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## Jafar Zattali: The Poetic Voice of Dissent

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### Abstract

*Poets, writers and creative authorities have always been there to reflect the mood of the masses and if we say, the feelings of the society. Jafar Zattali's outburst against the ruling class, elite society, govt servants and Mughal princes killing each other and living a wayward life was an anger with an undercurrent of pain for the overall situation of contemporary period. Jafar Zattali's poetic expression were reflections of varied picture of different sections of contemporary society and of their sexual life which even includes the royalty i.e., household of royals and nobles. In this article my focus is on the voice of dissent which has always been ignored or crushed by the rulers. Jafar Zattali's satire, it is pure dissent and agitation against the social degradation of the ruling class which resulted in the dilapidation of the society as a whole.*

**Key Words:** *Mughal, Zattali, Aurangzeb, Kaambaksh, Farrukhsiyar, Farrukhseer, Zattalnama, Poetry, Urdu, Rekhta, Satire, Dissent, Bahadurshah, Baadshah, Emperor*

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Today if we watch standup comedians representing young generation or popularly called Gen Z or watch any dark movie or series on Ott platforms, we will not be able to watch it with our family. Those abusive words which were earlier used to be hidden in a beep, are now

prominently used without any beep or hesitation. Although there are no relations between today's generation Z and a poet during and after the sixth Mughal emperor of Aurangzeb Alamgir (1618-1707), but still we can say that he was something close to today's blunt aggressive voices with mixture of obscenity in its expressions. We can further add that Jafar Zattali's outburst against the ruling class, elite society, govt servants and Mughal princes killing each other and living a wayward life was an anger with an undercurrent of pain for the overall situation of contemporary period. If we look at Jafar Zattali's time we can say that his poetries were also naked during that period and were representing the hidden reality of that society.

In my book "Sexual & Gender Representations in Mughal India", I have written a chapter on Jafar Zattali's poetic expression which were reflections of "varied picture of different sections of contemporary society and of their sexual life which even includes the royalty i.e., household of royals and nobles". This was part of my thesis submitted to CHS, JNU year 2004 entitled Sexual and Gender Relations in Mughal India. Sexual and gender aspect of the society in which Jafar Zattali was living is reflected in the chapter on Jafar Zattali in the book "Sexual and Gender Representations in Mughal India".

In this article my focus is on the voice of dissent which has always been ignored or crushed by the rulers. *Zattal Nama*, a collection of Jafar Zattali's poetries compiled by Rasheed Hasan Khan is a reflection of Mughal period of Jafar Zattali's time. Mehmood Sheerani in his Urdu book *Punjab Mein Urdu* has a chapter on Jafar Zattali. It says that Meer Jafar Zattali was from Narnaul, now in Haryana. His father was Syed Abbas who was a shopkeeper. Jafar Zttali was born in the same year when Aurangzeb crowned himself in 1658. His father died when he was young. He had two elder sisters and a younger brother Safdar. His uncle Meer Sarwar took care of him and got him educated. In *Zattal Nama*, Rasheed Hasan Khan has corrected these details which were taken from a book *Zar e Jafri*. Rasheed Hasan Khan has mentioned in his preface that Sheerani later corrected this information in a detailed article as after publication of his book, he found that the book *Zar e Jafri* was not authentic and it was writer's own created false narrative. So, we do not have actual authentic details about Jafar Zattali's birth and family. After completing education Meer Jafar Zattali looked for a job and was employed in the army of Prince Kaambakhsh, to whom he would criticize later in his poetry due to Jafar's opinion of him as characterless and incompetent ruler. Although Jafar Zattali was part of Prince Kaambakhsh army but he was never satisfied with his work and was in continuous stress to leave the job as

mentioned in “*Morchal Nama*”. *Haju-e-Shahzada Mohammed Kaambakhsh* begins with following shair;

زہے شاہ والا گہر کام بخش  
کہ غچی بز کرد پچی و پخش

*Zah e shah e wala gohar Kaam Bakhsh*  
*Keh Ghachchi Buz Kard Pichchi Pakhsh*

Jafar Zattali was never afraid of the ruler or commoner when it comes to his poetic satire. Jafar Zattali was a revolutionary poet who gave his life for the truth. We can have different views on his language of agitation but all of his poetry is not covered in similar tone. Most of his writings are in Persian but since at that time Urdu or *Lashakri* language or *Rekhta* was taking shape he used Urdu language with Persian language, like we find in Amir Khusru’s famous ghazal which is regarded as first Urdu ghazal.

ز حال مسکین مکن تغافل دورائے نیناں بنائے بتیاں  
کہ تاب بچراں ندارم اے جاں نہ لیہو کاہے لگائے چھتیاں

*Ze haal e miskeen makun taghaaful dora e nainaan banaaye batiyaan*  
*ke taab e hijraan nadaaram aye jaan na lehu kaahay lagaaye chhatiyaan*

We can say that Jafar Zattali was the pioneer of this art which was battered as vulgar, obscene, lewd, indecent and filthy. It is also discussed in Urdu circle that he was actually the poet who started Urdu poetry. Although Wali Dakni is considered by many Urdu scholars as the father of Urdu poetry, who was first to compose Urdu ghazals and compiled a Deewan.

Leaving this debate to Urdu scholars, if we analyze Jafar Zattali’s satire, it is pure dissent and agitation against the social degradation of the ruling class which resulted in the dilapidation of the society as a whole. Poetic dissent is now a norm in the globe or we may say that creativity finds a way to express its anger in a way that its impact is far reaching. When this creative agitation creates a fear among those who are responsible for the worst situation impacting masses, they try to silent that voice through different ways or at times they assassinate the whistleblower. In Pakistan we have witnessed a poet of Faiz Ahmad Faiz’s caliber or Habib Jalib or many more, were put behind the bars for speaking the truth. But their voices could not be stopped or ignored.

نثار میں تری گلیوں کے اے وطن کہ جہاں  
چلی ہے رسم کہ کوئی نہ سر اٹھا کے چلے  
جو کوئی چاہنے والا طواف کو نکلے  
نظر چرا کے چلے جسم و جاں بچا کے چلے  
(فیض احمد فیض)

*Nisaar main teri galiyon ke aey watan ke jahan  
Chali hai rasm ke koi na sar utha ke chale  
Jo koi chaahne wala tawaaf ko nikle  
Nazar chura ke chale jism o jaan bacha ke chale  
(Faiz Ahmad Faiz)*

دیپ جس کا محلات ہی میں چلے  
چند لوگوں کی خوشیوں کو لے کر چلے  
وہ جو سائے میں ہر مصلحت کے پلے  
ایسے دستور کو صبح بے نور کو  
میں نہیں مانتا میں نہیں جانتا  
(حبیب جالب)

*Deep jis ka mahlaat hi mein jale  
Chand logon ki khushiyon ko le kar chale  
Woh jo saaye mein har maslehat ke pale  
Aise dastoor ko subah be noor ko  
Mein nahin maanta main nahin jaanta  
(Habib Jalib)*

Poets, writers and creative authorities have always been there to reflect the mood of the masses and if we say, the feelings of the society. In a pathetic situation of their dependence on nobility, they still get some hidden words to narrate the sorry state of the world around them;

بنا ہے شاہ کا مصاحب پھرے بے اتراتا  
وگرنہ شہر میں غالب کی آبرو کیا ہے  
(مرزا غالب)

*Bana hai shaah ka musaahib phire hai itraata  
Wagarna shahar mein Ghalib ki aabroo kya hai  
(Mirza Ghalib)*

دلی میں آج بھیک بھی ملتی نہیں انہیں  
تھا کل تلک دماغ جنہیں تخت و تاج کا  
(میر تقی میر)

*Dilli mein aaj bheek bhi milti nahin unhein  
Tha kal talak dimaagh jinhein takht o taaj ka  
(Mir Taqi Mir)*

We find another lighter version of Jafar Zattali in later period in poetry of Chirkeen. His diwan has been published by National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language. Noted Urdu Litterateur Shamsh-ur-Rehman Farooqi has written preface of this Diwan. I have seen original Diwan at my maternal town as my mother is related to his descendant Muslim Bin Aqeel.

ہیں گو کے جہاں ڈھیر وہاں خرمن گل تھے  
کیا سبز قدم باغ میں آیا تھا خزاں کا

*Hain goo ke jahan dher wahan khirman-e-gul the  
Kya sabz qadam baagh mein aaya tha khizaan ka  
تونے آنا جو وہاں غنچہ دہن چھوڑ دیا  
گل پہ پیشاب کیا ہم نے چمن چھوڑ دیا  
Toone aana jo wahan ghuncha dahan chhord diya  
Gul pe pashaab kiya hum ne chaman chhord diya*

We find such voices of dissent in every society and time in every corner of the globe. If we currently see through the movie we can find another voice of dissent from Punjab, which was Amarjeet Singh Chamkeela. He gave back to the society what he was witnessing since his childhood in his melodious voice and sharp pen. Like in every period, Chamkeela's style of presenting naked truth was disliked by the forces who were being exposed and ultimately, he was assassinated along with his wife who was also his so called "partner in crime".

Jafar Zattali also had to pay with his life as he wrote against Emperor Farrukh Seer's atrocities and exposed him in the society. In Jafar Zattali's words, the time of Farrukh Seer (1713-1719) was the worst period as economic situation was in a doldrum. He introduced a coin with the following *shair* (Couplet) written on it;

سکہ زد از فضلِ حق بر سیم و زر  
بادشاہ بحر و بر فرخ سیر

*Sikka zad az fazl e Haq bar seem o zar*

*Badshah e bahr o bar Farrukh Seer*

Jafar Zattali took a shot at Farrukh Seer for writing this on the coin as he was aware of the burden on the poor masses and the society as a whole due to Farrukh Seer's failed economic policies. Jafar laughed at the *shair* (couplet) quoted on the coin with his '*tazmeen*' (composing a poem by adding lines to the couplets of a ghazal or *shair* of another poet);

سکہ زد برگندم و موٹھ و مٹر  
بادشاہ تسمہ کش فرخ سیر

*Sikka zad bar gandum o mooth o matar*

*Badshaah e tasmah kash Farrukh Seer*

Since Jafar Zattali was aware of the period he was living in and was not afraid of ruling class. He attacked the ruler with such a small change in the *Shahi* thumping of the chest on the coin. Changing *Seem-o-Zar* (Silver and Gold) with wheat, Bean and Peas and giving Badshah Farrukh Seer title of *Tasmah Kash* meaning a person who killed people with leather thread or a person who belongs to the lower strata of the society doing mean work but not a king. This fearless outburst ultimately led to Jafar Zattali's death but his work is still with us to tell the world that speaking the truth during adverse situation is an empire of those who are not feared by any empire of oppression, tyranny, cruelty, inhumanity, brutality or injustice.

If we see, when Urdu language was taking shape Jafar Zattali actually connected it with social causes. He was angry young man of his time like we see Amitabh Bachan in 1970s movies. If we look at Jafar Zattali's poetry we can say that he used his poetry as a medium to register his dissent and to express his agitation and fury at the downgrading of the ruling and elite class. Jafar Zattali was a witness of the fights between different Mughal brothers for the throne and back-room politics at that time resulting in back stabbing of each other.

ازیں تین بیٹے نیٹ نہ خلف  
پسر خود خلف با دگر نا تلف

*Az een teen betay nipat na khalaf*  
*Pisar khud khalaf ba digar na talaf*

There is a serious debate on Jafar Zattali's poetry and rule of Aurangzeb. Zattali never criticized Aurangzeb, in fact he diverted all criticism of Aurangzeb's rule towards administrators, govt servants, elite class and the princess during and after Aurangzeb's rule. Jafar Zattali wrote *qasida* (Eulogy, a long poem praising or commending someone) for Aurangzeb.

زہے دھاگ اورنگ شاہ بلی  
در اقلیم دکھن پڑی کھلبلی  
دریں پیر سالی و ضعف بدن  
مچائی دھما چوکڑی در دکھن  
برآورد عسکر بہ صد دھوم دھام  
کہ بل چل پڑی بر سر روم و شام  
(در تعریف اورنگ زیب)

*Zah e dhaak Aurang Shah Bali*  
*Dar aqleem e Dakhan padi khalbali*  
*Dar een peer saali wa zauf e badan*  
*Machaaai dhamma chokdi dar Dakhan*  
*Bar aaward askar ba sad dhoom dhaam*  
*Ke bal chal padi bar sar e Room o Shaam*  
(*Dar Tareef e Aurangzeb*)

In this long Eulogy of Aurangzeb, Jafar Zattali has painted him as the warrior who had won Bijapur and finished his enemy Sikandar Hasan. Jafar is totally different when it comes to praising Aurangzeb;

بہ بیجاپور آمد دھڑلا دین  
بر افواج اعدا جھڑلا کین

*Ba-Bijapur aamad dhadalla diyan*  
*Bar afwaj-e-aada jhadalla Kiyan*

جسى بھوم پر جائے جھنڈا کرے  
پکڑ مونڈ ، سب کو مرنڈا کرے  
بڑی دند ڈالی دکھن بیچ آئے  
سکندر حسن کو کیا سیخ پائے

*Jassi bhoom par jaaye jhanda kare  
Pakad moond, sab ko muranda kare  
Badi dund daali Dakhan beech aaye  
Sikandar Hasan ko kiya seekh paaye*

Jafar Zattali was fed up with sons of Aurangzeb. He was so critical of them that even in Aurangzeb's *qasida*, he did not ignore them and called them as *Nakhalaf* (disobedient, worthless son).

ازیں تین بیٹے نیٹ نا خلف  
پسر خود خلف با دگر نا تلف  
جہاں ہوئے ایسا کلچھن کپوت  
لگے خلق کے منہ کو کالک بیہوت

*Az een teen betay nipat na khalaf  
Pisar khud khalaf ba digar na talaf  
Jahan hoye aisa kalchhan kapoot  
Lage khalq ke munh ko kaalak babhoot*

In the closing of this *Qasida* of Aurangzeb, Jafar Zattali says that he had not seen a philanthropic like Aurangzeb;

پھرا میں بہت تیرتھ اور دوارکا  
نہ دیکھا دیا ونت تجھ سارکا  
بیجا جعفر! از مدح او لب ببند  
کہ سوزد دل حاسداں چوں سپند

*Phira mein bohat teerath aur Dwarka  
Na dekha dayavant tujh saarka  
Biya Jafar! az madh-e- oo lab baband  
Ke sozad dil-e-haasidaan choon sipand*

He even wrote a long *Marsia* (mournful poem, obituary) on Aurangzeb's death;

گلستان را بسوز از شعلہ غم  
مہیا کن بہ صحرا ساز ماتم  
کہ اورنگ زیب عالم گیر دیں دار  
کسستہ رشتہ ہستی بہ ناچار  
دریغا وائے وائے ہائے ہائے  
شہنشاہے، عجب گیتی پناہے

*Gulistaan ra ba sooz e az shola-e gham*

*Muhaiya kun ba sahra saaz e maatam*

*Ke Aurangzeb Aalamgir deen daar*

*Kusasta rishta e hasti ba naachaar*

*Dareeghaa waae waae haae haae*

*Shahansha e ajab geeti panaahe*

Going through his poetry we can say that Jafar Zattali had a soft corner for Aurangzeb. It means he was of the opinion that because of hard handedness of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Rule was surviving. But at the same time, he was not pleased with the Mughal princess and their way of life and he criticized them like anything. After Aurangzeb's death the way all the brothers fought for the crown, Jafar Zattali described this fighting in following couplets in the *marsia* of Aurangzeb;

رکت کے آنسوؤں جگ روؤتا ہے  
نہ میٹھی نیند کوئی سوؤتا ہے  
فلک رقااص بازی آن چناں کرد  
کہ ہر کس از خلل نقل مکان کرد  
صدائے توپ و بندوق است ہر سو  
بہ سر اسباب و صندوق است ہر سو  
کٹاکٹ و لٹالٹ است ہر سو  
جھٹا جھٹ و پھٹا پھٹ است ہر سو  
بہ ہر سو مار مارو دھاڑ دھاڑ است  
اچل چال و تبر، خنجر، کٹار است  
ازاں سو اعظم و زین سو معظم  
جھڑا جھڑ و دھڑا دھڑ ہر دو باہم

*Rukt ke aansuon jag routa hai*  
*Na meethi neend koi souta hai*  
*Falak raqqaas baazi aan chunaan kard*  
*Ke har kas az khalal naql e makaan kard*  
*Sadaay e top o bandooq ast har su*  
*Ba sar asbaab o sandooq ast har su*  
*Kata kat o lata latt ast har su*  
*Jhata jhatt o phata phatt ast har su*  
*Ba har su maar maaro dhaad dhaad ast*  
*achal chaal o tabar, khanjar, kataar ast*  
*Azaan so Aazam o zeen so Moazzam*  
*Jhada jhadd o dhada dhad har do baaham*

After the fights between the brothers Muhammed Muazzam got a chance to sit on the throne with the title of Bahadur Shah Awwal (First), He was also called as *Shah e Bekhabr* (ignorant king). Zattali wrote about his time as the worst period. He said if you cannot get watermelon or muskmelon, one piece from the cucumber is something to be thankful for, and if you wish to be a beggar or disgraced or humiliated, then job of Shah e Muazzam is something to be thankful or enough.

تریوز و خربزه نہ رسد گر ترا بہ دست  
 یک پھانک کھیرہ بالم غنیمت است  
 گر شیوہ گدائی و خواری طلب کنی  
 پس نوکری شاہ معظم غنیمت است  
*Tarbooz o kharbuza na rasad gar tura ba dast*  
*Yak phaank e kheera balam ghanimat ast*  
*Gar shewah e gadaai o khwaari talab kuni*  
*Pas nokri e Shah-e-Muazzam ghanimat ast*

Jafar Zattali in *Haju e Bahadur Shah Awwal* Muhammed Muazzam has targeted not only the king but all the elite classes, those in high ranks, rich class, everyone, where *radeef* of this nazm “*G\*nd Muravva Kheliye* becomes a symbol of loot of resources, tyranny, oppression, cruelty lawlessness, injustice and lack of governance.

پان کھا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 باغ جا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 بادشاہی ہے بہادر شاہ کی  
 بن بنا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 درمیان جوہری بازار و چوک  
 پان چبا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 حکم قاضی، محتسب زائل شدہ  
 دل بڑھا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 پیر سے اور باپ سے، اُستاد سے  
 چھپ چھپا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 جعفر، اب نوکری کا حظ نہیں  
 چت لگا کر گ\*ڈ مروا کھیلئے  
 (ہجو بہادر شاہ اول)

*Paan kha kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*Baagh jaa kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*Badshaahi hai Bahadur Shah ki*  
*Ban bana kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*Darmiyaan e Johri Bazaar o Chowk*  
*Paan chabaa kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*Hukm e Qazi, Muhtasib zaa'il shudah*  
*Dil bardha kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*Ustaad se peer se aur baap se,*  
*Chhup chhupa kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*Jafar ab naukri ka hazz nahin*  
*Chit lagaa kar g\*nd maravva kheliye*  
*(Haju e Bahadur Shah Awwal)*

He not only attacked princess but he was equally critical about the government servant and the degraded values and day to day life after Aurangzeb.

بشنو بیان نوکری، جب گانٹھ ہووے کھوکھری  
 تب بھول جاوے چوکڑی، یہ نوکری کا حظ ہے  
 ہر روز اٹھ مجرا کریں، درکار یک سو گر پڑیں  
 بے شرم ایسے لڑ پڑیں، یہ نوکری کا حظ ہے  
 مردم پریشاں یک دگر، کشتہ سپاہی در بدر  
 خوردہ بسے خون جگر، یہ نوکری کا حظ ہے  
 (قطعہ در بیان نوکری)

*Bashno bayaan e nokri, jab gaanth hovay khokhri  
 Tab bhool jaavay chaukdi, yeh nokri ka hazz hai  
 Har roz uth mujra karen, darkaar yak su gir paden  
 Be sharam aisay, lad paren, yeh nokri ka hazz hai  
 Mardum pareshan yak digar, kushta sipahi darbadar  
 Khurda basay khoon e jigar, yeh nokri ka hazz hai  
 (Qata Dar Bayan e Nokri)*

He was actually disheartened after seeing so much back stabbing for the throne and as he could sense the future of such bloodshed which ultimately resulted in weakening of the Mughal Empire. Jafar Zattali wrote many poems on such fights for the powers by all hook and crook and hence tarnishing the image of the society. He was dejected with the time he was living in. According to him it was a time without any sincerity, devotion, no love left between friends, blood relations, brothers, a time of lies, no truth, no shame, indiscretion, waywardness, backbiting, a period where everyone is afraid of oppressive tyrant.

گیا اخلاص عالم سے، عجب یہ دور آیا ہے  
 ڈریں سب خلق ظالم سے، عجب یہ دور آیا ہے  
 نہ یاروں میں رہی یاری، نہ بھائیوں میں وفاداری  
 محبت اٹھ گئی ساری، عجب یہ دور آیا ہے  
 نہ بولے راستی کوئی، عمر سب جھوٹ میں کھوئی  
 اتاری شرم کی لوئی، عجب یہ دور آیا ہے  
 دغل کرتے پھریں دُغلیے، چغل کرتے پھریں چغلیے  
 شغل کرتے پھریں شغلیے، عجب یہ دور آیا ہے  
 (دستور العمل در اختلاف زمانہ نابنجان)

*Gaya ikhlaas aalam se, ajab yeh daur aaya hai  
Daren sab khalq zaalam se, ajab yeh daur aaya hai  
Na yaaron mein rahi yaari, na bhaiyon mein wafa daari  
Mohabbat uth gayi saari, ajab yeh daur aaya hai  
Na bole raasti koi, umar sab jhoot mein khoi  
Utaari sharam ki loi, ajab yeh daur aaya hai  
Dughal karte phiren dughle, chughal karte phiren chughle  
Shughal karte phiren shughle, ajab yeh daur aaya hai  
(Dastoor-ul-amal dar ikhtilaf e zamana e nahanjaar)*

Jafar Zattali's prose are also equally critical of the society. *Guftugu Nama e Mulla* and other *Ruqas* (slips, notes) in prose are also worth reading to know the contemporary society. Many poems of Jafar Zattali have spiritual, religious and philosophical imaginations and thoughts. Therefore, his creativity is not only limited to the literary obscenity in his work as he is being branded.

## **Conclusion**

After going through Jafar Zattali's life and his works, we cannot just categorize him as a humorist or satirical poet. In Urdu Zattali means who speaks nonsense (foolish talks) but actually Jafar Zattali was a serious observer and a literary recorder of his time who was affected with whatever wrong was being done by the rulers, elites and the society as a whole. Since power to change for the betterment was falling with the rulers of his time, all his poetic attacks were targeted towards the ruling class. He was actually trying to guide them, to tell them to amend and make the changes needed the most but he was branded as enemy of the state and had to pay with his life for speaking the truth. Truth is, predictions of Jafar Zattali proved right and the down gradation in Mughal Rules ultimately paved way for the Britisher's to make inroads and eventually end of the Mughal Era and dawn of British Empire in India. The lesson is that such voices of dissent should never be ignored by any ruler if he or she wishes to remain in power for many more years.

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