

BOOK REVIEWS

Lancy Lobo and Jayesh Shah, eds., *Democracy in India: Current Debates and Emerging Challenges*, Delhi: Primus Books, 2017. pp. 197. ISBN: 978-93-84082-94-9

For over the past several decades, India, academically as well as popularly, has worked out and put together a rich and meaningful discourse on democracy, both in terms of the procedural aspects as well as substantive measures. Every reading of Indian politics, and sometimes of the economy and the social-cultural setups build on and work through the idea of democracy. Perhaps, it would not be entirely incorrect to suggest that almost every social scientist has implicated the analysis or study of democracy in their understanding of India. And this is not surprising, as democracy was and continues to be the bedrock upon which most, if not all, our institutions and constitutional guarantees have been established, legitimized and evaluated.

Contributing to the discourse on democracy in India are such works as Nirja Gopal Jayal's *Democracy in India*; Atul Kohli's *The Success of India's Democracy*, Thomas Blom Hansen's *The Saffron Wave*; Ramchandra Guh's *India After Gandhi*; Suhas Palshikar's *Indian Democracy*; Pratap Bhanu Mehta's, *The Burden of Democracy*; Ashutosh Varshney's *Battle Half Won: India's Improbable Democracy* and Bhikhu Parekh's, *Debating India. Democracy in India: Current Debates and Emerging Challenges*, edited by Lancy Lobo and Jayesh Shah, is indeed a valuable contribution to this ongoing discourse, filling in lacunae as well as introducing nuanced arguments. *Democracy in India* is conceptually and thematically divided into three distinct yet interrelated sections, which are, first, theory and practice, concerned with understanding and analyzing the idea and politics of democracy in India; second, the judiciary and Indian democracy, concerned with analyzing the at once contentious yet concurring relationship between the judiciary and the project and process of democracy; and third, new actors, issues and challenges, which focus on the politics and position of the civil and political society in the progress of democracy in India.

The first section, which focuses on the theory and practice of democracy, carries some rather interesting and academically provocative articles. Harihar Bhattacharya, while "debating democracy", underscores the manner in which democracy has evolved as the conceptual/political grid within which all other ideals and guarantees are debated. An important contribution is the link he draws between authoritarianism and democracy, whereby democratic welfare and repressive laws go hand in hand; or more importantly preventive detention and security claims are invoked simultaneously; and perhaps more acceptably, the claims of building a federation coincide with a centralized and centralizing state. Bhattacharya eloquently elaborates on the manner in which democracy's success has not only been conflated with, but has been presented as state's

