**Benazir Bhutto: The Unconquerable Spirit Who Defied Tyranny**

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As history’s pendulum swings once again this June, we remember the indomitable force who devoted her life to democracy. Her extraordinary life was filled with triumphs and tragedies. However, she fearlessly fought against all odds and left a lasting legacy. During General Zia-ul-Haq’s patriarchal regime, women’s rights were severely curtailed in Pakistan. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, however, refused to be silenced and rose as a beacon of hope for women across the country. Despite being imprisoned, exiled, and facing numerous assassination attempts, she continued to fight for democracy and women’s rights. Her bravery and resilience inspired countless others to join the movement for change and the restoration of democracy.

On the longest day of the year, June 21, the sun shone brightly, illuminating the BENAZIR rose with its warmest rays. As the world celebrates “Benazir Day” every year, the sun seems to pause, refusing to set and watchful of the festivities below. It’s as if the sun knows that this day is one of the most special days of the year–a day to honour the life and legacy of a truly matchless woman. Sindh’s BENAZIR rose as an insignia of fidelity, resilience, and strength. Its beauty shines even brighter in the warm glow of the sun, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, there is always something beautiful to be found.

Mohtarma Benazir was a true leader who embodied the values of bravery, fearlessness, courage and determination.

Three generations of my family had the privilege of standing alongside Shaheed BB during some of the most significant moments of her life. From election campaigns to birthdays and even funerals, my family was there to celebrate and mourn with her. To my father, Muhammad Arshad Shah Rashdi, she was more than just a leader. She was a sister. My father called her “bhern” in Sindhi. Her response of “Ada” demonstrated the deep bond she shared with my family. This connection is a testament to the power of leadership and the profound impact that one person can have on the lives of others. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto’s legacy continues to inspire people around the world, not just as a political figure, but as someone who touched the hearts of many on a personal level. Just as the brave and honourable Bibis of Karbala stood up against oppression and tyranny, Shaheed Bhutto’s Pinky fought tirelessly for democracy, justice, and human rights. Her unwavering determination and courage inspired millions around the world, Shaheed BB faced incredible challenges and obstacles, but she never gave up. This brave and beautiful message of never giving up on her principles continues to inspire a mourning nation today. BB, the irreplaceable, remained steadfast in her commitment to creating a better world for all, and her spirit lives on in the hearts of those who continue to fight for justice and equality. Shaheed BB was a leader with tremendous political and personal courage. Her impact on the world was so great that it’s hard to articulate what she was. She was a giant among us mere mortals, a beacon of hope in a world that often seems dark and hopeless without her.

Her leadership inspired poets to write: “Woh Aurat thi ya Jadoo thi” and “Woh Larki Lal Qalandar thi.” Her spirit embodied the very essence of resilience and strength. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a true trailblazer, and her legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. Even someone as accomplished as Hillary Clinton was in awe of her, saying that Benazir Bhutto was the only celebrity she ever stood behind the rope to see. BB Shaheed was not just a leader but a force of nature – a woman who changed the world with her unwavering commitment to justice, democracy, and human rights. Every year, BB’s jiyala Jan-nisars from all over the country visit the historic graveyard of Garhi Khuda Bux – a place that is a symbol and a witness of our country’s sacrifices for democracy. They come to pay their respects, celebrate the day as “Jashan-e-Benazir,” and wish the Queen of Sindh a happy birthday in Sindhi: “Salgirah Mubarak Sindh ji Rani.”

This tradition is a testament to the enduring legacy of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and a reminder of the impact she had on the lives of so many people. My late grandmother had close relations with both of Shaheed BB’s mother. Before her death, she used to often tell how she felt in the presence of BB Shaheed. She watched BB’s transformation from Pinky to Benazir. Her memories with both Shaheed BB’s mother and BB herself are a testament of the deep connection that my family had with her. My mother gave me birth, just 10 days before Shaheed BB’s tragic assassination. My family had plans of celebrating my aqiqa ceremony on December 27, 2007. However, as soon as my grandmama and father got to know about her tragic assassination, they rushed to accompany the Bhutto Zardari family in the dark hour, cancelling all plans.

My grandmother described the details of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto’s face after her martyrdom for years as she said: “BB looked as beautiful as a red rose, like a doll sleeping.” To me, these events are not normal. They put a sense of responsibility on me to continue her struggle for truth. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a true leader who embodied the values of bravery, fearlessness, courage, and determination. Pakistan stands poorer for her loss today. She taught us what it means to engage in the real “jihad” – the struggle for justice and against injustices. Despite the heartbreaking tragedy of her father’s judicial murder, she remained committed to the ideals of democracy and the supremacy of law. She wanted Pakistan to be a progressive, peaceful, and prosperous country that embraced federalism, pluralism, and moderation. She believed that all citizens of Pakistan, regardless of their background, should have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive. Her vision for Pakistan embraced the green and white sides of our national flag and celebrated the diversity and richness of our culture and heritage. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto’s legacy continues to inspire us today, and her example will continue to guide us as we work to build a better future for all Pakistanis. It’s hard to understand why anyone would want to take the life of someone as remarkable as Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. Her assassins may have thought that they could silence her with their bullets and bombs, but they were wrong. As she said, she put her faith and her fate in God’s hands. She lives on in Bilawal, Bakhtawar, Aseefa and those countless jiyalas like myself, inspiring millions of people around the world. The Holy Quran tells us that martyrs are not truly dead, but rather alive and well in the presence of their Lord. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto’s legacy is one that extends far beyond her grave, and her rule continues! She continues to inspire people to stand up for justice, democracy, and human and women’s rights. Jiyalas continue to chant her name, and her spirit will continue to guide us as we work to build a better future for Pakistan with her beloved son Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and her youngest daughter Bibi Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari.

Happy belated birthday, Sindh’s Rose. Happy 70th, Laal Qalandar. Jiye Benazir – Benazir Zindabad.

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