

Interview with Pakistan Prime Minister

Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali

Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, the 20th Prime Minister of Pakistan, began his political career as a member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which he joined in the 1970s. He was elected to the Baluchistan Provincial Assembly in 1977. In the 1980s, he served in the national Cabinet of General Zia-ul-Haq, where he first served as the Provincial Minister for Information, Law and Parliamentary Affairs and later as Minister of State for Local Government. Jamali was one of the contenders for premiership in the 1985 elections along with Muhammad Khan Junejo and Ilyas Bux Soomro. General Zia chose Junejo. Jamali served in the Junejo Ministry as Minister for Water and Power. In an interview to Mohammad Shehzad on January 29 in the backdrop of the improving India-Pakistan relations, Jamali talks about his socio-political outlook, the Kashmir situation and, importantly, the need for India and Pakistan to shed their egos in order to achieve the bigger goal of peace.

Excerpts

You come from a place [Baluchistan] that is known for feuds. But the Jamali tribe is reputed to be a peaceful one. What is the secret behind this?

Education and upbringing. My ancestors laid strong emphasis on good education and upbringing. The first batch of educated people in our family dates back to 1939. Moreover, people of our family have been like saints. My great grandfather Sakhee Durmohamamd Jamali was known for his sakhawat [generosity]. So, the family inherited sakhawat.

I got the best education. As far as feuds, violence, and clashes are concerned, these are part of tribal culture. My uncle Mir Jafar Khan Jamali was a man of vision. We call him the Renaissance Man since he introduced education in our tribe. He joined politics and worked closely with [Mohammad Ali] Jinnah. He motivated the poor towards education. This is the secret.

Should not these qualities be part of our political outlook?

I am on record as saying that a transparent system of accountability will change our corrupt political culture within 10 years... the public will start respecting politicians. I believe I am a trendsetter; one must practise what one preaches. To the best of my ability, I have worked with full honesty, patience, tolerance and gentleness to set an example. We don't pick quarrels with others. We don't resort to backbiting. I believe people have started feeling this change.

You have seen good times when society was tolerant. Today, it is intolerant. The hate element is visible in our textbooks. Do you think this hate element is the reason for the growing intolerance and extremism in society?

I have also seen bad times. I used to play hockey. Sports give you three lessons in life. When you win, you should be humble. When you lose, you should learn from your mistakes. At times you draw and become even. Education is not only reading books. Education in my view is taleem [education] and tarbiat [upbringing]. Textbooks and teachers give you education but upbringing comes from parents. Upbringing would have a strong impact on the person.

Pakistani textbooks demonise Indians; even a man like Mahatma Gandhi is depicted as an evil.

I don't agree. Mahatma Gandhi played his role and it was appreciated all over the world.

Is the two-nation theory still valid? If so, then to which nation do the Muslims of India belong? And what is the status of non-Muslims of Pakistan?

I think the two-nation theory has become a one-nation theory. It was over half a century ago. And whichever nation is there, that is there today.

The first head of the Pakistan Muslim League, Chaudhary Khaliq-uz-Zaman, wrote in his autobiography Pathway to Pakistan that the two-nation theory has proved injurious to Indian Muslims.

Many Muslims were left behind in India. They suffered a lot then. They had contributed a lot for the creation of Pakistan. Owing to the conditions and circumstances, they could not make it to this country. Naturally, they had to suffer because they were held responsible for the creation of this country.

Pakistan hates India and at the same time Pakistanis love Indian music and movies.

How could you say that Pakistanis hate Indians? Why should we hate Indians?

Some commentators believe that the February 16 talks between India and Pakistan should have been at the political level instead of the Foreign-Secretary level. The apprehension is that the bureaucracy would sabotage the peace process. This is what happened in Agra.

It is government-to-government talks. It is not person-to-person talks. It is only a start. This is level-I. Level-II will be at the ministerial level. Level-III will be at the chief executive level, whatever the case may be. I see no reason why people think that bureaucracy would sabotage. I don't mistrust my team... As far as we are concerned, we are positive. Even India needs peace. Nobody wants war. War is no solution to any problem. It is peace, dialogue and the convincing power, which has to make a breakthrough.

What are your expectations from the February 16 talks?

I hope we shall reach a conclusion... Of course, the core issue of Kashmir will be solved. In this region, Kashmir is a problem. The Kashmiris need a helping hand. We are trying to contribute so that this issue is settled - it is in the interest of humanity.

What flexibility is Pakistan willing to show and what flexibility does it expect from India?

In my assessment, both parties should sacrifice their ego for the sake of better relations. We have to sacrifice it for a bigger goal. And when you come to dialogue, either you convince me or I convince you. So, let us see who is a better operator.

Columnist Ayaz Amir says that India has not reciprocated the flexibility Pakistan has shown and the confidence building measures it has taken.

I hope Ayaz Amir comes up with better CBMs.

What is the most significant achievement of the 12th SAARC Summit in the India-Pakistan context?

Two issues - for the past few years, internationally, it had been thought that there is no law and order in Pakistan and it cannot host any significant national or international event. The summit has disproved it. Second, Vajpayee saheb was able to convince his people and we ours that this issue has to be resolved. That is the biggest outcome.

What makes Pakistan believe that January 6 was a historical achievement? The India-Pakistan relations have just returned to the pre-December 13, 2001 position.

I never used the word historical. As the Prime Minister, I was the host [of the summit]. I was not in the government before December 13. Things worsened afterwards and now they are getting better.

Has Pakistan reached the level where it can say that India is no more an enemy country?

I have always said that we are enemies to none - that was my speech to Parliament. And we expect no one to be our enemy. There are some issues that need to be discussed and resolved but we have no enmity with anyone. We have no reason for it. But if someone tries to compress us, we won't allow that.

If the threat perception from India decreases, would you consider reducing the defence budget?

Let the time come. But there is a big 'if' in this!

How does your government look at the Kashmir movement?

Every person has a right to one's freedom. We have been giving Kashmiris diplomatic and moral support. Kashmiris are the best people to decide. They are the best judges. They are suffering. That is why, in the interest of humanity, this issue must be resolved in a decent and honourable way.

How do you look at the recent All Parties Hurriyat Conference-Indian government talks?

Every country has a right... They have been able to get hold of Ansari, Mirwaiz, Bhatt saheb, the Lone brothers... I think that is politics. But whosoever they may be, they are Muslims and we hope better conclusions would come up. We would appreciate that. We want peace - whether it comes from the Pakistan side or the Indian side. If it is up to the satisfaction of the Kashmiris, it will be a worthwhile effort. If something is leading to peace, that is enough.

What is your reaction to [Indian External Affairs Minister] Yashwant Sinha's statement in the United States that India considers Kashmir its integral part.

He should talk to his Prime Minister because Vajpayee has said something else.

What is the harm in acknowledging the U.S. pressure on the India-Pakistan rapprochement?

There are friendly countries which have facilitated these talks. I would not name these countries.

**Courtesy: *Frontline*, Bombay,
Vol. 21 Issue. 5, March 12, 2004**