

Women, Power, and Property

The Paradox of Gender Equality Laws in India

Rachel E Brulé

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Quotas for women in government have swept the globe. Yet we know little about their capacity to upend entrenched social, political, and economic hierarchies. *Property and Power* seeks to explore this issue within the context of India, the world's largest democracy. Brulé uses cutting-edge research design and extensive field research to make connections among political representation, backlash, and economic empowerment. Her findings show that women in government catalyze access to fundamental economic rights: property rights. Women in politics also have the power to support constituent rights at critical junctures, such as marriage negotiations, sparking integrative solutions to intra-household bargaining. Although they can lead to backlash, quotas are essential for enforcement of rights. In this groundbreaking study, Brulé shows how quotas can operate as a crucial tool to foster equality and benefit the women they are meant to empower.

1. Introduction; 2. A theory of political representation and economic agency; 3. Property and power: a political history of the Hindu joint family; 4. Where are the women? Investigating reform's roots; 5. The politics of property rights enforcement; 6. The long arm of resistance: refusal to care for parents; 7. Representation and violence: gender equality and sex selection; 8. Conclusion.

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'In this powerful and subtle book, Rachel Brulé combs through an array of micro-level data for clues regarding the causes of and obstacles to gender inequality in India. One of her most stunning findings is that femicide actually increases when gender-equal inheritance laws are enforced – unless families are freed from the expectation that a daughter's property is forfeited to in-laws upon marriage. This book is a triumph of social science and a model for empirical scholarship on gender.'

Frances McCall Rosenbluth,
Yale University, Connecticut



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