**Remembering BB**

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Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto is counted among leaders whose wit, acumen, strength and ability are recognized at both the national and international levels.

Shaheed BB’s struggle against the worst dictatorship of General Zia and subsequent anti-establishment governments is worthy of being written about in golden letters. She did not give up even in the worst of circumstances, not allowing anything to deter her unwavering commitment to the constitution of Pakistan and democracy, despite character assassinations, arrest and death threats. Reading the history of injustice meted out to the PPP’s leadership, it becomes evident that the chairmanship of the PPP is not a sage of flowers but a crown of thorns which both Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari wore at a very young age.

Even today, BB Shaheed is considered a symbol of peaceful political resistance, as a champion of continuous struggle for democracy and human rights at home and abroad. History knows her as an intelligent, capable and courageous political leader.

After spending days and nights in solitary confinement and intense heat in Sukkur Jail with utmost bravery, determination and courage, Benazir Bhutto successfully forced Gen Zia to revisit his policy. The 1988 election finally saw the sun of democracy rise in the country. Benazir Bhutto was elected as the youngest prime minister of the world and the first woman prime minister of the Muslim world. As soon as she was elected prime minister, the remnants of dictatorship, at the behest of their masters, re-aligned themselves against democracy and a new era of conspiracies against democratic forces began.

As a result of these conspiracies, her government was overthrown in 1990 on the pretext of the infamous 8th Amendment. Once again, the mandate of the people was snatched. The PPP believes that in all the elections in which Benazir Bhutto and her party contested the mandate was stolen by undemocratic forces.

The general elections held in 1990 were won by BB Shaheed with an even greater majority than before but overnight the results were changed and the whole election was stolen. A few years back the Supreme Court of Pakistan also declared it rigged and asked the FIA to initiate inquiry against those involved in rigging the 1990 elections.

Time and again, even the court of history has proved that Benazir Bhutto and her family have always been oppressed in Pakistan but unfortunately, she could never get justice from the court of justice. Similarly, in the election of 1997, the PPP was limited to Sindh only. In the 2002 election, Benazir Bhutto was barred from running in the elections and was not even allowed to come to Pakistan for her party’s election campaign. Despite this, her party managed to win a majority in parliament and the then dictator had to use tactics to divide the PPP to keep it out of power.

Despite the rigging, the role of BB Shaheed was always that of a resourceful, responsible and patriotic leader. Despite all reservations, she acknowledged the election results and never allowed her struggle to deviate from the realm of democratic values so that the country would not fall into anarchy and chaos. This is something Imran Khan needs to learn today. BB always preferred to sit in the parliament formed as a result of even rigged elections. She used to say that even the weakest democracy is better than dictatorship.

Facing the worst of dictatorships, vile propaganda and filthy accusations, sometimes appearing for trial with minor children in one city, sometimes in another city, terrorist attacks – tactic was not used against BB Shaheed? She was declared a security risk but nothing could keep her away from her goal and her people.

Her position was also very clear in the war against terror. When other political leaders were afraid to take a clear stand for fear of terrorists, it was she who openly slammed terrorists and in her last speech at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi she announced she would help liberate Swat from the clutches of terrorists. This promise was fulfilled by Asif Ali Zardari after BB’s martyrdom.

Even her worst opponents name BB Shaheed as their ideal. Today when we are celebrating her birthday, we must not forget that this brave daughter of Pakistan was martyred in the war on terror, we must not forget that she was martyred because she wanted to bring Pakistan out of the darkness of religious extremism.

To make any concessions to her killers would not only be an injustice to the oppressed daughter of Pakistan and her family but would be tantamount to making Pakistan and its future insecure.

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