**Remembering the legacy of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto**

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Forty-three years ago, on April 4, 1979, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was hanged as a result of an unfair trial. Today, there is a consensus on the fact that Pakistan’s most popular leader was killed in a judicial murder on the behest of a military dictator. Till the very end, Bhutto refused to cower in front of General Zia ul Haq. He refused to beg for mercy for a crime that he never committed. After hearing about his death sentence, he was quoted as saying, “I am not afraid of death. A Muslim’s fate is in the hands of God. I can face Him with a clear conscience and tell Him that I rebuilt His Islamic state of Pakistan from ashes into a respectable nation.”
Shaheed Bhutto’s courage was also reflected throughout his life and political career. He gave ordinary Pakistanis a voice. He brought his country respect and dignity on the international political stage. Bhutto was a charismatic leader of great intellect and vision. He broke the shackles and did not believe in a compromised foreign policy. He imagined Pakistan as a strong and independent nation of the Muslim World. He managed to unite Muslim leaders in the Islamic Summit Conference hosted in Pakistan. He spoke about the Kashmir issue in the UN and always defended oppressed people on international forums. He started Pakistan’s nuclear programme. These were his qualities that made the common people admire him. These same qualities, however, became a thorn in the side for his opponents. They became extremely fearful of Bhutto’s popularity. Perhaps Zia knew that Bhutto had the courage to invoke Article 6 of the constitution against him if freed, which states:
“Any person who abrogates or subverts or suspends or holds in abeyance, or attempts or conspires to abrogate or subvert or suspend or hold in abeyance, the Constitution by use of force or show of force or by any other unconstitutional means shall be guilty of high treason.”
To save himself, Zia-ul-Haq decided that releasing Bhutto was not an option and he proceeded to eliminate the Bhutto threat by executing him. However, he failed to remove Bhutto from the hearts and minds of the people. Those who opposed Bhutto at the time of Zia now admit their regret regarding supporting unfair killing of Bhutto. Even today, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto is remembered as a man of principles and the master of dialogue. There are many examples, including the 1973 constitution, a huge feat to bring together people from across the political spectrum and reach a consensus. Even in the most challenging situations, Bhutto knew how to get a favourable outcome for his country. He managed to bring back around 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war from Indian custody and ceased territories were exchanged after the 1971 war, without compromising on the interests of Pakistan. Shaheed Bhutto remains an integral part of the landscape of Pakistan’s politics even today.
Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto came from a comfortable background. He attended Christ Church College, Oxford, and briefly practiced law in London. After returning to Pakistan, he started law practice in Karachi. He was a well-off young lawyer who turned to politics and won people’s hearts. He wanted to make a difference in the lives of the ordinary people and he wanted to bring them respect as the citizen’s of Pakistan.
When Z. A. Bhutto became the Foreign Minister in Ayub Khan’s government, he started leaning towards China and became against Ayub’s pro-American stance. After resigning from Ayub’s government, he founded the Pakistan People’s Party and emerged as a beloved leader of the people.
Shaheed Bhutto’s biggest success is his legacy that is alive even today. After his death, his wife Begum Nusrat Bhutto and daughter Benazir Bhutto both faced house arrests and hardships during Zia’s time, who wanted to quash Bhutto’s political legacy once and for all. His nefarious plans were foiled. Benazir Bhutto was determined to fight for democracy in Pakistan and became the first woman Prime Minister in the Muslim World. After her untimely death, the torch of Bhutto’s political legacy is now with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who is determined to carry forward his grandfather’s legacy. Pakistan People’s Party is still an undeniable force in Pakistani politics, four decades after Shaheed Bhutto’s assassination those who wanted to end Bhutto’s name forever are no more relevant in today’s political landscape while the legacy of Pakistan’s champion Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto still lives. Long live Bhutto!

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