

Paper Tiger: Law, Bureaucracy and the Developmental State in Himalayan India (Cambridge Studies in Law and Society)

Nayanika Mathur



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A big cat overthrows the Indian state and establishes a reign of terror over the residents of a Himalayan town. A welfare legislation aimed at providing employment and commanding a huge budget becomes 'unimplementable' in a region bedeviled by high levels of poverty and unemployment. Paper Tiger provides a lively ethnographic account of how such seemingly bizarre scenarios come to be in contemporary India. Based on eighteen months of intensive fieldwork, this book presents a unique explanation for why and how progressive laws can do what they do and not, ever-so-often, what they are supposed to do. It reveals the double-edged effects of the reforms that have been ushered in by the post-liberalization Indian state, particularly the effort to render itself more transparent and accountable. Through a meticulous detailing of everyday bureaucratic life on the Himalayan borderland, Paper Tiger makes an argument for shifting the very frames of thought through which we apprehend the workings of the developmental Indian state.



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