

**Ayesha Jalal: *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1995.
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Reviewed by

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This book is written by Ayesha Jalal who is a renowned professor of History at Tufts University and associated with many institutions like Columbia University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Harvard University and many others. Jalal's area of specialization is South Asia. She has authored many books like, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, published in 1994. Likewise, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, published in 2014. Similarly, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, published in 2004 and many more books has been written by the same author.

Considering that South Asian countries India, Pakistan and Bangladesh had the same colonial legacy but how former went on the line of democracy and both latter countries stuck on the path of authoritarianism. In introductory paragraph Jalal raised the question that despite the different forms of governments in these countries how the regional versus central, religious versus sectarian and caste, culture and linguistic differences have paved the same threat to each of the state's central government. Broadly speaking, as per Jalal, "monolithic state ideologies in South Asia have been designed primarily to legitimize control over diverse local and regional social formation." (p.245). Additionally, this book is a comparative study rather differential study, which has analyzed South Asian countries in the prism of historical development from colonial India rather in the form of nationalism or nation state. Although she

tactfully describes the modern nation state role in pre-colonial era for comparative studies of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In other words, this study has synthesized the historical and conceptualize concept of partition which has changed the post-colonial stated of South Asia in the form of political, social and economic perspective.

According to Jalal, colonial legacy of British India occupied the central theme of post- independent South Asian countries. Colonial Indian government was built in the form of unitary state of government. In this respect Congress candidly followed the British legacy of centralism in governmental affairs after the post-independence, while Muslim league throughout its politics rejected the unitary state of government and its politics mainly dependent on the federal form of government. To illustrate this point, Muhammad Aslam in book *Islam and Democracy*(edited) pointed out that Lahore Resolution of 1940 adopted the federal form of government where all the federating units of future Pakistan would be autonomous in their affairs. Similarly, Sindh Assembly also voted for the making of Pakistan in March 1943, which also passed the resolution on the appearances of the autonomous status for the province. Broadly speaking, Jalal rightly argued that after the curving of Pakistan in 1947, how the leadership of Pakistan deviated its previous stance and adopted the unitary form of government in decision making.

Similarly, Jalal argued from administrative legacy to ideological legacy and from economic to strategic legacies and colonial bureaucratic style of government and centralization were mainly opted by the post independent countries India and Pakistan from colonial rule. To support this argument, she argued both countries opted the retain the existing colonial all-India services and secularism of congress and communalism of Muslim League, are the main ideological legacies of colonial India and Pakistan. (p.25).

Congress and Muslim league's politics and social base were diametrically opposite to each other, as former believe in territorial (Indian) nationalism and latter believe in ideological (communal) nationalism. Likewise, congress acquired social base and mass following from 1920s whereas Muslim league

got popularity in the last decade of independence. The interesting fact is that, those areas which later became the part of Pakistan, Muslim League had very narrow political following and support. Broadly speaking, today, where Pakistan existed, these areas never demanded for the independent country. The author, rightly pointed out that how in the newly created state of Pakistan civilian bureaucrats and military men deep grounded their comfortable positions. further, she pointed out enormous reasons that how bureaucratic and military institution superseded the political institution in driving the country. Similarly, she pointed out myriad reason for Congress hold in the country. As Jalal pointed out that politicians in Pakistan had little social base, resultantly, unable to stand their ground against the civil servants trained in the tradition of colonial bureaucratic authoritarianism. She further pointed out that outbreak of Kashmir war gave more impetus to centralize the government. Arguing about the federal and federating units of Pakistan, she narrated that owing to external threat and meager resources, central government take away the provincial resources that resulted the lasting impacts on the central-provinces relations and dominances of military and civilian bureaucracy on the political fortune of the Pakistan. Likewise, Jalal analyzed the civilian politician's grip on the affairs of India. Historically speaking, she pointed out that long lasting of Nehru's grip on the Indian politics gave India the dominant role and mitigated the army role in the affairs of India. Further, she pointed out that regular conduct of elections in India raised the power of politicians on bureaucrats and army personals. However, sporadic elections in Pakistan gave a substantial status to army and civilian bureaucrats while downgrade the role of politicians.

While pointed out the successful strategies of Indian politicians, she rightly argued that there is no doubt that unlike Muslim League Congress leadership took steps to down-grade the army's social and political profile like in 1955 the office of commander-in-chief of the defense forces was abolished, Indian constitution put chief of army staff in twenty five place even behind the state cabinet ministers, after 1964 tenure of

chief of arms was reduced to three years with no further extension and army's budget placed under the defense ministry. As per Jalal, these steps were great to reduce the army role to just save the borders but she scrutinized, "pre-existing unitary central apparatus, a formidable defense establishment with adequate resources and geographical expense so vast as to make the coordination of a military takeover highly improbable in India." (p 43).

As she dealt with the imbalance between the two domains made one champion of democracy and other one is as the military dominated state. Jalal, tactfully compare the 1970 era of populism of Bhutto, Indra and Mujeeb. She concluded her argument that how before the end of decade the era of populism withered away but geared and heighten the authoritarian tendencies in future course of history in three countries as Mrs. Gandhi's overt authoritarianism downgrade the Congress role in 1977 elections. In Pakistan and Bangladesh how overt authoritarianism of Bhutto and Mujeeb brought military in both countries after the end of populism era.

Moreover, she analyzed the south Asian countries' political economy of development in the context of interplay of domestic, regional and international factors and rightly pointed out the monolithic state ideologies in South Asia has been designed primarily to legitimize control over diverse local and regional social formation. As it seen in India and Pakistan and Bangladesh that how regional dissidence movement challenged the state's central authority. To illustrate this point, occupied Kashmir, eastern Punjab and United Liberation of Assam in India while in Pakistan, non-Punjabi provinces like Sindh, Baluchistan and KPK and in Bangladesh Chakma Buddhists in the hill tracts of Chittagong raised the slogan of separation.

Jalal's real message through this book is that historically developed state structure(authoritarianism) in South Asia along with ethnic division are the real driver of South Asian countries. The worth noting factor is that she blames causes of failure of Pakistan's failed democracy and authoritarianism on the historical development but rather future state agents need to be flame equally for the failed democratic system. Undoubtedly, this book is based on objective analysis by

writer. This is a plausible comparative and analytical study. This comparative study of South Asia on historical account, is incredible fruit of thought for researchers, students and general readers equally. The language and structure used to develop the argument, is not lucid as it seems that she used complicated sentences and most unfamiliar words that can really possess great difficulty while reading the text. The principle strength of this book under review is that it is a blend the realm of the empirical and the conceptual to bridge the gap between the historian and political scientist.