

Pradip N. Khandwalla. *Revitalising the State: A Menu of Options.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999. Indian Rs 250.00. 304 pages.

In recent years discussions about the role of the state have been intense. Some argue in favour of an increased role of the state in the life of the people; others argue for a lesser and diminished role. Whatever the arguments, it is generally felt that the role of the state has been de-emphasised in recent years thereby making it unable to sustain the economic well-being of the people. This book, by presenting a number of suggestions, is an attempt to reinvigorate the state to make it more in tune with the requirements of the people.

Using history as a guide, the author identifies four main models of the state that have developed in the twentieth century. These can be categorised as (i) the interventionist welfare state; (ii) the developmental state; (iii) the 'reinvented' entrepreneurial state, and (iv) the World Bank model of the humane market-friendly state. After categorising these different types of states he proceeds to analyse the reasons behind the decay of the state. These include their growing size and complexity, corruption, poor governance, weak political structures etc. to mention a few. At the same time, he also examines some success stories from the Commonwealth and East Asian countries. These include Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore to name a few. From these success stories the author puts forward what, in his view, are steps aimed at revitalising the state, particularly in developing countries.

Four solutions are offered. The first deals with the creation of a greater number of autonomous units that are more effective in dealing with peoples' problems. In other words, a devolution of administrative and other powers down to the local level. The second solution, or option, is to downsize the state or government through a policy of selective privatisation and deregulation. The third solution aims at promoting direct democracy, fair representation, government stability and the protection of civil rights of the people. The fourth solution proposed is to make the rulers accountable. All these options are well known and have been extensively discussed in the literature relating to the role of the state. The author then applies these options dealing with the revitalisation of the state to India, where, despite many shortcomings, progress has also been made.

The book is well written and its central message is clear—that the role of the state has evolved over time. However, there is a static nature to the author's analysis—he appears to ignore the fact that societies make up states and as societies change so do states, and change is dynamic. Issues that are important today may become irrelevant tomorrow. This assumes even more importance in the modern—day world where far-reaching developments in the global economy have us constantly asking fundamental questions about the role of the state/government. These changes are so basic as to affect traditional power structures within countries as well as between countries. The rise of the multinational company also has its own implications for the economic sovereignty of nations. Furthermore, it is quite conceivable that in the not too distant future, national

economies would have become so integrated into the world economy, that the role/power of the nation state may well be significantly reduced in domestic affairs thereby unable to affect domestic policy. Nevertheless, this book summarises the issues raised succinctly and concisely. The language used is easily accessible to the general reader. The index at the back of the book is welcome as it provides an easy guide to the committed reader.

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