

Democracy in the third world history essay



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Book is divided into eleven chapters with list of illustrations, maps, abbreviations, notes, bibliography and index. Several attempts have been made by different authors addressing this intricate and perennial issue of utmost importance, but Pinkneys work stand ahead of them as it not only covers different forms of democracy and various factors influencing it but also take historical and analytical perspectives side by side. Studying democracy in the Third world poses a distinct set of intellectual problems. The most fundamental, perhaps, is establishing some frame of reference for analyzing a familiar western idea in circumstances that lie outside the historical experience of the West. Rescuing discussions of comparative politics from the perils of ethnocentrism is no easy task, but Pinkney has achieved this task, however.

In this book, the author has tried to conceptualize the term democracy, as this is a main hurdle for accounting absence of democracy in the third world countries. Pinkney elucidates that democracy is somewhat more than mere holding periodic elections. Democracy enumerates the extent to which various governments are accountable and responsive to public opinion and allows requisite means of participation and delineation of civil society. Moreover, the extents to which sufficient constraints are provided against the arbitrary exercise of authority, not only in theory but also in practice.

The role played by civil society in democratization of state is of immense substance which has been given due weightage by Robert Pinkney. The 'transitology' of different governmental forms is no longer a matter only between governments and opposition but a common man has its own critical role to play which is amply justified by the author. Similarly, Pinkney rightly

sees that the impact of external strands has increased many folds in the present globalized world. Before the inception of the concept of globalization the ramifications of outward factors, like the collapse of communism was acknowledged but not to the extent as of the more subtle influences now-a-days.

Earlier democratic circles comprised of handful nations that have similarities in their culture, located in a defined geographical area and were more or less equal in material prosperity. However, the present wave of democratization in the twentieth-century witnessed nations at fluctuating levels of socio-economic development, with diversified cultures and historical circumstances spread all over the globe. Thus, for Pinkney accounting democracy and its evolution in the third world is a far more strenuous task than explaining this form of government in the developed nations.

In the first two chapters, the writer endeavoured to explore the nature and conditions necessary for the emergence of democracy. After explaining different kinds of democracy Pinkney lead to some kind of ' Liberal Democracy' which according to him is a necessary phase along the road to true democracy. Later, he describes some essential conditions obligatory for the materialization of liberal democracy.

Chapter three most importantly describes the independence of third world countries from the colonial rule, relations between colonizers and the indigenous people and the varied after-effects of colonial rule. Why some countries like New-Zealand and Canada headed towards liberal democracy after independence, while others gave path to authoritarianism, is a major

question that has been addressed by the author. The author has addressed this question on account of the depth of democratic commitment on part of some of the nationalists who might give less priority to democracy, if it clashes with other objectives. Chapter four discusses 'evolved' and 'planted' democracies. Evolved democracy is a product of interaction between varying forces in a society, while planted democracy as part of the colonial transfer of power. Pinkney discusses the undermining of these two democratic forms resting on economic, social, institutional, military and external variables.

The next chapter explicates relations between state and civil society. For centuries, literature has recognized the importance of public opinion as well as the will of ordinary individuals in shaping the nature and form of governments. In present day world, the right to vote has given this concept an actual demonstration. However, civil society is somewhat different from society but the boundaries are unclear and constantly shifting, yet the concept of civil society is invaluable in mapping the relations between governments and governed.

Chapter six gives an insight of some examples particularly that of India where democracy has survived continuously in spite of some unfavourable conditions and elucidates some of the reasons for these queer examples. The next two chapters discuss some external influences which affect the process of democratization of a state and illuminates that the developing nations learn from the nations already democratized, partially seeing their progress and partially due to the difficulties faced by them as a result of authoritarian rule. The democratization is not just due to economic uplift but

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a host of other factors like political, social and behavioral cultures had to be modified.

Chapter nine makes a cost benefit analysis of the process of democratic consolidation and looks retrospectively at the circumstances leading to democratization and at the ability of a nation to maintain this political change prospectively. The next chapter explores the variety of political institutions and behaviour in the three continents with major chunk of third world nations: Asia, Africa and Latin America. The concluding chapter presents a very grim picture of the situation stating that the third world has not successfully completed the process of democratization; rather there is only an apparent change in form of governments with no significant benefits delegated to the masses.

Most writers emphasize on preconditions that are mandatory for the evolution of democracy, but Pinkney scrutinized the skill of the political actors in metamorphosing authoritarianism to democracy. This approach allows the reader to understand that why democracy has failed to materialize in many ‘ developed’ nations like Singapore, even when they enjoy copious preconditions that would favour democracy. On the contrary, nations like Pakistan can be accounted for ailing foundations of democracy.

In contrast to other writers, Pinkney not only focused on different aspects and conditions of democracy but also took into consideration the ability of countries to sustain and deepen the roots of democracy, once they have obtained their objective. Here, Pakistan could be one of the best examples

which have been awarded various chances of democracy but somehow the democracy could not intensify itself and there were excessive military coups.

With regard to the style of writing, Pinkneys style in this very book is not only descriptive in its nature but also analytical in its essence. He substantiated his observations with tenable arguments as well as there is coherence in his ideas. He does not jump from chapter to chapter but develops a proper link between them. Although there are some jargons used in the book but there is clarity of thought which is clearly depicted in his arguments.

The present (second) edition of book covers many issues not dealt in the first edition. However, some lacunas are there, as the writer does not mention anything about the historical evolution of democracy in developing nations and obviously it is difficult to understand the present scenario of politics in any nation without prior knowledge of its historical developments. Moreover, in chapter six he gave example of India, thus over-generalizing the issue, as India is a vast country with various forces at work. Also, Pinkney could not account for the presence of communism in many giants of the world like China, although they are progressing very rapidly in the fields of education, technology and economy. Finally, instead of giving valuable recommendations for democratization of states he presented a grim picture of the future, although many of the third world states have achieved the venerable status of democracy and they certainly need some time to develop such political culture there.

Notwithstanding, this is a well written research monograph having over 35 pages dedicated to appendices, notes and references provided with a vast

array of quantitative, qualitative and pictorial data aimed to bring understanding about the concept of democracy in the developing world. It can be recommended to political research scholars to know the reasons why democracy has not flourished well in the third world but with the notion that the philosophy of politics is subject to change with region and time and requires continuous research.