

AIPS Fellowship Research Information

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Document I

Grateful to have been awarded a short term *Lecturing and Research Fellowship* by AIPS, I returned to Lahore early morning of February 17, 2016. In this trip I was able to conduct several high level interviews regarding Benazir Bhutto's family life and upbringing, politics and leadership. I am interested in the political processes that enable women such as Benazir Bhutto to ascend to the highest political office in Muslim societies - from medieval to modern times. Benazir Bhutto's political leadership forms a chapter in my upcoming book, tentatively called, *Muslim Women's Paths to Power: From Bilqis to Benazir* (2017). The grant, however, motivated me to begin my research in Boston with my interview with Ambassador Peter Galbraith, and continued in London where I met and interviewed Sanam Bhutto extensively. I also had the opportunity to meet and talk with Ambassador Wajid Shamsul Hassan who had known Benazir Bhutto and her family for many years; and with Victoria Schofield who had known Benazir Bhutto in a different capacity and gave me a different perspective on her life and political activities. My time in Lahore was as productive as it was fast paced. As a former AIPS grant holder, I reconnected with many friends and scholars in Lahore and through them I was able to recontact and interview several individuals. I interviewed Senator Aitzaz Ahasan, Ambassador Abida Hussein, Asma Jahangir, Nahid Khan and Safdar Abbasi, each providing me with some aspects of Benazir Bhutto's life and politics. All along I solicited views and commentaries from friends and colleagues regarding gender, political authority and politics of representation in Pakistan.

I screened my video documentary, *Mrs. President: Women and Political Leadership in Iran* (Films for Humanities and Sciences, 2002) once at Beaconhouse National University (BNU) on February 22, and another time at Faiz Ghar Museum on February 29. At both venues the screening was preceded with a short talk, leading after the screening to much discussions and debates regarding Muslim women and political leadership. After my presentation at BNU, some young art students asked me to visit their studios and view their ongoing projects. I was delighted to do so and our meeting ended in a long visit, talking/commenting on their art work, and taking photos. I am presently in touch with one of them.

Rather unexpectedly, I was asked to give the keynote at the Social Sciences Expo 2016 on February 24 in Islamabad. The time to prepare was short but I did not want to miss this chance. It provided a good opportunity for me to not only have a chance to meet and talk with many young students representing various universities at the Expo, but also to share with the audience a revised version of a collaborative paper I had written a years or so earlier on dreaming gender equality and development in South Asia (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/100747-Asias-first-Social-Sciences-Expo-kicks-off>). It was indeed a pleasure and an honor to be a recipient of an appreciation plaque after my presentation.

My research and meetings in Lahore and later in Islamabad would not have been so facilitated had it not been for the professional help I received from the staff at the AIPS' charming house in Lahore, and in Islamabad from Mr. Nadeem Akbar. To all of them I extend my deep appreciation.