

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto

(1953 – 2007)

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan

❖ PERSONAL

- **Born** June 21, 1953, in Karachi, Pakistan
- **Daughter of** Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (a political leader and former Prime Minister) and Nusrat Bhutto (former Member of Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan)
- **Married**, December 18, 1987 to Asif Ali Zardari (in business, twice elected Member of National Assembly and Senate)
- Ms Bhutto was sworn in as Prime Minister for the first time in 1988 at the age of 35, but was removed from office 20 months later under the order of then-president Ghulam Ishaq. In 1993 she was re-elected but was again removed in 1996 by then-president Leghari. She went into exile in Dubai in 1998.
- She returned to Pakistan on 18 October 2007. She was assassinated on 27 December 2007, after departing a PPP rally in Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi.
- **Children**: Bilawal, Bakhtwar and Aseefa.

❖ EDUCATION

- Radcliffe College, Harvard University, B.A., 1973;
- Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University, B.A., 1976;
- Graduate study at Oxford in Foreign Service, 1976-77.

❖ CAREER

- Political activist with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan, 1977-84; repeatedly imprisoned and kept under house arrest by the Pakistani government; political exile in London, England, 1984-86; returned to Pakistan in April, 1986; Pakistan Peoples Party, Karachi, Pakistan co-chair, beginning in 1986; After elections held November 1988, invited to form the government, became Prime Minister in 1988 but her government was illegally dismissed in August 1990. She again came to power after her party won a majority in elections held in October 1993. Her government was once again dismissed illegally in November 1996.

❖ NARRATIVE

- Pakistani former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the first woman ever to lead a modern Islamic nation, did not plan to be a politician. She became active in politics after her father, the late Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was ousted from office in a 1977 military coup and later executed. Having sworn to carry her father's political flame, Benazir Bhutto overcame government persecution and a lack of political experience, leading her Pakistan Peoples Party to victory in the November 1988 and October 1993 parliamentary elections. As Prime Minister, Bhutto has been praised for moving swiftly to restore civil liberties and political freedom, suspended under military rule. During her

terms of office, she has faced enormous challenges in governing a poor, politically fractious, and ethnically diverse nation.

- Bhutto discusses her personal life and political career in her autobiography "Daughter of Destiny", which was published in 1989 to favorable reviews. Born into a wealthy landholding family with a tradition of political activism in southeastern Sindh province, Bhutto enjoyed a privileged childhood and went on to study political science and philosophy at Radcliffe College and Oxford University. She excelled academically and planned to work with her father's government as a professional diplomat upon her return to Pakistan in June 1977.
- Only two weeks later, however, military officers led by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq - capitalizing on public protests of disputed parliamentary elections - overthrew Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a bloodless coup. Benazir Bhutto spent the next eighteen months in and out of house arrest as she struggled to rally political support to force Zia to drop fallacious murder charges against her father. The military dictator ignored worldwide appeals for clemency and had Zulfikar Bhutto hanged in April of 1979.
- Bhutto writes in her autobiography of her last meeting with her father just before his execution. She also vigorously defends her father's government. Zulfikar Bhutto's government had mass support and was a democratic regime that worked for down trodden and have-nots.
- Bhutto's persecution began in earnest after the dismissal of her father's government in 1977 and his execution in 1979 as she intensified her denunciations of Zia and sought to organize a political movement against him. Repeatedly put under house arrest, she was finally imprisoned under solitary confinement in a desert cell in Sindh province during the summer of 1981. Bhutto described the hellish conditions in her wall less cage in "Daughter of Destiny":
- "The summer heat turned my cell into an oven. My skin split and peeled, coming off my hands in sheets. Boils erupted on my face. My hair, which had always been thick, began to come out by the handful. Insects crept into the cell like invading armies. Grasshoppers, mosquitoes, stinging flies, bees and bugs came up through the cracks in the floor and through the open bars from the courtyard. Big black ants, cockroaches, seething clumps of little red ants and spiders. I tried pulling the sheet over my head at night to hide from their bites, pushing it back when it got too hot to breathe."
- Weakened but still defiant, Bhutto was finally allowed to travel to England in 1984 to receive treatment for a serious ear infection, and she remained in exile there until after Zia lifted Martial Law in December of 1985. A huge crowd numbering in the hundreds of thousands turned out on the streets to greet her - by then the leading symbol of the anti-Zia movement -- when she returned to Lahore in April of 1986. Formally elected chair in the following month, Bhutto lost no time in organizing mass protests and civil disobedience campaigns to pressure Zia to relinquish office and call national elections. Bhutto's stirring oratory, familiar name, and striking appearance helped give her a strong mass appeal, but she had to struggle to wrest real power from the PPP's old-guard leadership, members of which were wary of her gender, youth, and political wisdom.

- "An arranged marriage was the price had to pay for the political path my life had taken," she writes in "Daughter of Destiny". "My high profile in Pakistan precluded the possibility of meeting a man in the normal course of events, getting to know him, and then getting married." But Bhutto had hopes that the relationship would deepen. "We were coming to marriage with no preconceptions," she observes. "Our love could only grow."
- General Zia's death in a mysterious airplane crash in August of 1988 instantly thrust Bhutto to political center stage. In November, she led the PPP to victory in the first free Pakistani elections in eleven years. Sworn into office as Prime Minister the following month, Bhutto acted quickly to release Zia's political prisoners and guaranteed basic civil and political freedom. A strong and contentious rightist parliamentary opposition of former Zia allies and Islamic fundamentalists accused the new Prime Minister of packing the civil service with PPP supporters.
- Relations with Pakistan's longtime enemy India showed early signs of improving when Bhutto met with former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but Muslim unrest in the disputed territory of Kashmir threatened to renew tensions in early 1990. Despite these problems, political observers credited Bhutto with keeping the country's chronic ethnic and regionalist tensions in check and developing a working relationship with the coup-prone military during her first year in office.
- Notwithstanding, she decided to face the system and accepted the challenge to guide people in the transition from military dictatorship to the management of democracy. Her government gave a high priority to social sectors like health, education, clean drinking water, sanitation and energy. The budgetary allocations in these sectors were increased so that fruits of democracy and freedom could reach the common man. Similarly, in the domain of foreign policy, her government pursued an aggressive and dynamic policy.
- Addressing a historic US Joint Session of Congress during her state visit to the United States in 1989, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto called for the establishment of an Association of New Democratic Nations.
- On August 6, 1990 after having been in office less than half of her tenure, President Ghulam Ishaque Khan dismissed her government unilaterally and called for fresh elections.
- While ensuring that her Party was not returned to power, the President and the Caretaker Prime Minister filed a series of references against Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. Her husband, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari was arrested and imprisoned for over two years on a number of trumped up charges.
- In July 1993, the President of Pakistan dismissed the Government of Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif on corruption charges and called for fresh elections. The Pakistan Peoples Party went to the people in October, 1993 with a new "Agenda for Change". The programme envisaged government at the door-step of the people and priority to the social sectors. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was again elected Prime Minister with a broad mandate after achieving strong popular support in all the four provinces of Pakistan.

- She has been mentioned as "The world's most popular politician" in the New Guinness Book of Record 1996.
- The "Times" and the "Australian Magazine" (May 4, 1996) have drawn up a list of 100 most powerful women and have included Benazir Bhutto as one of them.

❖ PUBLICATIONS

- Shaheed Benazir Bhutto is the author of two books "Foreign Policy in Perspective" (1978) and her autobiography, "Daughter of the East" (1989). Several collections of her speeches and works have been compiled which include "The Way Out", Pakistan Foreign Policy, Challenges and Responses in the Post-Cold War era in "After the Cold War" by Keith Philip Lepor and Male Domination of Women offends her Islamic religion in "Lend Me Your ears: Great Speeches in History" by William Safire. The most recent being "The Way Out" (1980). She has also contributed to many periodicals and to the books, "Predictions for the Next Millennium" by Kristof and Nickerson and "Book of Hopes and Dreams" published by Bookmaster Inc.

❖ AWARDS AND HONORARY DEGREES

- Bruno Kreisky Award of Merit in human Rights, 1988.
- Honorary Phi Beta Kappa Award (1989), presented by Radcliffe College, Harvard University.
- Highest Moroccan Award "Grand Cordon de Wissam Alaoui"
- Highest French Award "Grand-croix de la Legion Honneur" (1989)
- The Noel Foundation Award, 1990 (UNIFEM).
- Honorary Fellow of Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh - 1990
- The Gakushuin Honorary Award, Tokyo (1996)
- Award by the Turkish Independent Industries and Businessmen Association (MUSAID) on account of providing assistance to the people of Bosnia.
- Golden medal Dragon of Bosnia awarded by President of Bosnia (1996)
- Key to the city of Los Angeles, presented by the Mayor of Los Angeles (1995)
- Presidential Medal, Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Science (1995)
- Medal by University of California at Los Angeles (1995)
- Honorary Doctorate of Law, L.L.D Harvard University (1989)
- Honorary Doctorate of Law (Honoris Causa), University of Sindh (1994)
- Honorary Doctorate from Mendanao State University, Philippines (1995)
- Honorary Doctorate of Law (Honoris Causa), Peshawar University (1995)
- Honorary Doctorate of Economics, Gakushuin University, Tokyo (1996)
- Honorary Fellowship by Lady Margaret Hall, University Oxford, (1989)
- Honorary Fellowship by St. Catherine College, University of Oxford, (1989)
- Honorary Professor of the Kyrghyz State National University (1995) Kyrghyzstan.
- Honorary Professor of Yassavi Kazakh Turkish University, Kazakh-Turkish International Language University, Kazakhstan, 1995.
- Honorable Member of OHYUKAI, Alumni Association of Gakushuin, conferred by OHYUKAI Tokyo (1996).
- Awarded the 2000 Millennium Medal of Honor by American Biographical Institute, Inc. in November 1998.
- Awarded American Academy Award of Achievement in London, October 28, 2000
- Awarded "World Tolerance Award 2005" by Women World Awards in Leipzig, November 29, 2005

- Awarded 'International Woman of the Year 2006' by the prominent European Publishing House based in Dubai as part of "Emirates Woman Awards 2006'.
- Nominated Chair of "Muslim Women for Human Rights and Democracy" Oslo, Norway, May 6-7, 2007
- Awarded the prestigious Tipperary International Peace Award for April 25, 2008 (posthumously)
- Shaheed Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was posthumously awarded the Service to Humanity Award by the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 1-5 Dec 2010.

❖ **KEYNOTE ADDRESSES**

- Joint Session of US Congress (1989)
- World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland (1994)
- French National Assembly (1994)
- Parliament, Republic of Ireland, (1994)
- UN Conference on Population Planning, Cairo (1994)
- UN Commission for Human Rights, Geneva (1994)
- Fortune Global Forum, Singapore (1995)
- Princeton University, USA (1995)
- School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University (1995)
- Women Conference, Beijing (1995)