

## **Pakistan : The Bhuttos of Larkana**

lundi 23 mai 2011, par [ALTAF Waseem](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 20 mai 2011).

**The sardars of Bhutto clan would invite the ruling elite for annual "hunt" to their estates. Shahnawaz was introduced to Governor General Iskandar Mirza by his son-in-law Brig. Muhammad Mustafa Khan, husband of Mumtaz Begum, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's sister. Iskander Mirza used to visit Larkana every year for the "hunt" In 1954-56 Brig. Mustafa brought General Ayub to Larkana where Sir Shahnawaz introduced Z.A Bhutto to the army chief who then became a trusted aide of the general**

When we look at the history of political dynasties in the area which now constitutes Pakistan, we find that in most cases, the origins of the rise of these dynasties lie in the service of the mighty and the powerful. The ancestors of these families remained in the service of the Mughals, and later the British, who would bestow large fiefdoms and monetary benefits to them, in exchange for their unswerving submission and support.

The Bhuttos are no exception. An ancient Rajput clan centred in Sindh was mainly Zamindars in charge of fiefdoms who would collect tax for the Mughal Empire.

One of the Sardar's namely Murtaza Bhutto sent his son Shahnawaz Bhutto to England for schooling. On his return Shahnawaz joined the civil service at the State of Junagadh. He later became the Diwan or the Prime Minister of Junagadh State (in Persian *diwan* means tax collector). Shahnawaz's services were duly appreciated by the British when he won the Order of the Indian Empire and the Order of the British Empire. Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto then married a Hindu girl called Lakhi Bai who later converted to Islam and was renamed Khurshid Begum. In 1940 Sir Shahnawaz formed The Sindh Party. The role played by Sir Shahnawaz in the accession of Junagadh on partition is controversial. Some of the historians are of the view that he wanted the accession of Junagadh with India while others think that he wanted its accession with Pakistan. However on partition he returned to Sindh, with immense wealth. The *sardars* of Bhutto clan would invite the ruling elite for annual "hunt" to their estates. Shahnawaz was introduced to Governor General Iskandar Mirza by his son-in-law Brig. Muhammad Mustafa Khan, husband of Mumtaz Begum, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's sister. Iskander Mirza used to visit Larkana every year for the "hunt". In 1954-56 Brig. Mustafa brought General Ayub to Larkana where Sir Shahnawaz introduced Z.A Bhutto to the army chief who then became a trusted aide of the general.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was born in 1928 at Larkana. Bhutto's personality vacillated between love and empathy on one end and feelings of superiority and pride on the other. His mother was from a humble background and could never really get acceptance in a feudal family system. Bhutto greatly loved her. Bhutto would project his deep feelings for his mother onto the poor and downtrodden, when he stood for their rights and even genuinely cried for them. However he was also harboring feelings of superiority and pride which he inherited from his feudal and aristocratic father. So he would easily get offended when he felt that his authority was being defied, while he remained an authoritarian personality throughout his life.

His first marriage at age 15 was arranged with Shirin Amir Begum in Karachi in 1943, however it

was not successful and in 1951 he married his second wife Nusrat Isphahani, an Iranian Kurd. Foreign educated Bhutto was a learned man and courtesy his association with the General, in 1958 at the age of 30, he became the youngest minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet, holding charge of the energy ministry. Later heading a number of ministries and following an independent foreign policy, he developed differences with Ayub Khan and resigned in 1966 as the foreign minister of Pakistan. He would then express his strong opposition to Ayub Khan's military rule and organize his own political party.

Although he expressed his full confidence in socialism and the rights of the poor, however his feudal background dominated his personality. Throughout his political career he would remain threatened by the popularity of alternate leadership and would make decisions with an authoritative mindset. A number of his former colleagues suffered at his hands and within a few years after coming into power he had lost the support of most of his comrades. On retirement of Tikka Khan, the army chief, in 1976, a Bhutto loyalist, the greatest threat was from the military, so he deemed it fit to appoint an apparently simple and mediocre general as COAS, while superseding seven of Zia's seniors. That proved to be his greatest mistake.

The feudal mindset remained a characteristic feature of the leaders of the Bhutto dynasty whereby the leader dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieved, and directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Z.A Bhutto would often resort to coercive measures as "fix him up" was a favorite expression. It is said that he directed the DG, FSF Mahmood Masood to "fix up" Mr. Kasuri who took it for eliminating him, whereas he did not in fact wanted his assassination. Although highly charismatic yet arrogant and overconfident he did not perceive ground realities as they existed. When Bhutto was on bail and Zia-ul-Haq was the Chief Martial Law Administrator, he carried out rallies against him and threatened Zia of dire consequences. It is said that Zia initially did not want to go to the extent of hanging him, but Bhutto's highly threatening gestures compelled him to think that Bhutto's survival would mean his own elimination. Although he was for the uplift of the poor of this country and wanted an equitable system, yet in 1977 we find that almost all those who got electoral tickets by the PPP were from the feudal/elitist class.

Benazir carried the Bhutto legacy. Educated at Convent and later Harvard and Oxford, she came on the public scene as Z.A Bhutto's daughter. She was charismatic and dynamic yet highly egotistic and arrogant with an authoritarian mindset, carrying personality traits she inherited from her feudal father and wealthy mother of Iranian origin. Having little understanding of facts on ground, she came into power twice but had little to be proud of in terms of any substantial contribution, towards achievement of national goals.

Benazir was assassinated on 27th Dec 2007. She left behind a son and two daughters. The son, namely Bilawal Zardari, rechristened as Bilawal Bhutto Zardari by his father, is the present Chairman of PPP. He is currently being groomed as an intern by his father, to lead this country sometime in the future.

Meanwhile the Bhutto legacy is being advanced by Mr. Asif Ali Zardari the husband of the late Benazir Bhutto. The party leadership has now formed an alliance with the security establishment, the PML (Q) former Musharraf loyalists and the MQM. The heritage presently is in the hands of a businessman, whose main focus is on ground realities and tactical decisions to come out of problematic situations.

Pragmatism and manipulation has replaced *roti, kapra, aur makaan*, while the PPP is no more a party of *jiyalas* but beneficiaries.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the heir apparent, who likes target-shooting, swimming, horseback riding and squash, studied at Froebel's and Oxford, had a Filipino maid, gets drinking water from France, shops in Harrods, lives in Palatial houses in London and Dubai and spends holidays in the south of France, generally speaks English but learning to speak Urdu also.

Bilawal will "take up some political responsibility in September this year" announced President Asif Ali Zardari while meeting party law makers and office bearers from Gujranwala division on 27th April 2011.

I recall Gujranwala is the city wherefrom a boy topped the secondary education board in the general group, a couple of years back, so poor that he was working as a welder at a small shop and had appeared privately for the exams.

We might in our lifetimes witness a day when the real change comes in this country, and it can only come when such capable sons of the soil will lead this nation and not the imported ones cashing in on their dynastic legacies.

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\* From VIEWPOINT ONLINE ISSUE NO. 51, MAY 20, 2011 :  
<http://www.viewpointonline.net/the-bhuttos-of-larkana.html>

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