

BOOK REVIEW

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Smt. Shanti Gupta Centre for Women Studies (2009). *Women Achievers of J&K – Short Biographies*, Arun Art Printers, Jammu. Pages: 134, Rs.300.00

The book under review *Women achievers of J&K – Short Biographies* happens to be an important timely addition to the growing literature on women's empowerment and development. It contains short biographies or profiles of fifteen contemporary leading women achievers of J&K who, according to the project team, are ideal role models for women in general and the women in Jammu and Kashmir state in particular. The book is the first attempt of its kind in the state and provides a good profitable reading on how women of the J&K state (a hilly area characterized by rigidity, religious dogmas and restrictive practices) have made their mark against all odds to rise in their respective fields commendably.

Women Achievers is preceded by a well-written scholarly foreword by educationist Arun K. Gupta that explains the background, methodology and criteria for selection of profiles. Some inferences and insights from the profiles add to the value of the Foreword.

The book can aptly be called an important storehouse of the biographies of women who have left an impact on in their own fields with hard work. The language of the book is clear and convincing. The profiles contain information regarding women achievers as collected through a structured schedule followed by personal interviews. The publication succeeds in projecting the multi-dimensional personalities of women achievers in terms of their unique upbringing and backgrounds, family support, role models and experiential learning in personal/professional fields. A continuous chord runs through the profiles that highlight attainment of stature by women resulting partly from encouragement and support they received from their parents, teachers, mentors and life partners. The chosen personalities are from various fields, namely, Social Work, Politics Public Administration, Management, Medical Education, Police Services, University Education, Art, Culture and Social Service. The profiles in the book assume the shape of a multi-coloured rainbow that shows each personality in her unique hues. This goes well with each personality appearing to be a familiar face – the woman next door.

It goes without saying that women portrayed in the book emerge as responsible, vibrant, dynamic, tough and compassionate individuals.

Being highly instrumental in promoting growth, development, progress and prosperity, they have revealed that success did not come to them overnight; it was attained through perseverance, hard work and learning. The book introduces us to another fascinating side of women also. Being modest and dignified, these women refused to lead traditional existence. Through struggle, they developed confidence and the will to succeed with faith in their abilities. They were able to retain self-esteem by dint of independence of mind and the spirit to create harmony in difficult conditions, even as they seldom lost sight of their social and familial rights.

Going through this book, one also gets glimpses of the composite and rich culture of the J&K state. The women showcased have shared a common concern for the deprived underprivileged women, as also critiqued the media-projected image of women as sex symbols. For them, it is the mental abilities, qualities and values that count in a woman's life.

After going through the chosen profiles, one is firmly convinced that Smt. Shanti Gupta Centre for Women Studies has done a commendable job to project the idea of dynamic intervention with respect to women's role in society. The profiles have a wide range and variety, and they depict a sense of 'unity in diversity'.

The J&K State has many women achievers who have made significant contributions to social development and progress. Some of these women do not find mention in the book. This is so because the book is confined to contemporary women achievers. Since the project is continuing, we hope the forthcoming volumes will include more achievers from different fields and regions of the state who did not find place in the present volume. One is sure that these profiles would prove to be a trend setter and inspire the younger generation of women to emulate attitudes of assertion and modernity.

The book is fairly priced and is within reach of the book-loving reader. It also impresses with its production quality.