For next eleven years, from 1988 to 1999, he played his assigned role, though at an exuberant cost to the nation in terms of national unison, progress and prosperity. But then a time came when he questioned the authority of his creators and hence was abandoned. This has also a lesson in it. Test tube leadership can not be created: If created it will not last for long.

The time has come when the establishment would have to trust the people again. They have proved to be the best judges. Whenever they have been given a chance, whether in 1936, 1947, 1971 or 1993, they have showed how best had been their collective wisdom. Whenever somebody, some institution or some agency has interfered or tried to engineer their verdict, whether in 1962, 1977, 1985, 1988, 1990 and 1997, the consequences have been detrimental. The



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decision that Pakistan takes today shall make her tomorrow.

The democracy means unity in diversity. It means to respect the other's point of view. It is name of values and not a system. The history shows that our elite has been very unkind to the people of Pakistan, and to their genuine leaders. All the leaders, all over the world, like rest of the human beings, commit mistakes. No mortal can escape this. One can ask a question: whether the political leaders of Pakistan, whom the people have been electing, are inferior to those who have been imposing themselves upon the country through the use of sheer force? The answer is definitely no. The allegations usually presented against the political leadership have been ten times truer in case of a number of civil and military rulers. The virtue and morality are not confined to just one institution or organization. The malice is treated and not the patient is killed.

As a nation, Pakistanis would have to devise ways and means to keep in check the evils, of which there has been a lot of talk lately. The accountability is must. But, who should perform the accountability? The accountability turns into vendetta, when it is placed in the hands of adversaries. This is what the history of the country tells us. Evenhandedness and transparency are the two pre-requisites of this process. If they lack, then the process degenerates into persecution. During last many years Pakistan has seen the replay of this drama several times. It has become sickening now. The temporary and half-hearted measures have always and would always backfire. The question of their fairness would never be resolved.

The best solution to this problem is constitution of a judicial commission comprising men and women of unquestionable integrity. This commission should make everyone accountable, politicians, judges, generals, journalists, bureaucrats, businessmen, landlords etc. And covers all the time from 1947. It is ridiculous to start it from 1985, or 1990, or 1994. The sin is a sin, whether it was committed in 1950 or 1990. To malign just one section of the society has been very counterproductive in Pakistan's life as a nation.

The country has to come out of the complex also about the quality of its leadership. Compare them with those in neighborhood, like those of India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, and for that matter

any other country of the world. Are they better than the Pakistan's political leadership, starting with Jinnah and including Benazir? Our leaders have set examples for the rest of the world. Jinnah created a new country on the map of the world through his political acumen. Allama Iqbal brought awakening. Liaquat Ali Khan laid the constitutional foundation. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made Pakistan a leader of the entire Muslim world and champion of the cause of the Third World. Benazir brought us distinction of being the most liberal and enlightened country in the Muslim world. They all have added laurels to the country's national pride. Very few countries can compete with Pakistan in the quality, caliber and acumen of its political leadership.

Unfortunately, the elite has not been very kind to the genuine leaders of the country. Barring a few exceptions, they were killed, some time through bullet, some time through hangman's knot, and some time through character assassination. No other country has dealt with their leadership as the elite in Pakistan has been doing. This practice has to be ended. In a ragging fire, flowers will never bloom. It is time to extinguish the fire and pave way for plantation. It seems that the force of circumstances is leading us to that direction. We have already exhausted all the other options available in the books of political science. The only thing that we have to experiment with is the simple and uncontaminated democracy.

In this scenario, where does Benazir Bhutto stands today? Let's make objectivity the criteria. She is the chairperson of one of the two largest parties of the country. The party, she heads stands solidly behind her and is not ready to weaver even an inch from her. Despite, all the attempts since 1977 by various establishments, she stands as the most popular leader of the country. She and her party has roots and representation in all the four provinces, federally administered tribal areas and Kashmir, which make her the binding force for the federation of Pakistan. She is known internationally and highly revered and respected in the global forums. She is highly educated. The added advantage is that she has seen both the sides of Pakistan's politics, the ugly one as the daughter of an assassinated Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, and the fairer ones

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as the two times Prime Minister of the country.

Now, the negative ones. There were many points before 1988, like her being a woman and aspiring to be a leader was seen as repugnant to the teaching of the religion, and her being too young, inexperienced etc. The time has taken care of all those negative aspects and they are no more valid. The only negative one is the allegation leveled against her by her opponents that she and her husband have been involved in certain underhand deals. Those who blame this have been in power for many years. Their human rights record has also not been very impressive. Despite all the resources at their command, no worthwhile substance could be found in all these accusations.

One of the courts, under highly 'unusual' circumstances delivered a judgement, barring her from contest for five years, when her rival Nawaz Sharif called the shots. An appeal is pending in the Supreme Court, which would decide the matter. But, one thing is certain that the role of a leader emanates from the approval of the people. If somebody or a court of law disqualifies a leader or even imprison him or her: this does not necessarily end the leader's role in politics. Nelson Mandela, Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indra Gandhi are just few examples. That forecasts the continuation of her role as one of the top most leaders of Pakistan.

She might have committed mistakes. But, she has heavily paid for them as well. At times, she even paid for the ones, she never committed. Her father was killed mercilessly. She was deprived of her youthful days that she had to spend in worst prisons of the country. It was no fault of hers. Attempts were made on her life. Attempts were made on her honor, on her reputation and her patriotism. Her right to rule was snatched through manipulations, not once, or twice but thrice, in 1988, 1990 and 1997. Her husband was slogged in the jails for unending spells. And above all, she has been denied a peaceful living with her children in her own country, time and again.

Her demand is that the past should give birth to a new era, a new hope for the coming generations of Pakistan. She says that the coun-

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try would be better served if the people of Pakistan are given the right to chose their leaders on their own, in transparent and fair elections, as per accepted definition of the term, without adding or deducting anything from it. The era of guided democracy should be honorably buried and the establishment should cease to influence and engineer the results. The persecution of people, under beautiful terms should come to an end, and should be replaced by an even-handed, impartial and above the board accountability through a carefully selected body of eminent jurists and other honest persons. These demands have the support of the times. And the times have been with her.

The story is still going on.

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  11. Daily Dawn, dated 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1989
  12. Ibid, dated 20<sup>th</sup> January, 89
  13. Ibid, dated 21 January, 89
  14. Ibid, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 89, whereby it is reported that the Interior Ministry expressed supervise over the refusal of Pūnjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif to talk to the Federal Government on its five points.
  15. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated Feb. 10, 1989
  16. Ibid, dated Feb. 12, 1989
  17. At least five person were dead and several injured on 12 February, 89 during the demonstration against Salman Rushdi's book "Satanic Verses" published in England in 1988.
  18. A debate on foreign policy was called in the National Assembly on February 22, 89. Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Mr Ghulam Hyder Wyne, the future chief minister of the Punjab, led the protestation and finally walked-out of hall.
  19. In all leaders from 163 countries participated in the funeral of Japan's Emperor on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1989.
  20. Daily Dawn Karachi, Feb. 25, 1989.
  21. Resolution was sponsored in US Senate by Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee and eleven other Senators on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. which was passed after due deliberations.
  22. All Pakistan Women Association invited her at the house of Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, first woman governor in Pakistan, who had been appointed in the position by Benazir Bhutto's father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1970s. The woman groups had challenged the death sentence being given to a woman even if she was raped.
  23. Daily Dawn, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1989
  24. Interview given to ED. Brodley at Rawalpindi, for Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television networks program "60 minutes" telecast on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1989.
  25. She was star guest in BBC World program "This is your world" telecast live from 7 p.m to 8 p.m on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1989.
  26. Ibid
  27. The row started on the transfer orders of four federal government officers, by the federal government, posted in the Punjab
  28. Daily Dawn, Karachi, dated 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1989.
  29. Conversation of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto with newsmen at Lahore airport on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 89 as reported in the newspapers of 15<sup>th</sup> March 89
  30. Daily Dawn Karachi, 5<sup>th</sup> April 89.

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31. Ibid
32. Ibid, dated 27<sup>th</sup> April, 89
33. "Change of Guard at the ISI" article published in Daily Dawn Karachi, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2000
34. Ibid
35. Ibid
36. Munir Ahmed, Pakistan mein Intelligence Agencion ka Syasi Kirdar, (Urdu book) (The Politic Role of Intelligence Agencies in Pakistan), page 290
37. Ibid
38. Daily Dawn May 27, 1989
39. Ibid, dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 89
40. Ibid, dated 27<sup>th</sup> May, 89
41. Ibid, dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 89
42. Ibid, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 89
43. Ibid, 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
44. Ibid
45. Ibid
46. Ibid
47. Ibid
48. Ibid, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
49. Ibid
50. Ibid
51. Ibid, dated 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
52. Ibid
53. Ibid
54. Ibid
55. Ibid
56. Ibid, dated 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
57. Ibid.

### **Chapter 10: In the Eye of the Storm**

1. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
2. Ibid, dated 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
3. Ibid, dated 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1989
4. Ibid
5. Ibid, dated 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1989
6. Every time the Military government takes over power in Pakistan, country's membership in the Commonwealth is suspended. Similar situation would arise again in 1999 when following the assumption of power by Gen. Pervaz Mushraf.
7. Mrs. Margret Theture saying to Benazir Bhutto, as reported in Daily Dawn Karachi, in those days.

8. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1989
9. Iqbal Akhund, Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto, page 113
10. Interview with Ms Benazir Bhutto
11. Iqbal Akhund, Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto
12. Monthly Newline, May 1994 issue, page 21
13. Daily Dawn Karachi, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1989
14. Ibid, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1989
15. Monthly "Herald" Karachi, October, 1989 issue, page 78
16. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1989
17. Ibid, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1989
18. Transcripts of the cassettes containing conversation of the Intelligence officials and the PPP MNAs as produced by Mr. Munir Ahmed in his book, Pakistan mein Intelligence Agencion Ka Syasi Kirdar, page 122-250
19. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1989
20. Iqbal Akhund, Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto, page 120
21. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 306
22. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1989
23. Ibid, dated 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1989
24. Ibid, dated 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1989
25. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto survived the motion expressing vote of no confidence in her government in the National Assembly with a margin of 12 votes. The opposition could muster 107 votes in a house of 232 on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1989.
26. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1989
27. News story with head line "Agreement with PPP not possible: Nawaz" in Daily Dawn December 3, 1989
28. Title story of monthly "Herald" October 1989 issue
29. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1990
30. Ibid
31. Monthly Herald, April 1990 issue
32. Iqbal Akhund, Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto, page 81
33. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated April 19, 1990
34. Ibid, dated May 20, 1990
35. Iqbal Akhund, Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto, page 143
36. Ibid page 305
37. Roedad Khan, Pakistan: A Dream Gone Sour, page 109
38. Ibid
39. Ibid page 110
40. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1990.



*Notes*

## Chapter 11: Testing Times

1. The Press Conference addressed by Ms. Benazir Bhutto, after dismissal of her government on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1990
2. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1990
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Ibid, dated 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1990
9. Ibid, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1990
10. Ibid, dated 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1990
11. "From Parliament" by Shaheen Sabai under title "The President is Fine," in Daily Dawn, dated 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1990 "Among others who saw the President was head of Special Tribunal Judge, Justice Rafiq Tarar, recently setup to try Benazir blues for their "crimes" (of the cash and kind). What that could mean, I can't offer a guess."
12. Ibid
13. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1990
14. Ibid, dated 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1990
15. Ibid, dated 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1990
16. Begum Syeda Abida Hussain was caretaker minister as well as a leading IJI leader. The statements were published in Daily Dawn of 12 October and 19 October, 1990
17. Benazir Bhutto on Trial
18. Daily Dawn Karachi, dated 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1990
19. Ibid, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1990
20. Affidavit signed by the then ISI Chief Lt. Gen. (Retired) M. Assad Durrani, dated 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1994 as reproduced in monthly Herald, July 1996 issue, page 15
21. Ibid
22. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 313
23. For elections results of 1990, the data has been taken from National Democratic Institute publication "The October 1990 Elections in Pakistan" published from Washington DC.
24. Address by Ms Benazir Bhutto as Leader of the Opposition on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1990 as reproduced in Sajjad Bokhari's compiled work "Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto: The Leader of Today" page 100
25. Ibid
26. Monthly Herald, October, 1991 issue
27. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 322

28. Ibid, page 321
29. Ibid
30. Amnesty International, Pakistan: Arrest of Political opponent in Sindh province in August 1990-early 1992 (London 1992) page 07
31. Roedad Khan, Pakistan: Dream Gone Sour, page 111
32. Transcript of the speech address by Mr Nawaz Sharif on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1993 as produced in Dawn, dated 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1993
33. A portion from the Dissenting Judgement given by Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, who later became the Chief Justice of Pakistan.
34. Ibid
35. Roedad Khan, Pakistan: A Dream Gone Sour, page 134
36. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 329

## **Chapter 12: The Great Betrayal**

1. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 333
2. Interview with Ms Benazir Bhutto
3. Ibid
4. Daily Dawn of relevant dates
5. Mr. Nawaz Sharif will also not be able to realize the dream of documentation of economy.
6. News reports appearing on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1994
7. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 335
8. Monthly Herald, April 1995 issue
9. Ibid
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. Ibid
15. Time International, April 17, 1995
16. Ibid
17. Monthly Herald, January, 1996
18. Ibid
19. Ibid
20. Ibid
21. Ibid
22. Ibid
23. For a detailed background to conflict between the government and the judiciary see Newslines of January, 1996 with the title "Government V/S Judiciary" and other articles appearing in Daily Dawn, Karachi following the judgement in famous Judge's Case in March, 1996

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24. Monthly Herald, April 1996
25. Daily Dawn, 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1997
26. Interview with Ms Benazir Bhutto
27. Monthly Herald, October, 1996 issue
28. Interview with Ms Benazir Bhutto
29. Ibid
30. Newslines, October, 1996
31. Interview with Ms Benazir Bhutto.

### **Chapter 13: The Odds Again**

1. Weekly 'Takbeer' Karachi 5<sup>th</sup> December 1996 with title story regarding the caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh.
2. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 350
3. Ibid page 353
4. Interviews with Mr. Rehman Malik, former D.G, FIA, Mr. Hussan Lowai, former President M.C.B and host of other such former officers, presently in London were interviewed in July-August 1999 by the present author
5. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 353
6. Hassan Mujtaba, "The same old faces" in monthly Newslines, February, 1997
7. Ibid
8. Openline, reply of Mr. Hassan Mujtaba to letter of Mr. Ameer Bhutto in Newslines magazine, April, 1997
9. The figure given by Mr Ameer Bhutto in his letter published in the Newslines in April, 1997 issue
10. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 355
11. Benazir Bhutto, addressing press conference in the eve of the announcement of the results of elections
12. The results of the elections as published in Dawn of 5<sup>th</sup> February 1997 and Newslines, February, 1997
13. Daily Dawn of 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1997
14. After dismissal of Mr. Nawaz Sharif the cases would be initiated against one time accountability bureau chief Saifur Rehman and a number of eye opening revelation about his own corruption and misuse of power will come to fore.
15. News Line, November 1997
16. Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A Modern History, page 362
17. Ibid, page 363
18. In September, 2000 the Supreme Court has again reopened the case to punish the culprits
19. The Friday Times Lahore, relevant issues.

20. Monthly Herald, February, 1999
21. Ibid
22. Daily Dawn, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1999
23. Monthly Herald, February, 1999
24. Ibid
25. Ibid
26. Bashir Riaz, Blind Justice, published in March 2000
27. Monthly Herald Karachi
28. Bashir Riaz, Blind Justice, page 164
29. Ibid, page 171
30. Ibid, page 171-172
31. Synopsis of legal opinion by Sir John Morris, former Attorney General U.K as produced in the book Blind Justice by Bashir Riaz, pages 139-156
32. Bashir Riaz, Blind Justice, page 173-184
33. Extracts from the inquiry committee report constituted by the High Court of Sindh, as released to the press and published in Daily Dawn Karachi.

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