

Benzir assassinated

-Biplab Pal 12/27/2007

Daughter of the East is no more with us.

Benazir Bhutto had just addressed a rally of Pakistan People's Party supporters in the town of Rawalpindi when the rally was rocked by a blast. Bhutto was said to have been leaving the rally when the attack occurred. Two motorcycle riders fired at Bhutto's SUV with AK-47 assault rifles just as she was about to drive off after the rally. Simultaneously, a suicide bomber detonated next to her vehicle. It is currently unclear as to whether or not her death was caused by the blast itself or shots fired by the assassins.

When I was reading Daughter of the East first time perhaps in 1993, I was completely overwhelmed by a voice of a woman--fathomlessly fearless against autocratic political system in Pakistan. She was a prime witness of how her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto suffered at the hand of General Zia-ul-Haque and political injustice in Pakistan chiseled her into Iron lady-a fearless leader more determined for secularism than any other leader in any of the Muslim countries. Often she is referred as first woman to head a Muslim state--but that is not commensurating with what she stood for through out her life with her conviction to secularism and a modern Pakistan.

Quite naturally, after her return from exile she was the first target of the Islamic extremists. They were determined to exterminate Bhutto because Benzir had no doubt in her mind about the fact that Pakistan will not survive unless the extremists who were created by Zia-ul-Haque regime to fight against former Soviet, are eliminated completely from state politics. I have seen intensive campaign of extremist Muslim groups against her throughout the world-and she was portrayed as enemy of Islam!

Personally I am shocked-she was one of those very few women who realized discrimination against woman in a religiously conservative society and she was determined for the cause of women in Pakistan. Her voice in the daughter of the East is still fresh in my mind and I am sure to the millions of women in South Asia who found their own mentor in her.

She was put to rest-but I am sure there are millions of women in Pakistan who will carry her vision for a modern Pakistan.