



# Being Brahmin, Being Modern: Exploring the Lives of Caste Today

*Ramesh Bairy*

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## **Being Brahmin, Being Modern: Exploring the Lives of Caste Today** Ramesh Bairy

There is clearly an academic and political obsession with the 'idea' of the Brahmin. There is also, simultaneously, a near-complete absence of engagement with the Brahmin as an embodied person or community. This book addresses this intriguing paradox by making available a sociological description of the Brahmins in today's Karnataka. It pursues three distinct, yet enmeshed, registers of inquiry – the persona of the 'Brahmin' embodied in the agency of the individual Brahmin; the organised complexes of action such as the caste association and the public culture of print; and finally, taking off from a longer (yet, modern and contemporary) history of non-Brahminical othering of the Brahmin. It argues that we tend to understand the contemporaneity of caste almost exclusively within the twin registers of legitimation–contestation and dominance–resistance. While these facets continue to be salient, there is also a need to push out into hitherto neglected dimensions of caste. The book focuses attention on the many lives of modern caste — its secularisation, the subject positions that it offers, the equivocations by which persons and communities become 'subjects' of caste, their differential investments in the caste-self.

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