



The Anti-Politics Machine in India

State, Decentralization and Participatory Watershed Development
Vasudha Chhotray

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Description

An innovative assessment of the validity of 'anti-politics' critiques of development in the peculiar context of India.

'Vasudha Chhotray has written an intelligent, incisive and sometimes witty account of the politics of anti-politics in contemporary India. Her important book shows us that bureaucratic development is never anti-political, however anodyne many of its formulations have become; rather, is political in particular ways and with important social consequences.'

—*Stuart Corbridge, Professor of Development Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science*

James Ferguson's memorable metaphor of development as an Anti-Politics Machine that serves to entrench state power and depoliticize development continues to appeal to those cynical of the widespread tendency of development discourses to treat various issues apolitically. The book examines this problem in India, a country where post-independence development planners have adopted a scientific stance and claimed to distance themselves from mass politics, yet all the while the groundswell of democratic political mobilization has been considerable in recent decades.

In a country with an extremely differentiated landscape of authority and diverse politics, what does it mean for the state to undertake a project of depoliticization? The author examines this question through a study of a highly technocratic state watershed development programme in India that has witnessed key transformations towards participation in recent years. This book offers a historically and empirically grounded appraisal of James Ferguson's 'anti-politics' critique of development while addressing the issue of depoliticization within the new context provided by decentralization. It shows how the potential of decentralization to reorganize relationships amongst different levels of the state greatly complicates the very pursuit of depoliticization as a coherent state practice.

Readership: A key title for readers concerned with Indian history, government and politics, as well as students of critical development theory.

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About the Author

Vasudha Chhotray is a lecturer in Development Studies at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom. She has worked on the governance and politics of natural resources in India and South Africa for over ten years, and has conducted several studies on the subject for the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the Ford Foundation. She is the co-author of *Governance Theory: A cross-disciplinary approach* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

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