



Radical Democracy in Modern Indian Political Thought

Between the 1910s and the 1970s, an eclectic group of Indian thinkers, constitutional reformers, and political activists articulated a theory of robustly democratic, participatory popular sovereignty. Taking parliamentary government and the modern nation-state to be prone to corruption, these thinkers advocated for ambitious federalist projects of popular government as alternatives to liberal, representative democracy. *Radical Democracy in Modern Indian Political Thought* is the first study of this countertradition of democratic politics in South Asia. Examining well-known historical figures such as Dadabhai Naoroji, M. K. Gandhi, and M. N. Roy, alongside long-neglected thinkers from the Indian socialist movement, Tejas Parasher illuminates the diversity of political futures imagined at the end of the British Empire in South Asia. This book reframes the history of twentieth-century anti-colonialism in novel terms – as a contest over the nature of modern political representation – and pushes readers to rethink accepted understandings of democracy today.

TEJAS PARASHER is Assistant Professor of Political Theory at the University of California, Los Angeles. He received his PhD from the University of Chicago in 2019 and was formerly Junior Research Fellow in Political Thought and Intellectual History at King's College, University of Cambridge.

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To the memory of my grandmother, Radhika Sharma

This is real democracy. Otherwise that kind of representative government which consists in a mere parliament of intermediaries or middlemen, ‘representing’ the people because they manage to get themselves elected, is only a disguised oligarchy. There the representatives soon grow into a bourgeoisie or bosses or a group of labor *sardars* [lords], they form rings and caucuses, with vested interests. The real people – the millions in the fields, factories, and workshops – are deprived of all share and voice in the government – even universal adult suffrage cannot prevent this, for the middlemen or intermediary representatives manage the whole show in their own interests.

—*The Modern Review* (August 1923)

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