[Dr Naazir Mahmood](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/dr-naazir-mahmood)

December 6, 2020

**Balochistan: Bizenjos and Jamalis**

Balochistan is an interesting province not only in terms of vastness of area and meagerness of population but also in having produced politicians – from the Bizenjos and Bugtis to the Jamalis, Marris and Mengals. They represent the wide streams of thoughts that flowed into the mainstream politics of Pakistan.

With the death of Zafarullah Jamali we have lost in 2020 another major politician from Balochistan, the first being Hasil Bizenjo. The families of these to politicians could not be more different. Their activism, intellectual capacity, and political preferences were poles apart. Understanding these two families gives us one of the keys to understanding Balochistan. Both families have played their respective parts in Balochistan for nearly a century and in Pakistan for its entire 73 years of existence. Can we compare and contrast them in a brief column? Perhaps, we can.

The leader of the Jamali clan, Mir Jafar Khan Jamali, was born in 1911 in Rojhan Jamali which was part of the Dera Ghazi Khan area under the British rule. Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo opened his eyes in 1917 in Nall Khuzdar in the heart of Balochistan. Both followed entirely different paths and it appears that the family background and the geographical location of their birthplaces also played a role in their formative years. In the 1930s when Jafar Jamali engaged M A Jinnah’s services as a lawyer in a property dispute, their long association began.

Jinnah was able to reclaim the disputed land for the Jamalis from the British Crown, and on Jinnah’s invitation Jafar Jamali joined the Muslim League, as the movement for the division of India was on the anvil. As the tribal chief of his area, Jafar Jamali commanded influence over his people and that clout was to play a significant role in the late 1930s when the Muslim League emerged as an able foil to the Indian National Congress. In 1940, Jafar Jamali participated in the Lahore gathering on March 23 when the Lahore Resolution demanded the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of India.

In the 1940s, when the struggle for Pakistan gained momentum, Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo was more inclined towards the Communist Party of India (CPI) but he was not happy when the CPI supported the demand for Pakistan. Just like Bacha Khan of NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Bizenjo believed in keeping India united and when the division was inevitable, he wanted Balochistan to emerge as an independent country. Bizenjo did not believe in using religion as a tool for politics and, as Bacha Khan wanted free movement of people from Kabul to Calcutta, Bizenjo foresaw an open access from Gwadar to Guwahati.

When the so-called Shahi Jirga opted for Pakistan, the nationalist politicians of Balochistan were not amused – and Mir Bizenjo was one of them. But his politics saw a sea-change when Pakistan became a reality. Just like Bacha Khan again, Bizenjo wholeheartedly worked for a democratic Pakistan where all nationalities could enjoy their rights of self-determination. Bizenjo’s Pakistan was supposed to be a liberal, progressive and secular Pakistan with friendly relations with all its neighbours. It was supposed to give equal rights to all ethnic and religious groups with no room for usurpation of power by the powerful civilian and military elites.

On the other hand, Jafar Jamali was a disappointed man after the demise of Jinnah, as the Muslim League reneged on most of its promises. While Bizenjo strived for the formation of one left-wing party after another, Jafar Jamali still remained with the Muslim League hoping to see some improvement it. Bizenjo became a dedicated leader of the National Awami Party (NAP) from 1957 onwards. The semblance of democracy in Pakistan gave way to direct military rule and that saw both Bizenjo and Jafar Jamali not siding with General Ayub Khan.

But Jafar Jamali’s opposition to General Ayub Khan had a lot to do with the land reforms that General Ayub Khan was trying to introduce; the Jamali clan was dead against any such reforms that could deprive them of their huge tracts of land. Bizenjo’s opposition to General Ayub Khan had more to do with the general’s authoritarian regime and his desire to rule forever using an iron fist. Bizenjo was at the forefront of the democratic struggle against General Ayub Khan. Jafar Jamali also sided with Fatima Jinnah but for different reasons, one of them was the general’s dislike for the Jamalis.

Jafar Jamali died early, at the age of 55 in April 1967, just three months before the death of Fatima Jinnah. And that was the time when his nephew, Zafarullah Jamali – in his mid-20s – emerged on the scene. Z A Bhutto was looking for allies in Balochistan, and the young Zafarullah Jamali was a potential candidate. When Bizenjo was active in his democratic struggle from the platform of NAP, Zafarullah Jamali joined the PPP and contested the 1970 election but lost to Sardar Chakar Khan. After his defeat in the election, he remained inactive in politics whereas Bizenjo became governor of Balochistan.

Mir Bizenjo had to face the brunt of Z A Bhutto’s onslaught against the only major progressive party in Pakistan. Still he played a significant role in the passage of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. After the Hyderabad Conspiracy Case initiated by the Bhutto government, Mir Bizenjo was imprisoned with most of the NAP leadership. During the 1970s, Bizenjo’s struggle for democracy was exemplary. Zafarullah Jamali first sided with Z A Bhutto and then was quick in ditching him and joined General Zia’s cabinet as minister for food and agriculture and then as minister for local government.

In the 1980s, Mir Bizenjo was once again at the forefront of his democratic struggle against the military dictatorship of General Zia and his coterie. Bizenjo endured one jail term after another but stood fast in his principles for democracy, fundamental and human rights, justice, and federalism.

Zafarullah Jamali held one ministerial position after another. He was one of the most powerful politicians from Balochistan during General Zia’s dictatorship when General Rahimuddin was governor of Balochistan from 1978 to 1984. In 1985, General Zia orchestrated a general election to keep all political parties away and in which no political party could contest.

After the elections, Zafarullah Jamali was once again one of General Zia’s favourites from Balochistan. Jamali won a National Assembly seat unopposed and was aspiring to be the next prime minister. But the all-powerful General Zia opted for Muhammad Khan Junejo from Sindh. In the meantime, Mir Bizenjo was leading his Pakistan National Party (PNP) and continued to oppose General Zia and demanded an immediate restoration of democracy where all political parties could function freely. Zafarullah Jamali joined the Junejo cabinet as federal minister and again was quick to ditch Junejo when General Zia dismissed him as prime minister in May 1988.

Jamali then joined the caretaker cabinet formed by General Zia before his death in August 1988. In the party-based elections of 1988, Mir Bizenjo unexpectedly lost against a young nationalist. He died in August 1989 and left the field for his son, Hasil Bizenjo who followed in his father’s footsteps. In the 1990s, Zafarullah Jamali associated with the PML-N but turned sides when another military dictator General Musharraf toppled the elected government of Nawaz Sharif which had two-thirds majority in parliament.

The pinnacle of Zafarullah Jamali’s career came about in 2002 when, finally, General Musharraf elevated Jamali to the post of prime minister. What General Zia had refused, General Musharraf could offer. Jamali did not seem to care much for the fact that both generals had assumed power illegally and unconstitutionally and had violated basic principles of democracy just to remain in absolute power as long as possible.

The writer holds a PhD from the University of Birmingham, UK and works in Islamabad.

Email: mnazir1964@yahoo.co.uk