relationship between caste, region, religion, language on one side and political orientations and actions of the society on the other side. The authors seem to agree that communal aspirations are historically grounded, nonetheless, communal conflicts are the result of capitalism and elite pluralism. Several rich cases fall under the third category of case studies. Alam on Orissa politics, Malik on Akali Party, Wood on Gujarat politics and Vora, Palshikar and Bhoite on Maharashtra politics provide an insightful analysis of how institutions and culture may mix at the micro level to shape and define political decisions. Last, articles in the fourth category assess the performance of state actions within the given context of elite pluralism, changing class formation, caste politics, and mass alienation. Wood on affirmative action, Vajpeyi on technology, and Whitehead on feminist issues offer this "output" side of the Indian politics. It is interesting to observe how public policies have been skillfully used to distribute the present-day rewards of growth and development on the traditional social (mostly caste) lines.

In general, the message of these noted authors is one: Indian politics can not be understood in separation from the nation's multi-layered social culture. The idea that the two—state and society—coexist and that they influence each other is evident in every essay. The book is unique and should be extremely valuable for those who wish to find answers to the question of "why is it happening?" rather than simply "what is happening?"

The book does not offer any organizational theme. The essays are arranged in no particular order and, therefore, make it difficult for the reader to find smooth transition from one aspect to another. The book is clearly for advanced readers who are assumed to have basic understanding of the prevailing political and social structures in India. If one can ignore the cosmetic presentation of the material (citation styles, for instance, differ from one essay to another), it makes a delightful reading. Readers may, however, feel disappointed when being engrossed in the unfolding drama of a phenomenon, such as the bureaucracy or a party, they are left without much discussion on the latest developments. Many tables, for instance, offer data trends for only until 1980 and most discussions do not go beyond the Rajiv regime. Nonetheless, this does not in any way undermine the usefulness of the book, because the analyses are strong for whatever period they are meant to reflect. Hopefully, this will create enough desire and curiosity in the readers to look forward to more work from same authors in future.

In brief, the book is well-suited for scholars interested in Indian politics per se and in Third World politics in general. Undoubtedly, it can serve well in graduate seminars where it can provide excellent discussion opportunities.

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Capturing one's attention from beginning to end, this monograph abounds in specificity and humor springing from intimacy with a text and its devotees. It should be read by all who care about living religious texts—how they come alive for adherents, how they provide livelihood and spiritual sustenance for religious specialists and laypeople, and how they present the lives of deities as mirror for action,
Lutgendorf focuses on the sixteenth-century Rāmacaritmanas [henceforth Mānas] by Tulsidās, a Hindi telling of the story of Rām. Although this text remains one of the most popular Rāmāyana texts in North India, little previous scholarship exists about the precise nature and characteristics of its popularity. Lutgendorf shows the range of its recitation, exposition, and artistic appropriation as people internalize it in different formats, hear it celebrated in multiple venues, view it within variously conceived dramatic frames, and align it with diverse political ideas and particular social classes.

Lutgendorf's study stands as a sophisticated model of how popular religious texts are presented to audiences in modern India, because he incorporates insights from various research methodologies. His foundation is textual; he grounds his analysis in the verses of the Mānas. Yet because Lutgendorf draws his working procedures from the field of performance studies, he does not depend upon Western notions of the "complete" story (beginning, middle, and end). Instead, he illustrates how the text emerges in discrete and individualized units: reciters divide it into daily doses, expounders spend an evening drawing out the myriad meanings of a single verse, and hours of dramatic preparation culminate in a four minute enactment of a single scene. Also, by situating his research within the field of the social history of North India during the last two centuries, Lutgendorf shows how the performance of the text became transformed in relation to colonialism, peasant resistance, and social mobility.

Notable achievements characterize Lutgendorf's analysis. First, he insightfully sets out the semantic and cultural nuances of key indigenous terms for devotional activities. For example, he shows how kathā (literally, 'story') must be understood in light of the bhakti assumption that storytelling is one of the most fruitful ways to cultivate love for God (p. 115). Similarly, he explains the līla of Rām not as an opportunity to watch a play, but as a chance to be a privileged participant in a drama of the eternal acts of the Lord (p. 250). Second, Lutgendorf attends to the diversity within performance genres with precision and admirable perseverance. For example, after cataloging the numerous ritual, economic, and performance features of conventional kinds of Mānas exposition, he tells of a group of dedicated devotees who have studied and argued about the Mānas for years on their daily railroad commute into work. Similarly, he juxtaposes his analysis of the highly publicized, well-attended, and hierarchically structured festivals featuring famous expounders of the Mānas with a discussion of a tiny intercaste group of devotees who meet regularly to sing verses from the Mānas interspersed with seasonally appropriate folksongs. Third, Lutgendorf takes into account the effect of changing technology on the development of the traditions he studies. His careful research on the publication history of inexpensive editions of the Mānas, for example, illuminates changes in religious reading habits of an increasingly literate populace. Fourth, his documentation of conflicting Mānas interpretation among different kinds of expounders belies fundamentalist claims about a single correct way to understand the text. Most impressive is his analysis of the ways that an interpreter's bhāv, literally 'feeling' but here denoting a mode of interpretation, can shape the meaning of a particular passage. Fifth, Lutgendorf pays attention to the effect of diverse and changing kinds of patronage on Mānas performance: his accounts of the shift from royal to urban mercantile patronage of textual enactments and his data about the economics of neighborhood Mānas festivals demonstrate how finances affect the duration, shape, and tone of religious performances.

"The Art of Mānas-Kathā" (chapter four) best exemplifies Lutgendorf's endeavor to give those unfamiliar with Mānas performances the opportunity to understand and