**Out of the ordinary**

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Mohammad Siddique Khan Kanju, a charismatic personality, inspired his people greatly and is considered to have been a visionary leader. He gave his fellow country-men a new spirit, a sense of self-respect and a feeling of pride in their national heritage he was and still is considered to be much more than your average politician.
Siddique Khan Kanju was born on December 2, 1951, in a remote village situated on the northern side of River Sutlej in Lodhran district of Punjab. He received his primary and secondary education from Sadiq Public School in Bahawalpur, after which he went to Government College where he graduated with a B.A in English Literature, then he obtained an LLB from Punjab University.
At the age of 25-years old, Siddique Khan Kanju began his political career addressing a crowd in Kahror Pakka. He was influential as his courage and humility impressed many. In the general elections of 1977 he ran for the Provisional Assembly seat, however the elections were postponed. In 1985, he became the Member of the National Assembly through non-party elections, and served as the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture. However, the government was dissolved in 1988 and he was appointed as the caretaker Education Minister.
Siddique Kanju, for the first time, became a part of the opposition headed by Nawaz Sharif, during the initial Benazir Bhutto government. In the general elections of 1990, he was elected for the third time as a member of the National Assembly from Lodhran and joined Nawaz Sharif’s cabinet as the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. During this period in 1991, he worked hard and was able to change Lodhran’s status to a district, which was previously a tehsil of the Multan District. His strong personality clubbed with his pleasant nature and immense determination made him one of the country’s greatest civilian leaders, dominating his field for almost an entire decade.
Siddique Khan Kanju was perceived as one of the most successful members of the Pakistan Muslim League-N. In 1997, he was elected again as a Member of the National Assembly on a PML-N ticket. Once again he became part of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif’s Cabinet, as the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Kanju was remembered for being a calm, patient and modest foreign minister.
Though his time was mostly spent in airports and foreign capitals, his heart resided with his people in Lodhran. He was known as a renowned diplomat globally, capable of pushing the Pakistani agenda; a pragmatic and practical leader with networks spanning throughout the world. During one of his visits to Afghanistan he was attacked by militants, narrowly surviving, and was highly appreciated for his courage and diplomatic handling of what could have damaged Pak-Afghan relations. He appealed to the Afghani groups to stop fighting, enforce ceasefire and resolve their differences through peaceful negotiations. Siddique Kanju’s personal attributes were the building of national consensus in key issues and a passion for inclusivity and consultation. He was immensely loved across the borders, for his remarkable representation of Pakistan across borders.
In 1998 while giving speech at the United Nations he minced no words. The highlight of his more than 30-minute-long speech was intense criticism of India for its annexation of occupied Kashmir and the continued restrictions imposed in the region.
He also told the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) that his country’s decision to conduct nuclear-weapon tests was an attempt to restore mutual deterrence in the region, which India had destabilised by its earlier nuclear-weapon tests. Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju, as the Committee continued its general debate, said that the difference between the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests lay in the fact that India’s tests were a provocation, while Pakistan’s tests were a reaction. Nevertheless, it was not Pakistan, but India, which had “inducted” the nuclear dimension into the volatile security environment of South Asia. He, at the United Nations, said and cleared it firmly to all the committees that if his country failed to demonstrate its nuclear capability, it could have eroded the delicate psychological judgements that were the essence of deterrence.
When Mian Nawaz Sharif left the country, Siddiqui Kanju with his close comrades joined the new faction of Muslim League-Q headed by Chaudry Shujjat Hussain. During the local government elections of 2001, Siddiqui Kanju was once again seen actively campaigning in his constituency. On July 28, whilst delivering a speech at a Counsellor shop in Kahror Pakka city, the spot where he gave the first speech of his political career in 1977, he was shot dead by four assassins at the age of forty-nine. His burial was attended by thousands of people, while the entire nation mourned and condemned this act, and the then President Musharraf labeled his death as a national loss. Today, 22 years after his death, Kanju still lives among the hearts of his people in Lodhran who remember him as their pride and leader.
Revolutionary ideas-driven political leaders around the developing world have an unenviable history with their lifeline, and they are victimised, more often than not, brutally enough to the extent of their life. While this says volumes about moral failure, it simultaneously delivers a fair reflection about the political intolerance of the certain strata for whom personal interests surpass every moral value.