

Jalib, Daman and Bhutto

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Lavishly betrayed by Bhutto, it was the dervish poets and workers resisting Zia dictatorship. The corrupt feudal lords Bhutto held very dear, were now members of Majlis-e-Shura.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) was keen to recruit Habib Jalib for his newly-formed Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Jalib was a member of National Awami Party, or NAP, as many communists were at the time. When NAP's leading figure and renowned lawyer Mr Mahmud Kasuri joined the PPP, Bhutto saw a chance to court Jalib through Kasuri Sahib. Jalib was a committed and disciplined party worker. Also, he understood Bhutto's politics. His poetic instinct proved sharper than many left leaders with regard to Bhuttoist politics.

In 1970, when the country finally got the chance to vote in general elections, Jalib contested elections from Lahore against a PPP candidate. Mirza Ibrahim, the legendary trade union leader, also entered the electoral fray. Mirza Ibrahim ran from the constituency Dr. Mubashar Hassan was fielded by the PPP. Both Jalib and Mirza Ibrahim did not fare well against Bhutto bandwagon. However, the personal relations between Bhutto and Jalib were not strained despite Jalib's election bid.

When Bhutto finally managed to reside at PM House, Jalib in his typical dervish manner kept a distant from the Sultan. An oft-quoted anecdote mirrors the nature of their relationship during this period.

Once Jalib was spending his evening-a-usual at Pak Tea House when a messenger sent by Bhutto arrived. The messenger said that Bhutto had summoned Jalib. When asked why, Jalib was informed that Bhutto wanted to see him. 'If he wants to see me then he should come to me. Go and tell him,' replied a proud Jalib. To his credit, temperamental Bhutto himself arrived at Pak Tea House to meet Jalib (though Bhutto did not enter the building).

Meantime, Bhutto was getting exposed. His mercurial politics was inviting Daman's poisonous satire.

One such poem by Daman targeted Bhutto's trip to Simla. Daman pointed out how Bhutto raised the slogan of fighting India for 1,000 years on one hand and then going to Simla to meet Indira Gandhi on the other. The poem was an instant hit:

*Kaday Shimlay janda aay
Kaday Murree janda aay
Aay keey kari janda aay.*

Poem's mass popularity led to a police raid of Daman's Hujra, a 'bomb' was recovered, a case was duly registered.

When a spirited Daman appeared before the court to defend himself, he stated that only bomb could

be recovered owing to the size of his Hujra's slight door else police would have recovered a tank.

When Bhuttoists would insist to address Bhutto as Fakhr-e-Asia (pride of Asia), Daman replied:

*Saiban bha ganday vikan
Resham bha mlysheya
Wa oye, Fakr-e-Asia!*

Another poem making rounds those days was maliciously attributed to Jalib. This vulgar poem was enthusiastically popularised by Jamaat activists. Jalib at a mass public meeting disowned the poem. Poetry for him was a sacred affair and he could not vulgarise it, Jalib told the gathering. Also, he said, Benazir was like his own daughter and he was not the one to disrespect women. Bhutto understood it. However, when the NAP leadership was put behind the bar by Bhutto, Jalib was also implicated in the treason case. On treason charges, one might go to gallows. Jalib stood firm. Even importantly, the NAP leaders embraced Khakis when Zia overthrew Bhutto government. True to his democratic credentials, Jalib did not welcome Zia dictatorship mere because Bhutto had treated him badly. He was out on the streets claiming:

Zulmat ko Zia, sar sar ko saba, banday ki khuda kia kehna!

What about Daman? Well, the fake 'bomb case' left Daman deeply depressed. The case finally fizzled out after sometime but now he spent more of his time in reading than writing. He stopped going to literary functions and would prefer remaining alone in his room. This loneliness together with financial problems took toll on his health. Still, when Zia arrived on the stage, Daman was out to ridicule this confessional tinpot dictator. Long before Zia was able to send Daman behind the bars, a poem was making rounds across the country:

*Saday mulk day do khuda
La ilah tay martial law
Ik teh rehnda arshan utay
Doja rehnda farhan utay
Ohda na aay allah mian
Ehda na aay Jarnal Zia
Wa bhai wajjarnal Zia
Koun kehnda aay too aethon ja*

Lavishly betrayed by Bhutto, it was the dervish poets and workers resisting Zia dictatorship. The corrupt feudal lords Bhutto held very dear, were now members of Majlis-e-Shura. The present prime minister was also a Shura member!

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P.S.

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