



Gender, Governance and Empowerment in India (Routledge Research on Gender in Asia Series)

Sreevidya Kalaramadam

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Since the mid-1980s, the presence of women in governance has become a major marker of successful democracy in global and national discourses on the democratization of society. A diverse set of nation-states have legislatively mandated gender quotas to ensure the presence of elected women representatives (EWRs) in various rungs of governance. Since 1993, the Indian state has legislated a massive program of democratization and decentralization. As a result, more than 1.5 million EWRs have taken office within the lower rungs of governance or the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI).

This book is an ethnography of the Indian state and its policy of legislated entry of women into political life. It argues that political participation of women is necessary to change the political practices in society, to make institutions more gender, class and caste representative, and to empower individual women to negotiate both formal and informal institutions. Its locus is the everyday life contexts of EWRs in the southern Indian state of Karnataka who negotiate their own meanings of politics, state, society, empowerment and political subjectivity. Analysing three factors – structural boundaries, sociocultural divisions and conjunctural limitations imposed on the participation of EWRs by political parties – the book demonstrates that the social embeddedness of PRIs within everyday practices and social relations of identity and power severely constrain and shape the political participation and empowerment of EWRs.

Providing a valuable insight into contemporary state and feminist praxis in India, this book will be of interest to scholars of grass-roots democracy, gender studies and Asian politics.

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