



Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices

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This volume examines how Indian democracy has survived the challenges posed by widespread illiteracy, poverty, secessionism and communalism—problems that have felled the fledgling democratic institutions of so many post-colonial societies. The contributors locate the reason for the resilience of Indian democracy in its history—that it was the product of a gradual evolution and not of a sudden imposition from above.

The essays in the volume, however, show that despite having stood the test of time, Indian democracy is not a democracy in any substantive sense. The economic policies of successive governments since 1985 have been basically anti-people; rampant casteism, communalism, and the use of money and muscle power have infiltrated the body politic. Mass mobilization has been powered by hate, making it a feature more typical of a nascent neo-fascist state than of a democracy. The `substantialization of democracy'—proper representation and people's participation in decision making—still remains a distant ideal.

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