

**BENAZIR BHUTTO:  
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER OF PAKISTAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the role of Benazir Bhutto as a young political leader in social and political transformation of the country with a special focus on some aspects of her leadership. The paper gives an overview of her personality and work which can be described into three words—opportunity, community and responsibility. She created opportunities for unemployed youth and strengthened poor communities and worked for protecting economic, political and social rights of these communities. She struggled for bringing a lasting change in the lives of people and to inspire them for positive change through democratic process. She led the nation in difficult times and worked to achieve the national interests of the country. She was lifelong believer in the democratic principles. She gave her life for the restoration of democracy (Dawn, January 17, 2016).*

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**Keywords:** Leadership, Democracy, Global Popularity, Charisma, Inspiration

**INTRODUCTION**

Sound Leadership occurs when the leaders are able to influence others to undertake certain actions with or without formal authority. Their followers believe that they are competent and confident in specified circumstances. A leader has to lead his/her followers in all conditions no matter how good or bad they are. Leaders have visionary ideas to get through even the worst conditions and win for the country. Thus, leader also provides leadership, guidance and the overall control over large number of people. Good leaders have influencing skills. They know how to influence their followers and how to inspire them through various ideas. The leaders also communicate a clear vision to their followers. Thus, the followers even can go for hundreds of miles in the desert, if the team leader is able to show them visionary oasis of great success (Ahmed, Shuja, *et.al*, 2013:42). Leaders encourage innovative way of thinking and working. According to Robbins, ‘innovation means doing things differently, exploring new territory and taking risks (Robbins, Stephen, *et.al*, 2009:29). Benazir Bhutto possessed all these qualities of a true democratic leader. She was herself an institution per se.

It is argued by the scholars that there are two types of leadership styles. Leadership can be either transactional or transformational. Transactional

leader gives his/her followers what they want in exchange for acting in a given manner, thus the two parties may be seeking different end products. If the rewards were not forthcoming then the leader would no longer exist. Nevertheless, the transformational leader manages to merge what both he/she desires with what the followers desire. This relationship can empower both parties to reach common goals in agreed ways. There were following distinguished features of Benazir Bhutto leadership.

#### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Benazir Bhutto was the most dynamic and popular leader in Pakistan and in the World. During the decade (1986-1996), Benazir Bhutto remained on the centre stage of Pakistan politics. She revealed courage and imagination in confronting military rule in the process facilitated a democratic transition. She portrayed the image of a transformational leader-forward looking, moderate but with a democratic disposition, well versed in changing global realities, and aspiring to transform Pakistan into an economically developed, democratic, socially tolerant, modern nation-state (Saeed, Shafqat, 1960:655). Benazir Bhutto demonstrated that her skills of mass mobilisation, regime confrontation, and manipulation of political elites are far superior to her managerial abilities. She also worked as a opposition leader very effectively.

Benazir Bhutto clearly communicated her visionary objectives of her struggle for the empowerment of the masses. In her address at Asia Society in New York city she said that the objective of her government was to seek 'not to choose between development and democracy, between peace and prosperity but to recognise that in each case, we cannot have one without the other' (*Pakistan Times*, June 11, 1989).

#### **CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP**

Many scholars including Akbar S. Ahmed believed that 'She embodied what Weber referred to as a charismatic leadership. She had her own charisma when she emerged in the 1980s as a young, well-spoken woman leader. She was intelligent and confident person. She had the rare quality of humour, which she never lost in spite of leading an uncertain and challenging life (Ahmed, Akbar, 2008:4).

#### **DETERMINATION**

There was a lot of gender-discrimination in our society. Benazir Bhutto herself observed various forms of discrimination in male-dominated society. She knew that many Muslim religious leaders believed that she had taken a man's place. Thus, they opposed her simply on the grounds that she was woman. These opponents did not tolerate her as a leader of the nation

because they believed that woman cannot be a head of state. They argued that physically women were less powerful than men and thus they could not work during the special circumstances.

General Zia announced elections when, he was informed that Benazir Bhutto was pregnant. Benazir Bhutto worked 15 hours a day for election campaign. She won the election and disapproved the baseless notion forever. Through this act of bravery and determination she set a new example for women in the Muslim world. She opened new opportunities for women in all important fields.

Her victory in the elections that followed Zia's death was heralded by Peter Galbraith<sup>11</sup> as a triumph of determination and belief over extraordinary adversary. Bhutto told the Harvard graduates about her experiences at the 1989 commencement address that 'the most powerful idea in the world today is the right of people to live under a Government of their own choosing' (Akhund, Iqbal, 2001:459-470). Benazir Bhutto is loved by her followers for her strong determination and her positive attitude towards change in society. She had ability to convince people that change was important. She was able to communicate clearly her ideas and present arguments coherently to discard old assumptions and negative attitudes. Thus, she was successful in communicating her vision for real change. She gave extraordinary opportunity to her followers to learn from her point of views about how the past events unfolded. They were able to know what needed to be done in order to discard traditional social and political attitudes. The followers also learnt lessons about how to protect their rights through democratic movement.

#### **SOURCE OF INSPIRATION**

She became first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan. Her successful struggle inspired women not only in Pakistan but also in Muslim world. The women began to demonstrate their skills and talents in various fields. The women became confident and began to play an active role in politics. Her ideas and actions transformed the lives of millions of people.

After the demise of Zia-ul-Haq people began to consider that the era of women's suppression in Pakistan had come to an end. Benazir Bhutto had led her party to victory. During her rule, several measures were taken to empower women the depressed segment of society and to end gender-based discrimination against women. For instance, she established women police stations, courts women banks for the development of women. Benazir Bhutto would be remembered for what she did for Pakistani women. The aim

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<sup>11</sup>Galbraith was a senior Adviser to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

of political struggle was to make a difference to the lives of other women. She always did her best to allow women to succeed in their fields.

In her address at the Fourth World conference on women Beijing reiterated that ‘as the woman ever elected to head an Islamic nation, I feel a special responsibility towards women’s issues and towards all women.’ She also said: ‘I feel special responsibility to counter the propaganda of a handful that Islam gives women a second class status’ (Address, 1995).

She took efforts to empower women and to defend them at every forum. In an interview conducted by Moneeza Hashmi in the late 1990s, Benazir Bhutto removed misperceptions about Pakistani Women and rejected the false concept that Pakistani women were trapped indoors. She gave following remarks: “If you travel to the rural areas of Pakistan you will see women out in the fields. They not only harvest but also manage the household”. She further argued that women are not completely independent. Working women have not control of their hard - earned money. Thus she found economic empowerment for women as only way to get out of helplessness and hopelessness. She opened new job opportunities through entrepreneurship. The First Woman Bank was established to finance the projects conducted by women. It also employed women and empowered them to work independently. The only way to get out of this helplessness is to open the doors of economic empowerment for women, through jobs and through entrepreneurship. It is with this aim in mind that I launched The First Women Bank which is a bank which finances and employs only women” (Dawn, April27, 2014).

#### **GLOBAL POPULARITY**

Benazir Bhutto was a global figure in the political field. There are two categories of popular Muslim leaders in the World. The first category includes those leaders who are popular in their own countries but their image is not positive in the eyes of Western people. The second category includes the leaders who are favoured by Washington but unpopular among their own people. For instance Mubarak of Egypt and Musharraf of Pakistan belong to the second category of leaders of the Muslim World. However, Benazir Bhutto transcends this categorisation; she was loved and adored in the West, where she was seen charming figure who was also part of their world. She was comfortable in both worlds (Ahmed, Akbar, 2008:4). After her death, she became one of the very few Muslim leaders to assume the iconic status of a political martyr in the West.

Her death evoked strong sentiments not only in her country but also in the entire Muslim World. The murder of Benazir Bhutto was condemned by all great leaders including General Musa the Secretary General of Arab League, Mr.Ban Ki Moon the UN General secretary and the President

George Bush who gave tribute to the sacrifice made by Benazir Bhutto for the restoration of democracy. The Chancellor of France also put emphasis on continuing war on terrorists who killed Ms Bhutto. South Asian leaders considered the death of Benazir Bhutto as a loss of courageous and brave leader of South Asian region. The prime minister of India recognised Ms Bhutto as a great leader of the World. He admired the qualities of Bhutto and appreciated her exemplary role in the breaking ice on the Indo-Pakistan relations. Similarly, leadership in China felt agony and condemned the coward act of the terrorists and extremists (*Kawish*, December 27, 2015).

#### **FACTORS IN THE MAKING OF BENAZIR BHUTTO LEADERSHIP**

Saeed, Shafqat (1960) has listed personal and situational factors which contributed to the emergence of political leadership of Benazir Bhutto. The personal factors included family background, her education at Radcliffe and Oxford and her prison experience. The situation-based factors included execution of her father, Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq and politics of electoral competition.

However, it is clear that Benazir did not emerge from obscurity that surround so many other third world leaders, but she remained a public personality from the time she was a child' (Lawrence, Ziring, 1991:178). She was expected to assume leadership role and her father made a deliberate effort to prepare her for such a political role in Pakistan. Many scholars have remained interested in doing research on various aspects of her personality including educational development, political association, and character. One of these researchers has analysed the personality of Benazir Bhutto as under:

#### **BURUMA'S ANALYSIS OF HER PERSONALITY**

Ian Buruma has described personality and character of Benazir Bhutto in academic and cultural terms. He has considered a culture as a major influence over the personality of a leader.

Her educational development and learning experience in the elite educational institutions of United States and Great Britain have been termed as Radcliffe Bhutto (Ian Buruma, 1989:8). This role of Bhutto was a rational, realistic and justifiable for researchers, thinkers and leaders of the World. In this role Ms Bhutto's thinking, decisions-making and leading style was influenced by Western experiences.

**FIGURE-I  
RADCLIFFE BHUTTO**



Source: Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

However, the other role of Bhutto as a Larkana Leader was focussed on a single goal – the establishment and strengthening of democracy in the country where her father Zulfikar Bhutto sacrificed his life for democratic principles. Thus, the nature of Larkana leader was psychological, sentimental in appearance. The Larkana leader was more focused on protection of social and cultural values practiced by common people. Only Benazir Bhutto had ability to use these values in combination with the western values in her actions as a leader of the nation. In some circumstances these values were used separately. People in the country were more attracted towards Larkana leader than, Redcliffe Bhutto. However, Redcliffe learning and education and values were used to ‘control and temper the Larkana enigma’ (Lawrence, Ziring, 1991:179).

**FIGURE-II**  
**RADCLIFFE BHUTTO AND LARKANA LEADER**



Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)



**BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HER FIRST GOVERNMENT**

She became optimistic about the formation of Government after winning elections. She led the nation in a very difficult time in the history of Pakistan. She said: 'I am proud to be elected Prime Minister of Pakistan in this critical time. It is an awesome obligation. But in the words of John Fitzgerald Kennedy- I do not shrink from this responsibility—I welcome it' (Address, 1989).

**CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS**

Benazir Bhutto as prime minister considered that the cooperation between the civilian and military leadership vital for the effective performance of her Government. Efforts were made to placate the armed forces and towards addressing its genuine needs. She also sagaciously decreased the influence of Zia legacy.

**FIGURE-III**  
**FIRST WOMAN PRIME MINISTER**



Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

**NUCLEARIZATION IN SOUTH ASIA**

This was one of the major issues faced by the Benazir Bhutto Government. The need to develop nuclear energy was justified by Pakistan that the nuclear energy is only way to end energy crisis. Pakistan's point of view was that nuclear energy would be used to generate electricity. However, since Z.A. Bhutto's time nuclear development was seen as an effort to match nuclear capability of her militarily strong neighbour. India demonstrated its nuclear capability by conducting nuclear test in 1974. In addition, Indo-Pak



tensions over Kashmir were seen by international community as sources of nuclear conflict. India already concluded that insurgency in Kashmir was sponsored by Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto on several occasions tried to convince Washington that nuclear energy would be used for peaceful purposes. However, Washington believed that Pakistan was engaged in the manufacturing weapons of mass destruction. This led them to cut off of US economic aid at the critical time of the 1990s. This caused serious financial difficulties for the Government. However, the Government continued the policy of developing nuclear energy without making any compromise on national interest of Pakistan.

#### **ECONOMIC INSTABILITY**

Economic situation under the Government was less than satisfactory. Inflation was running at 14% and poverty was increasing day by day. The lack of foreign and domestic investment affected job situation in the country. These weaknesses of the Government provided an opportunity for opposition to move a no-confidence in the National Assembly which was supported by presidency. However, the no-confidence move failed to remove Benazir Bhutto from her office.

#### **PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS & THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT**

There were lot of expectations from Benazir Bhutto as a young political leader of the nation. Nevertheless, it can be argued that there were certain factors which hampered the performance of the Benazir Government.

As a matter of fact, Benazir Bhutto became youngest Prime Minister. She had no cabinet or Government experience. Thus, lack of proper training and Government experience hampered the progress of a young leader. The opposition was not playing constructive role and according to Benazir Bhutto it was using conspirational tactics to dissolve the Government. Benazir Bhutto came in power during the period characterised by political chaos and economic crisis. During this period, the country faced serious internal and external security issues. These circumstances were difficult and challenging. Nevertheless, she took this challenging job to lead the nation with courage and insight.

The first challenge face by new Government was to restore the national unity. The new Government faced the problems of weak economy, administrative corruption and smuggling of arms and heroin. It also had to negotiate with a powerful opposition comprising former leaders in the Zia regime' (Weiss, Anita M., 1990:434-35). Politics for her father was a 'passion and romance but for Benazir Bhutto it was a responsibility and duty (Lawrence, Ziring, 1991:17). She was overburdened by family and public responsibilities. Benazir Bhutto established a democratic Government after an 11-year military rule in Pakistan. Thus, political institutions were weak

and vulnerable. Political parties were not behaving positively. They did not support the Government against the opponents of the democracy. The largest coalition partner of Peoples Party withdrew its support to Benazir Government. Mutahida Quami Movement (MQM) joined the alliance 'Islami Jamhuri Ithad' (IJI) against the democratically elected Government. The Awami National Party (ANP) was no longer supporter of the PPP Government. These conditions further weakened the authority and power of the Government. The lack of political support and political instability created lot of hurdles for the Government and thus it could not concentrate on resolution of economic, social and political issues. Subsequently, the President dissolved the Government in August 1991.

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