



Why democracy deepens: political information and decentralisation in India

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management of family business as an art. The book, as the title suggests, is organised around the '10 Commandments' that the author argues as vital for the success of any family business.

At the heart of this work lies the author's note on the 'five D's to disaster' (xxxviii) as a counterexample, which provides an interesting model to analyse the major challenges family businesses face. The author uses several case studies, business models and anecdotes to show the significance of lessons drawn from family feuds (xxx) and failed family endeavours in the shaping of family business empires. He then uses them as pointers to good business practices. The caselets and templates used in the book serve as a guide for business families in distress. The book's commandments are also useful suggestions as to how to keep a business alive over generations. The 10 chapters supply a wide range of recommendations: from the professional behaviour needed in family business matters, to framing a business chart that supports an appetite for risk and makes the company adapt to changes when demanded by the circumstances. Some of the key discussions revolve around 'value of trusteeship' (148) for the maintenance of family businesses; philanthropy as a route to build family reputation or brand value (152); adopting flexible strategies for business manoeuvres, etc.

The book situates the paradoxes of family business through the 'life cycle theory' (viii) wherein the exploration of rise, fall and sustenance of a family business makes for a compelling read. The chapters provide an understanding of what results in the success or failure of a family business. The author manages to explain the intricacies involved in the building of businesses as institutions that requires a strategic approach and a plan for succession. In the author's view attributes like 'frankness', 'flexibility' and 'far-sightedness' balance out the 'five D's to disaster' (6) mentioned above.

This work has clearly grown out of the author's professional engagement – both in academia and as an advisor to business families. The usage of self-referential language by the author, including the use of the first person singular, and the writing style overshadows the academic rigour of this work. The insightful analysis of chapter one 'To Communicate and Build Trust', is delivered with a very casual language, and could have benefited instead from a stronger theoretical framework. Similarly, the discussion on 'meaning of togetherness at different levels' (154) in chapter 10 unpacks interesting points but lacks a clearly laid-out argument.

The book fleetingly mentions the emerging role of daughters and women in male-centric family business, particularly in the section that discusses the challenges of succession in business families. However, it fails to do justice to the topic by keeping analysis at a superficial level. Even admitting that a book can only cover a few aspects of a topic, we note the absence of a chapter devoted to apprehending the problem from a gender angle. This book is no contribution to theory building, but it will resonate well with readers who are interested in a jargon-free overview of interesting case studies of Indian business families.

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Why democracy deepens: political information and decentralisation in India, by Anoop Sadanadan, Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2017, ix + 192 pp., ISBN 978-1-107-17751-2

Of late, there has been a steady growth in the scholarship on democratisation in India, variously exploring the (uneven) augmentation of democratic processes and structures therein. Anoop Sadanadan's book contributes to this burgeoning literature with a comparative analysis of the advance of

governmental decentralisation across major Indian states. Rooted in the political economy approach, this study combines qualitative and quantitative methods to explain the different trajectories and outcomes of decentralisation across India following the 73^d/74th constitutional amendments of 1992. Why is it that some states devolved more rapidly and substantively than others? This 'supply-side account of decentralisation' (14) seeks to unravel the motives and conditions under which higher echelons agree to share power with local governments.

The key, Sadanandan suggests, lies in the asymmetries of political information. When leaders at the state-level are unsure of their electoral prospects due to uncertainties over voting decisions of the electorate, they are more likely to turn to decentralisation. This helps develop networks of local leaders and more direct connections with voters as well as retain power at intermediate levels when not in government. Sadanandan finds that states with high levels of socio-economic vulnerabilities display lower asymmetries of political information, as voters tend to vote in blocs (influenced by 'intermediaries or ethnic considerations' [11]), and correspondingly witness lesser devolution of power. Conversely, states with greater socio-economic security are likely to see greater autonomy in voter decisions, necessitating state parties to decentralise so as to access political information directly and promptly; an important caveat being the fear of political defection. The author offers an index of democratic deepening based on eight indicators, and ranks states by their extent of decentralisation.

Why Democracy Deepens systematically lays out the recent history of Indian political decentralisation and peruses the role of various state-level political dispensations. However, while decentralisation is an essential step towards substantive democratisation, it does not in itself result in democratisation. Thus, the 'demand-side' account becomes imperative, where ordinary citizens/communities organise and mobilise for greater inclusion. The author also constructs an inherent dichotomy between 'central leaders' and 'local politicians', subordinating the latter to the former's authority and vision and with little to no agency or autonomy of their own (barring the exception of disrupting party structures through defection). Thus, the privileging of a 'supply-side' account presents a top-down approach to conceptualising decentralisation.

There are some important omissions in the thesis that bear highlighting. The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, which entailed the most significant devolution of powers to PRIs but witnessed the most systematic violation, finds no mention in the book. The study excluded the north-eastern states, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and states constituted after 1992, most of which have distinct legacies of panchayati raj. While the author has looked at 'temporal changes in the extent of devolution' (32), he has overlooked spatial changes. States with otherwise regular PRIs have pockets where these institutions are stymied and even deliberately suppressed (for instance, in belts where the state/industry has extractivist interests such as mining, etc). The author has also glossed over the pre-1992 discourses and developments concerning decentralisation that show the evolution of the political thinking and praxis on the subject. Much of the data presented in the book is up until the early 2000s, which by the time of publication in 2017 seems dated. Consequently, Sadanandan fails to consider the impact of the backward caste parties on PRIs in the states that perform poorly on the democratic deepening index in the past two decades.

In sum, this is a welcome volume that explores the dynamics underpinning decentralisation, but suffers from a number of limitations.

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