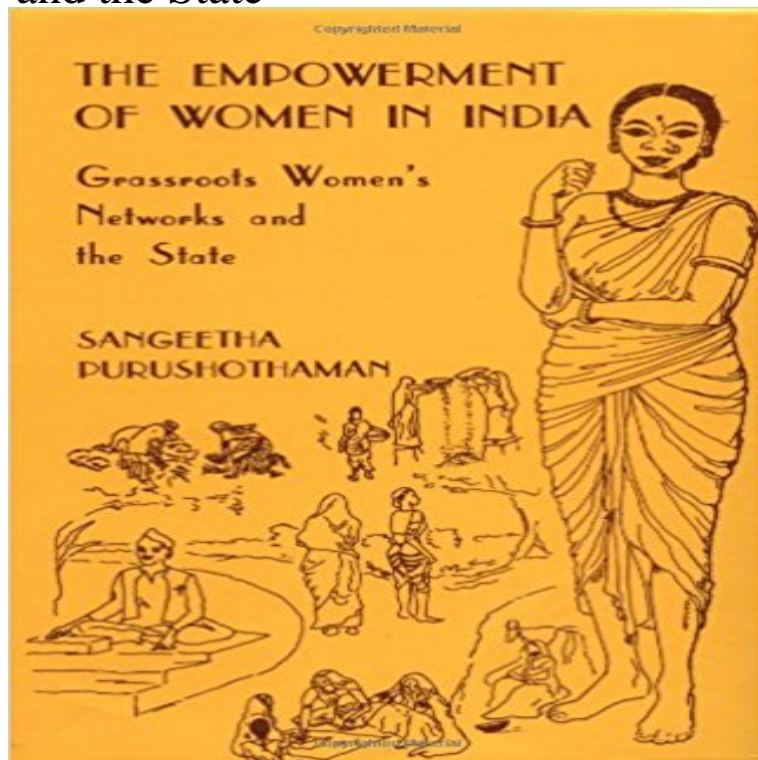


The Empowerment of Women in India: Grassroots Womens Networks and the State



The Empowerment of Women in India constitutes perhaps the first theoretical analysis of grassroots women's movements in India by utilizing a synthesis of social movement theory and state theory in understanding women and development. Based on a case study of decentralized and informal women's collective called the Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), author Sangeetha Purushothaman illustrates the strategies through which rural women try to control resources and the forms of organizations required for changing the relations of power and autonomy vis-a-vis both men and various social groups. The case study demonstrates the need for and effectiveness of decentralized and informal forms of organization (such as networks and women's collectives) in mobilizing resources for poor women and for facilitating their participation in developmental processes. Among the other issues discussed are shifts in attitudes among both women and various levels of officials, the processes of resource transfer, and the strengthening of the capacities of poor women to effect sustainable change in their own lives. The author concludes that decentralized networks of women's collectives and NGOs can increase the participation of women at the grassroots, enabling them to bargain for resources and to change state policy.

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