

Class and Gender in India: Women and their Organisations in a South Indian City.

By Patricia Caplan

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Cover blurb

The major theme of this volume is the relationship between gender and class, which is examined through a study of women's voluntary organizations and their middle and upper-class members in Madras.

Patricia Caplan first situates the material theoretically and provides background information on the area. She then considers women in their domestic role as reproducers. Female householders play many vital roles – in domestic labour, child-rearing and socialization, marriage negotiations, religious ritual, and the maintenance of kinship networks – all of which help to form, perpetuate, and reproduce the culture of their class.

The women also have an important role as members of voluntary social welfare organizations. Patricia Caplan looks at the history of these organizations and at their relations with the national and local state. Five organizations, their activities, ceremonies and publications, are studied in detail. The voluntary sector plays an important ideological role in Indian society, both by defining classes through the exercise of philanthropy and by creating vertical links between classes. In a comparison of similar organizations in nineteenth-century England and in contemporary societies in the Third World, Patricia Caplan concludes by suggesting that the emergency of such organizations is likely at certain periods in the historical development of class society.

Addendum

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Further information about this topic may be found in the following publications:

1978. "Women's organisations in Madras city, India" in Pat Caplan and Janet Bujra (eds.) *Women United, Women Divided* London and New York: Tavistock Publications.

1980: "Joiners and non-joiners: an Indian city suburb and its women's club" *Sociological Bulletin* 29, 2: 207-21.

1984: "Women's voluntary social service in India - is it work?" in K. Ballhatchet and D. Taylor (eds.) *Changing South Asia* Asian Research Services: 69-80

1985: "Women's Voluntary Social Welfare Work in India: the Cultural Construction of Gender and Class" *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 17, 1: 20-31

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