

ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO

Short story on his life



Sani Hussain Panhwar

ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO

Shaheed Bhutto was born on 5th of January 1928. Incidentally, this was the year when for the first time Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah came to stay at Bhutto's ancestral home 'Al-Murtaza' at Larkana, on invitation of Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto, who presided over Sindh Mohammedans Association. Both the leaders developed a very intimate relationship, which grew further when Sir Shahnawaz, along with his family, shifted to Bombay as a Minister in the Bombay Presidency, where Jinnah practised as a lawyer. Both of them had a common physician and friend in Dr. Pinto, who was famous for his evening tea parties attended by the giants of Indian politics.

Zulfikar was just six years old when the family shifted to Bombay. Bhuttos lived in their palatial home 'The Nest' in the most sought after residential area of the metropolis. Young Zulfikar was admitted in the city's most prestigious Cathedral High School, which was near the famous bachelor doctor's clinic. His keen interest in the politics can be judged from the fact that after attending his school he used to go to Dr. Pinto's clinic to listen to the discussions going on amongst the top most leadership of India on the intricate constitutional, political and socio-economic issues confronting the subcontinent. It was during this period that Zulfikar developed a great reverence, respect and admiration for Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah.

A seventeen-year-old Zulfikar wrote a letter to Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah in April 1945. He wrote: "You, Sir, have brought us on one platform, under one flag, and the cry of every Muslim 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." And true to his word, he sacrificed his life for Pakistan exactly thirty-four years later in April 1979.

Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah wrote back young Zulfikar, from his Mount Pleasant Road residence at Malabar Hills of Bombay on 1st of May 1945, advising him as follows:

I was very glad to read your letter of 26th April and to note that you have been following the various political events. I would advise you, if you are interested in politics, to make a thorough study of it. But, don't neglect your education, and when you have completed your student's career, I have no doubt that you will be all better qualified if you study thoroughly the political problems of India, when you enter the struggle of life.

Signed:
M.A. Jinnah

A year later, Zulfikar enlisted himself as a political activist and strategist for the cause of Pakistan under the command of Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah. It was the time when India's political landscape was infused with unprecedented heat and fury. The conflict amongst the three main parties, the British, the Congress and the Muslim League, had intensified to almost no-return level. 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, 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 Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946 to make it clear for everybody that Muslims had their own entity and strength.

However, in the city of Bombay, Muslims were in a negligible minority. There was almost no likelihood of the success of the direct action day in Bombay. But, Quaid-e-Azam wanted to make it a success in the city was considered the nerve-centre of the subcontinent and a successful day was bound to yield a tremendous psychological benefit to the advantage to the Muslims. In this backdrop, Mr. Jinnah invited nineteen-year old Zulfikar and some other active Muslim students to his residence. Most of the students were evasive and did not forward any concrete proposal in view of brute majority of Hindus in the city. 'Every one talked in circles and used vague 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,' remembered Shaheed Bhutto later.

Zulfikar knew the college principal's son who was his classmate. Both of them rounded up around two hundred of their fellow students and 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. Next day all the leading newspapers of the city carried the news of successful protest demonstration and closure of the college in response to the direct action day called by Mr. Jinnah. Quaid-e-Azam was very pleased over the successful strategy and operation by young Zulfikar.

After passing his Senior Cambridge, Zulfikar 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 September 1947 and just a few days had passed since the new country, Pakistan, had appeared on the map of the world. Always an active and socialising man, he quickly adjusted himself in his

new environs and took up his studies. He was very fond of books and his special interest was in history. He had read almost the entire literature available on history and economics. Coupled with his interest in his studies was his active participation in the co-curricular activities. Since his student days, he had very strong communication skills. In university, he joined the debating team and emerged as one of the most remarkable and outstanding speakers, becoming a most sought after person amongst his friends and fellows.

Even in the foreign lands his love and reverence for Jinnah remained unaffected. For him 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 in United States Mr. Hassan Isphani, who also was one of Jinnah's closest friends. Zulfikar wrote: "(We) have been orphaned at this crucial moment when we needed more than any other the force, the torrential magnanimity of our beloved leader.... Though 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."

During his summer holidays, when the rest of his fellow students preferred to have fun, Zulfikar chose to spend his free time as a volunteer in the Pakistan Embassy in Washington. One of the papers he wrote there dealt with the man he highly revered. 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."

After spending a little less than two years at the University of Southern California, in June 1949, Zulfikar moved to Berkeley for his further studies. It was here that he contested the first election of his life by running for the seat of Representative-at-Large on the Students' Council. He was the only non-American candidate out of seven in the contest. And as social and popular he was; he won the election with quite a good margin.

In 1950, he went to England to study jurisprudence and law at Oxford's Christ Church College. His chosen subjects required three years of learning at the university. Always eager to do things ahead of time, he wanted to do it in two years. When his counselor knew that he did not have any background in Latin, a compulsory subject and prerequisite for understanding the Roman Law, he advised Zulfikar to do it in three years, telling him, "You know even our own

best boys would not be able to do it in two years.” Zulfikar replied that he would do it in two years, “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,” Shaheed Bhutto recalled later. And he did the course in two years and got high honors. The Oxford professor was so impressed that he became his admirer and a lifelong friend.

Zulfikar returned back to Pakistan in 1953, the year his daughter Benazir was born. He was now a Barrister, with a degree from one of the world’s most prestigious institution. He joined Karachi Bar and also lectured at a law college on honorary basis. But, his primary interest was in the Constitutional issues facing the country. This was the time when the first constituent assembly was still striving to arrive at some Constitutional formula agreeable to all the five federating units, and two wings separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory, in the backdrop of their cultural, ethnic, regional, racial and linguistic differences. Zulfikar wrote articles in the leading newspapers suggesting a framework for the future Constitution. Though at that time the exercise did not bore fruit, but two decades later culminated in form of the Constitution of 1973, unanimously agreed and approved by the Parliament, when he himself was the elected leader of the country.

In 1957 Zulfikar was chosen to represent Pakistan at the United Nations General Assembly. It was a singular achievement for somebody less than thirty years old, to be called to represent his country at the highest international forum. Zulfikar’s grip on his subject, style of presentation, logic and vision highly impressed his listeners at the world assembly that November. Next year, he was offered to be a Central Minister in Government of Pakistan. He accepted the offer and was entrusted the portfolio of Commerce Ministry, becoming the youngest cabinet member the country ever had. This placed a great deal more responsibilities on his shoulders. But, as hard working and devoted person he was, he dedicated himself to his work. On the basis of his outstanding performance, he was entrusted about half a dozen more ministries and divisions to look after.

Few years later, Zulfikar was appointed the foreign minister of the country. “[He] was well qualified to fill it 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,” opined Hamid Yousuf in his book *Pakistan: A study of Political Developments 1947-97*. As the Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto brought much needed moderation in the foreign policy of the country, especially bringing about a balance in the country’s relations with the then two superpowers. Another bold initiative by him was his support for China’s admission in the United Nations. He was very popular amongst the international political leadership. During one of his official visit to Washington in October 1963, he called on President Kennedy in the White House. When the

meeting ended, President Kennedy shook foreign minister 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.

By 1966, Shaheed Bhutto developed serious differences with the government of President Ayub over post war handling and resigned from the cabinet. This proved to be the beginning of Shaheed Bhutto's career as the most popular leader of the country. He saw two opposite phenomenon taking place simultaneously in his political life. While, on one hand his rupture with the government brought him under the wrath of the military ruler who used every possible weapon in his armoury -- threats, murder attempt, false cases - to subdue his will, he tasted, on the other hand, for the first time the great mystic love amongst the common people for him for taking a principled based stand. When, after quitting his cabinet position, he reached Lahore on the night of 20 June 1966, he saw a sea of people filled every inch of the space on the platforms. He was garlanded, his hands were kissed, and he was lifted onto shoulders by thousands of his admirers who had flocked 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.

Following months and years witnessed the country in the grip of political turmoil. East Pakistan had exploded in an open rebellion. West Pakistan was groaning under the weight of an unpopular military despot, who was fast losing his grip on power. Zulfikar's popularity grew by leaps and bounds. He had emerged as the only hope to most of the Pakistanis. In December 1967, he founded Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the party which would remain the most popular party in Pakistan since its foundation. The foundation of the party was laid at Lahore, where he addressed the delegates 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 him as the founder Chairman.

"The first floor of our house at 70 Clifton, Karachi, began to serve as a branch office of the PPP," remembered his daughter Benazir Bhutto, who would succeed him as the leader of the party. 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. Very soon, whole of the country was in the grip of an unprecedented agitation and unrest against Ayub Khan's government. There was not a single day when there would not be a procession or a public meeting somewhere in the country. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto addressed numerous rallies, fearlessly attacking the policies of the rulers. When this became unbearable for the government, an attempt was made on his life.

When this could not intimidate the dauntless Zulfikar, he was arrested and sent to Mianwali Jail, one of the worst prisons in Pakistan, where he was kept in solitary confinement. This gave birth to violent agitation in the country. 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 Zulfikar. Finding no other way, in February 1969, the government decided to shift him from the jail to his Larkana house, where he was placed under house arrest for some more time before releasing him. Finally, by March 1969, President Ayub decided to step down. But, instead of handing over power to the political leadership, he invited the army chief to take over the country who proclaimed martial law, bringing the country into yet another crisis.

The military government headed by General Yahya Khan undid the One-Unit scheme, which had amalgamated four provinces of the West Pakistan into one unit. The policies of the martial law authorities 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. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party was one of the major contenders in the election, with an agenda to provide basic necessities of life, Roti, Kapra aur Makan (Food, clothing and shelter) to all the citizens of Pakistan. The election took place on 7th December 1970. PPP won a majority in the western wing, securing 82 of 138 National Assembly seats. Shaheed Bhutto himself won five seats of National Assembly from various constituencies and from different provinces. Most of his party candidates had defeated big feudal lords as well as wealthy and influential political rivals, setting a new trend in the country's politics.

However, the things were different in the eastern wing of Pakistan, one thousand miles away beyond the eastern border of India. There Awami League 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. 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.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, being a federalist was naturally against this anti-federalist scheme. Two wings of the country, separated by a thousand miles of Indian Territory, had two totally divergent ideological grounds. It was a conflict like that between the North and South American States in 1860s, when two slogans and two ideologies -- United States of America and Confederate States of America -- pulled the country down. It was a struggle between the forces of federation and confederation. Here Shaheed Bhutto took a leaf out of Abraham Lincoln. But, unlike Abraham Lincoln he was without power and helpless. The country was in for a crisis as at this most crucial hour of Pakistan's political history an army general of mediocre intellect presided over the destiny of the country.

Once in power, the general indulged excessively in women and wine, leaving matters of state in the hands of his unimaginative and incompetent advisors to the extent that his military chief had to advise his military governors "not to implement the President's verbal orders, if given to them personally by him after 10 p.m." In such circumstances the tension between the two wings increased by every passing day. East Pakistani leadership hardened their stance on their anti-federalist formula, while West Pakistani leadership led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto insisted for federalist structure. The Awami League went for agitation in the East Pakistan and effectively took control of the entire wing. Instead of finding a political solution, the nervous military President ordered for military action in the wing, which further alienated the local population. General KM Arif later wrote: "The military action caused casualties which further alienated the people. At considerable political cost, a modicum of order had been restored. But the people lost confidence in the government. Their wounds were bleeding."

At this juncture India intervened and sent her army in East Pakistani. A war broke out. Pakistani army was fighting against heavy odds, the most important being the alienation of the people of East Pakistan. Soon the separation of East Pakistan became evident. At a belated stage the Generals turned towards Zulfikar for their salvation, to help saving what could be saved of the country. There was not a single Pakistani leader except Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, 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.

Just few days before the war was formally over, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was designated as the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to represent Pakistan at UN and safeguard the remaining Pakistan. He immediately rushed to New York and engaged himself immediately in damage-control efforts. By then, East Pakistan had virtually gone out of hand, while 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. He 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 US President and is father of the present US President Mr. George W. Bush.

Recalling his meeting with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that December, Dr. 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."

Despite his best efforts, Zulfikar could only ensure the integrity, security and intactness of the present Pakistan. In East Pakistan the Pakistani army commander surrendered before his Indian counterpart and the wing became an independent country Bangladesh. The news of the separation of East Pakistan and army's surrender resulted in mass rallies and demonstration all over the country. The demand for immediate transfer of power to elected civilian leadership grew louder and louder. Unfortunately, the military rulers were still planning to hang on, but an incident in National Defence College, where the young officers hooted upon and hurled abuses on the army chief when he tried to address them, changed generals' perceptions and compelled them to transfer power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

He was still away from the country, when he received the cable from home to reach immediately and take over reigns of the remains of the country. As soon as he arrived, he was rushed to the Presidency, where he was handed over the power of a broken and a most demoralised Pakistan. He had to 'pick up the pieces, very small pieces,' as he said in his televised broadcast. '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.

The first task before Zulfikar Ali Bhutto after assuming power was to get the country back to normalcy. 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 India's territory. The balance of power had never been that heavily tilted in favour of India since 1947. Defeated and dismembered Pakistan 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. The stage was set at Indian hill station Simla for a diplomatic encounter between the two celebrated political leaders of their respective countries, Mrs Indra Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Before leaving for Simla, Shaheed Bhutto visited fourteen Muslim countries in the region and obtained public assurances of their support for the cause of Pakistan. At home he consulted the opposition leaders, industrial workers, students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, religious leaders, and the military commanders. Hence, he was going to India as a sole spokesman of his own country as well as the important Muslim nations of the region. This tactical move enhanced his strength to match that of victor India. At Simla, the negotiations were deadlocked. But, thanks to his diplomatic skills, the situation was saved and the two countries were able to sign an agreement that has ushered the longest spell of peace between the two countries since their independence.

The provisions provided that the territories occupied by either country along the recognised 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 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 recognised Bangladesh. Even his critics regard the Accord as one of the greatest achievement of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The next most important contribution by Shaheed Bhutto to Pakistan was providing the country a Constitution framed by the representatives of the people. It was irony that the country since its independence had still been

without a Constitution. Two dictatorial regimes had tried to provide two constitutions in 1956 and 1962, but both of them had disappeared with the disappearance of their authors. Since his assuming the power Zulfikar Ali Bhutto focused his utmost attention to the task of Constitution framing. On 17th April 1972, a parliamentary committee was appointed to prepare a draft. 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, which should be agreeable to all the federating units and political parties in the National Assembly, a Herculean task.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's determination won the day and finally, after long discussions amongst the parliamentary committees, public debates, and candid discussions spread over about a year, on 10th of 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. This is the Constitution, which is still intact in Pakistan. It is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's baby. Even his worst enemies and the dictatorial regimes including his executioner General Zia could not dare to abrogate it; they could only suspend it for time being.

In February 1974, Shaheed Bhutto hosted an Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore. This was the most important assembly of the top leaders from all the thirty-eight Muslim nations, comprising one fifth of the mankind. They included King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, President Anwer Saddat of Egypt, Colonel Qaddafi of Libya, Shaikh Mujib Ur Rehman of Bangladesh, Chairman Yassar Arafat 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," This unprecedented large assembly lasted for three days and took stock of all the important issues relating to the Islamic nations spread all over the world. At the end of the Conference, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was elected Chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was standing at the pinnacle of his popularity and power, when he decided in the beginning of 1977 to hold national elections in March that year. "I am going to call for additional land reforms," he told his daughter Benazir. "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, modernising agriculture by sinking new tube-wells, increasing seed distribution and fertiliser production,” he shared his vision of a forward looking and prosperous Pakistan.

All the independent observers agreed that Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali 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 a two-third or may be three-fourth majority in the National Assembly. The Opposition was in complete disarray. These were mostly the parties, ranging from religious right to outright leftist, which had been rejected by the people of Pakistan for many times in the past. They held divergent views to such an extent that they were even not ready to sit under one roof. Suddenly, just a day after the announcement of the elections nine political parties and splinter groups formed an alliance namely Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) to confront PPP candidates.

The worst of all, the chief of army staff General Zia ul Haq 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. Zia had leanings towards a very well organized and very well funded religious political party, which served as backbone of the opposition alliance. The opposition and army chief alliance was set for a big showdown with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the democratic forces.

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 to the days of the beginning of Islam, fourteen centuries earlier. But, still with all these tactics, the Opposition was not able to win popular support anywhere in the country except for few urban centers. From the very start, the PNA launched its campaign with two basic ingredients: Islam and hatred for Bhutto, the symbol of progressive mindset. During all these days of electioneering, the PNA was again and again saying that they would accept the results of election only if they were declared as 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 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the oppositions public meetings.

On the appointed day, some seventeen 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. There were certain complaints about stuffing the ballot boxes or rigging of the elections in certain constituencies. Making them a base the PNA charted a course of agitation. Following weeks saw the agitation turning into a terrorist movement. Following negotiations between the government and PNA, both the parties reached to an agreement in the late hours of 4th July. This was against the desire and wishes of army Chief General Zia who wanted to take over and impose martial law. "One day, when he (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) 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 Haq was up to no good, and might be planning some kind of coup." When ZAB inquired from his ISI chief, he showed his ignorance and attributed the warning to his ill will towards General Zia; because General Sharif was not made the army chief.

But, the ISI chief was wrong. General Zia had fully prepared his plan for removal of the elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The General had already sent his family out of the country. Lieutenant General Faiz Ali Chishti, the Corp Commander of 10th Corp, the area covering the federal capital later wrote in his book: "When Gen. Zia ordered me to take over and execute the 'Operation Fair-play,' 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."

Not only this, the General had also prepared very well 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 Fair-play 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."

The ambitious army chief had not taken into confidence most of his senior colleagues. The senior army command, unaware of such development, was

called at an odd hour, 11.00 O' clock in the night on 4th 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,' wrote General Zia's most confidant colleague, his Chief of Staff, General KM Arif. A little after midnight, the army contingents took over the important installations including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's official residence, where he was sleeping along with his family, unaware of any eventuality. He did not resist the coup and saved his family and him from perhaps immediate execution as had happened in breakaway Bangladesh few years back.

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."

With imposition of martial law that night, the country ushered into a Dark Age once again. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was taken into custody and shifted to the nearby Murree. The General promised that the army was there just for ninety days, to hold impartial and fair elections. When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto called the army chief, while the coup 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." Eventually he would hold his first elections, that too on non-party basis, in 1985, after ninety months!

After some time, the military government released Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from the protective custody, believing that his charisma was over. But, this was a grave miscalculation. As soon as he came out, hundreds of thousands people came out to greet him, listen to him, and to pledge their unflinching support for him. It was quite evident that in case of holding elections Zulfikar Ali Bhutto would return back to power, with more votes than he ever had got in the past. Zia charted a new course of action, to end the very life of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Less than two months of the imposition of martial law, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was re-arrested on 3rd September 1977, this time charged with conspiracy to murder a political opponent. Within no time an upright high court judge granted him bail and he was set free. He was arrested again.

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' Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was. But, all this propaganda could not bring the desired results. Instead of decreasing, the size of the crowds increased. The outcome of the promised polls was evident before their actually taking place. The Chief Martial Law Administrator 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.

These were the most turbulent times of Pakistan's history, when flogging was the most favourite punishment of the sadistic ruler, who liked listening to the screams of the hapless political workers being flogged in public. The shrieks were relayed on loudspeakers through the microphones fixed near the mouths of the victims of this torture. Countless political workers, journalists, lawyers and other sections of intelligentsia bore the brunt of the dictatorship on their bare backs. Under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's directives the PPP filed a petition in the Supreme Court, challenging the imposition of martial law. A court ruling upholding the Constitution would have in effect made Zia liable to a charge of high treason. But, unfortunately, the court found a rescue in the 'Doctrine of Necessity.'

The proceedings in the murder case against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto began in the Lahore High Court, where Moulvi Mushtaq, a Zia-appointee, worked as the 'acting' Chief Justice. The only outstanding qualification of the man was that he belonged to Zia's native district, Jalandhur in the Indian East Punjab, coupled with his hate for Bhutto. National and international observers were astonished to observe the degree of hatred and animosity being shown by the presiding judge of the bench towards the 'accused.' As was expected, the bench on 18th March 1978 declared him guilty and sentenced him to death. Whole of the case depended just upon the statement of a State-Approver, a former Director General of Federal Security Force (FSF) that he had ordered the killing of Kasuri on the verbal instructions of the Prime Minister! In a most bizarre way, even the 'witnesses were briefed on what they should say,' noted Ian Talbot in his book on history of Pakistan.

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, Dorab Patel, Muhammad Haleem, Ghulam Safdar Shah, Karam Ellahi Chauhan and Nasim Hassan Shah. Though Zia had appointed some of the judges on the bench, still the old guards over-weighted their more

'realistic' colleagues, who had recently joined them. The proceedings prolonged and one of the senior judges 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 Haleem, G. Safdar Shah and Dorab Patel, acquitted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto 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 for 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 judgment might have been different if those two judges had still been on the bench at the time of decision." 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 thirty years!

Following the death sentence, whole of the world leadership arose in unison to appeal the military leader 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 3rd April 1979, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's wife and eldest daughter Benazir were informed that they were to be taken for the last meeting with him in Rawalpindi Jail. 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 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, unaware of this new development, was sitting on a mattress on the floor. They had taken away even a chair and a table besides the bed from his cell which itself was a dingy and drab, and hot like an oven. He was surprised to see them both at same time, because his captors had never allowed both of his daughter and wife to see him together.

The pain, agony and the anguish, a daughter could feel, when she beholds, helplessly, her innocent father going to the gallows at the hands of an illegitimate usurper and a tyrant, was unimaginable. But, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was calm. He was a student of history. 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," Benazir later wrote in her biography.

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," Zulfikar Ali Bhutto 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? Zulfikar Ali Bhutto asked Benazir.

"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," a happy father told his daughter.

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 they wanted to hug each other, the most loved-one. But, the iron bars stood in between them. Benazir 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. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto brought his hand out of the space within the bars and kept it on his daughter's head. He gave her his good wishes for the last time! The meeting was over.

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