BOOK REVIEW

Democracy Displaced in Pakistan: Case History of Disasters of Social Pollution, Mirza Arshad Ali Beg (PhD), published by Research and Development Publications, Karachi, 1998. pp. i—xviii, 376. Price Rs. 450.00

Mirza Arshad Ali Beg is a prolific writer on environmental issues. Though his specialities are on water pollution, his technical skills are ranging from water purification to herbal medicines. He has written many articles on chemical, physical and environmental sciences. He has been working on several positions in PCSIR laboratories, Pakistan, since many years and has completed several assignments for the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and IUCN---the world conservation union. The book under review is the second book of the author on the same topic in which he thoroughly discusses the social malaise of Pakistan and its remedies.

There is a rising awareness in Pakistan that our society has been polluted to a great extent at all the levels and the damaged social structure has reached to a point where it seems irredeemable. The book under review is a good attempt on this topic. The facts and information provided in the book are based upon the personal observation of the author, during the tenure of his service in PCSIR laboratories, Pakistan, where working on different position, provided him an opportunity to closely observe the different problems of society; e.g. environmental or social problems, the gap between the policy making and policy implementation or the loopholes in the governmental and social infrastructure. Through these observations, author first dealt with scientific and technological problems then he moves on environmental issue; on which he wrote for several years in different journals, magazines and periodicals. His research reveals the causes of environmental problems which he named "Social Pollution". He finds a close analogy between the factors responsible for social and environmental degradation then consequently turned his focus to social pollution. He used his scientific and analytical skills to address the social issues and supported his thesis with quantitative data and scientifically justified personal observation.

While going through the analysis and examination of all the issues, presented in the book the author got fully convinced with his own hypothesis of "the prevalence of munafiqat (hypocrisy)" in all the fields of the country, which he has mentioned in his first book i.e. "New Dimensions in Sociology: A phisico- Chemical Approach to Human Behaviour," as the root cause of deterioration of the social values and causing social pollution in the country. To support his thesis, author cites many incidents and events in the book, and exposes those who could have responsible for the disaster just because of their hypocrisy and who could have stopped the disaster to be happened. This book is also an attempt to signify the events and policies that brought the existing catastrophe of the administration and the economy of the country. According to him, it was just the uncontrolled hunger for wealth

and lust for power of few people that has accelerated the pace of social pollution with a highest rate to the pinnacles. This ultimately contributed to the displacement of the democracy in Pakistan. The author holds the feudalism exclusively responsible for all the evils and malaise of the country and indicated the network through which feudal system maneuvers and causes the social pollution to be spread. This network, according to him consists of the members of civil and military bureaucracy and political and religious leaders, at various levels of the government and society. The analysis of the events given in the book suggests that the existing malaise of the country and social pollution is not the result of overnight maneuvering; rather it's the outcome of a gradual socio- economic degeneration process which has enormously contributed to the miseries of the society.

In the different chapters of the book under review, author describes political, social and economic maladies with historical background and rational explanation, and being a physical scientist, has termed them as "social Pollution". Like any scientific study of chemical or environmental pollution, he has conducted the study of social pollution in Pakistan in a very scientific manner. He has discussed the key pollutants, (i.e. feudal system, military and civil bureaucracy, greedy political and religious leaders etc.), core causes of the pollution (e.g. poverty, class structure, illiteracy, urbanization, mismanagement of resources etc.) and also has identified the major entities like bureaucracy, banks, agricultural and corporate sector as the most polluted institutions which are playing the leading role in increasing the level of social pollution in the country.

In this book, the author attempts to trace the history of social pollution and displacement of democracy in Pakistan to the early days of the country, when soon after the independence, the democratic infrastructure could not be built properly and feudalism began to set its foot in all the fields and institutions. Even during the life of Quaid-e- Azam, the feudals and the landlords of the country had started to spread their tentacles to grab the country's power and resources in their strong clutches. After the demise of the two stalwarts of the freedom movement and our country viz., Quaid-e- Azam and Quaid-e- Millat Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan totally fell into prey to the feudal system, which contributed enormously to the social pollution of the society. The author argues that this pollution further got augmented in the following years when the civil and military bureaucracy took the complete control over the country. Many different people and forms of the government were experienced in our country but with every governance system the standard of democracy deteriorated and the level of social pollution further amplified. All the people who came in power as executives, claimed to form a true democratic society but in reality they further hindered the way of democratic process. Furthermore they all have a common slogan of "*maximum good for maximum people*" but in reality this "maximum good" is for "maximum people" only from civil and military bureaucracy. The author asserts that we have intermittent martial law regimes in Pakistan

which ultimately sabotaged the democratic infrastructure and accelerated the momentum of social and political deterioration of the society. Therefore, before setting its feet in the ground, democracy was displaced to a larger magnitude. By making a bird's eye view of the history of the governance system in Pakistan, one counters an irony that all the military dictators boasted of and pretended to be the democratic rulers, whereas all the democratic leaders who came in power with people's vote in general election acted in a dictatorial manner. This argument can be proved by citing the examples of Ayub Khan's basic democracies system, Yahya Khan's general election of 1971 or Musharraf's devolution plan, similarly on the other hand, by citing the examples of Z.A. Bhutto's, Benazir Bhutto's or Nawaz Sharif's regimes during which it is quite evident that how these democratic and popular leaders of masses acted in a highly dictatorial manner and thus finally lost their power to military coups and non-democratic sources got firmly grounded.

Furthermore, the author in an attempt to reveal the factors responsible for financial corruption holds that while grabbing the social and political powers in their hands the feudals of Pakistan also turned their attention towards the financial institutions of the country in order to control the economy to maximize their profits and to capitalize their wealth. The author identifies that major transformation in the financial structures was brought in by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)'s government in early seventies (1970s), in which it introduced the PPP's own brand of socialism and consequently with its own vision, generated the "*cross-breeds of socialism and capitalism*". The corporate sector and financial institutions further got corrupted during Zia regime, whose policies grossly displaced the democracy. After Zia-ul-Haq during the successive governments of Benazir and Nawaz Sharif and more after them the democracy and economy of Pakistan further derailed from the path of stability and development.

To conclude the book the author holds that the feudal system interalia is mainly responsible for the degeneration of the economy and social structure of the society. In this book he very comprehensively mentions that how the feudal lords and civil and military bureaucracy formed a nexus in order to assure the "maximum good" only for each other even by playing politics in agricultural sector, on crops or on food only at the cost of common people.

The book under review is not a scholarly piece of writing; neither is it claimed by the author to be. It's just the collection of the personal observation, experiences and ideas or analysis of the events by the author, which he has supported with the material mainly taken from newspaper, journals, magazines and periodicals. Neither a single primary source of the topic nor any secondary source material or academic books are consulted to write this book. For example the book written by G.W. Chaudhry titled: "*Democracy in Pakistan*" (Dacca, 1963) or "*The Idea of Pakistan*" by Stephen P. Cohen or "*Pakistan: The Enigma of Political Development*" by Lawrence Ziring, could have been consulted for this book as these books

provide a very comprehensive and well researched data and analysis on the same topic. However some reference books like of *Dr. I.H. Qureshi's "Struggle for Pakistan"* and *"The Beginning & the End--- Pakistan 1969-1971"*, by *Herbert Feldman*, are used and mentioned in the present book. Though the scholarly books of academic worth, like primary and secondary sources are not used in writing this book, the author has provided some relevant data and facts and figures taken from some original documents(as quoted by the author) to supplement his analysis but no proper technical referencing is given, which undermines the academic worth of the book. Furthermore, the contents of the book though are in accordance with the title of the book, the required harmony is lacking among them. Every chapter has its own individual importance but the connectivity of the chapters is somehow missing.

The overall nature of the book is much narrative rather than analytical. The author has reported events and has made an explanation or interpretation of those events. Moreover, on the basis of these interpretations he has constructed his own ideas.

As a whole, this book is a commendable effort to raise the issue of social pollution and displacement of democracy. The author, though does not formally belong to the discipline of social sciences, he has made a laudable try not only to diagnose the problems but also by suggesting and recommending the possible remedies with an objective approach and lucid language. These remedial approaches can be the useful guidelines for the policy makers or the decision making authorities as the author has focused on the policy making and planning of the government.

With all these characteristics this can be a good reference book and can be recommended to the people and especially to the students of social sciences, e.g. history, sociology, economics and management etc.

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