



Tamil Brahmins: The Making of a Middle-Class Caste

C. J. Fuller, Haripriya Narasimhan

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A cruise along the streets of Chennai—or Silicon Valley—filled with professional young Indian men and women, reveals the new face of India. In the twenty-first century, Indians have acquired a new kind of global visibility, one of rapid economic advancement and, in the information technology industry, spectacular prowess. In this book, C. J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan examine one particularly striking group who have taken part in this development: Tamil Brahmins—a formerly traditional, rural, high-caste elite who have transformed themselves into a new middle-class caste in India, the United States, and elsewhere.

Fuller and Narasimhan offer one of the most comprehensive looks at Tamil Brahmins around the world to date. They examine Brahman migration from rural to urban areas, more recent transnational migration, and how the Brahman way of life has translated to both Indian cities and American suburbs. They look at modern education and the new employment opportunities afforded by engineering and IT. They examine how Sanskritic Hinduism and traditional music and dance have shaped Tamil Brahmins' particular middle-class sensibilities and how middle-class status is related to the changing position of women. Above all, they explore the complex relationship between class and caste systems and the ways in which hierarchy has persisted in modernized India.



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