

## Book Reviews

Sharma, R. (2019). *Democracy on the Road*. New Delhi, India: Penguin  
280 Pages.

Indian democracy is one of the largest and diverse in the world, which makes it more complex in nature. Elections in India are the most celebrated festival of democracy since independence. Over the years, the election process has changed, many leaders have elected and rejected, but an important thing which remained the same is the voters participation in the elections. The electoral system has been an important mechanism behind the success of the democratic regime in India. This book provides the understanding of changes evolved in Indian polls in the late 90s. It starts with the return of Shri A.B Vajpayee in 1998 and the loss of NDA in 2004. Rise of UPA and its fall in 2014 election due to the emergence of Modi wave has been dealt with in the text. On the other hand, it covers state polls. Caste alliances and complex electoral in U.P, Bihar and anti-incumbency in Rajasthan are the part of the discussion in the text. Author and his team covered the ground realities and behaviour of Indian voters through interviews and surveys conducted across the country. A glimpse of interviews and conversations with political leaders like Narendra Modi, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Mayawati, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar are providing the leader's insights about electoral behaviour. The way political parties in India tries to connect with diverse sections of voters is an important part of the analysis in the writing of the author. According to Mr Sharma, many factors play an important role in Indian elections but caste is the most important one. Caste realities are still dominating the Indian elections along with factors like religion, money spending,

development, price rise, corruption and welfarism. Development and performance of government sometimes suffer in front of caste and religious issues.

Diversity in India does not allow one party to dominate the whole country which provides space for the coalition and alliance politics in India. Realities of sub-national identities can be seen as major national parties such as the BJP and INC do not enjoy their hold in all the parts of the country. These parties do not enjoy the large support in South India as they enjoy in North India. Politics in South India is dominated by the issues of language and identity. Fear of domination of Hindi language is very sensitive in the South, as regional parties exploit these issues to manage their support base in the South. In the state elections voter think about the local issues rather than national issues. In the view of Ruchir Sharma, 2014 election was won by BJP due to the strong leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi as a large section of young voter found him more deserving candidate than Rahul Gandhi. Author do not find difficult competition for Mr. Modi in coming years due to weak opposition. Voters are thinking of Lok Sabha election in presidential terms as they are voting for Mr. Modi more than the BJP. Concluding remark of the writer shows India is a thriving democracy because the electoral process in India doesn't get influence from external factors. Ruchir Sharma also appreciates the maturity of opposition in handling defeat. It is an appreciating attempt to understand the changing nature of electoral process of India.

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