

---

## Book Review

Indian Journal of Public  
Administration

1–4

© 2025 IIPA

Article reuse guidelines:

[in.sagepub.com/journals-permissions-india](https://in.sagepub.com/journals-permissions-india)

[journals.sagepub.com/home/ipa](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ipa)



**V. Anil Kumar and D. Jeevan Kumar (Eds.), *Governance and Development in Karnataka: One State, Many Worlds*, 2024, xxxvi + 295 pp., ₹1,495, Writers Choice Publications.**

DOI: 10.1177/00195561251394174

The book under review celebrates the golden jubilee (1972–2022) of the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore. It is the product of a two-day national seminar held by the Centre for Political Institutions, Governance and Development at ISEC in collaboration with the Institute of Public Administration, Karnataka. The book has forewords by two eminent personalities, Dr A. Ravindra and Professor James Manor, and a preface by Professor D. Rajasekhar. The volume is edited by Professors V. Anil Kumar and D. Jeevan Kumar. Several experts in their respective fields, 20 in all, have contributed to the subject matter of the book.

The first section delves into the regional, caste and gender disparities one encounters in the state of Karnataka. Two chapters are dedicated to the relatively backward districts of the Hyderabad–Karnataka region, and the inference is that this backwardness stems from the ‘top-down approach of the administration’. It suggests that local governance in the area needs to be strengthened. It points out the drawbacks of the prevailing panchayati raj system, with poor attendance in gram sabhas, and many vacancies in panchayati raj institutions. In fact, it notes that there are more than 10,000 vacancies in the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj! Overall, governance mechanisms—such as leadership vision and capacity-building exercises of elected representatives—were found to be weak, and there was inordinate bureaucratic control of the local institutions. Altogether, the Hyderabad–Karnataka region is neglected, resulting in continuing underdevelopment.

Regarding OBC politics and economics in Karnataka, the book points out that the 200 backward communities subsumed under this nomenclature continue to be dominated by the two dominant castes, Vokkaliga and Lingayat, who constitute merely 26% of the population of the state. After all, M. N. Srinivas developed the concept of ‘dominant caste’ when studying the social structure of Mysore. Upper castes are even more dominant in Bihar, with which a comparison is drawn.

One would hope that the chapter on picturesque Kodagu would be fulsome in its praise of the ‘Scotland of India’, but one’s hopes are belied. The study points out serious shortcomings of governance. The district lacks a proper healthcare system

---

and the Primary Health Centres (PHCs), wherever they exist, are found to lack facilities and staff. Similarly, the condition of government schools is less than satisfactory, with a lack of permanent teachers. It points out that ‘the public transport system in Kodagu is very bad’. It presents a dismal picture of governance in Kodagu, which it ascribes to the inadequate allocation of funds in the past few decades.

Regarding data policy, the author contends that data are valuable resources, and these can be used proactively to improve citizen services and build departmental capabilities. He points out that the state must not merely seek to monetise the data but see itself as the trustee of that data and respect the privacy and anonymity of the people who have contributed to its collection.

In her article, Kathyayini Chamaraj points out the importance of a good database for development. Databases help to identify persons as recipients of numerous government schemes. She examines the efficacy of Mission Antyodaya, a grassroots database embedded in the gram panchayat, in taking up the devolution of 29 functions to gram panchayats as per the 11th Schedule of the Constitution of India. This database can help in the constitution of the gram panchayat and the district panchayat and, thus, enable an evidence-based bottom-up approach to planning in the district.

The chapter on the ecological governance of a national park—the Bannerghatta National Park, near Bengaluru—points out the importance of people’s participation in park governance: it should be a collaborative effort of government officials and the indigenous communities who live in the park. In this way, local knowledge can be utilised for improving governance of the park, which is a wildlife corridor for elephants in the BR Hills and the Sathyamangalam forests. The state government should heed the voices and opinions of forest department ‘watchers’ as well as local people as they know the forest in and out. It concludes that ‘indigenous community participation is critical for better ecological governance’. It is critical of the displacement of local villagers from the park, the development of a housing society on 2,500 acres within its precincts, and also the giving out of land to establish resorts and industries.

The article on urban property ownership records gives us an update on the way in which property rights are conferred. Earlier, there was a system of ‘poorly maintained land records which resulted in issues of fake documents, *benami*, and fraudulent land transactions and encroachment of public land’. A technological intervention—by way of the computerisation of land records in Karnataka, by the revenue department, and known as the Bhoomi Project—has changed that and improved the authentication of property titles. Implemented at the taluk level since the late 1990s, the Bhoomi Project has made the Record of Rights, Cropping and Tenancy (RTCs) available for all lands in digital form. Project Kaveri digitises these documents at the sub-registrar’s office and Project Mojini at the survey department. Integration of Bhoomi, Kaveri and Mojini gives us a spatial and textual picture of land ownership in the state. The revenue department has computerised more than 20 million rural land records, such as RTC/Paani, ‘mutation request’ records and *khata*. The author claims that there has been a reduction in corruption due to digitisation of land records, thus improving the governance of

land. Tech-based governance has made land administration in the state effective and is expected to make it a fool-proof system before long.

The chapter on welfare schemes in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka shows that the implementation is modest in Karnataka as compared to Andhra Pradesh. The Ammavodi Scheme in Andhra Pradesh makes a provision for ₹15,000 annually to meet the educational expenses of children in schools and reimburses fees to all college students. In addition, the entire infrastructure of government schools has been overhauled. However, the Andhra Pradesh government has incurred a huge debt due to spending on its welfare schemes.

In Karnataka, the focus is more on programmes for vulnerable sections such as SCs, BCs, women and minorities than on welfare schemes. The allocation to the SC sub-plan has increased 24 times from 2002–2003 to 2016–2017, especially in the last three years, while the ST sub-plan has increased by a meagre four times.

The next chapter takes up the important issue of skill development and vocational training of the youth of Karnataka. It is observed that there is a huge skills gap in India. The first initiative in skill development took place under the Rajiv Gandhi Chaitanya Yojana Scheme of Karnataka, which provided training for 45 days to beneficiaries selected by the Ministry of Skills Development and Employment. Care has been taken to make the programme inclusive in terms of both caste and gender. Thus, a minimum of 20% SCs and 9% STs were included as beneficiaries while only 30% of beneficiaries were women. Each male beneficiary gets a loan of ₹50,000 for self-employment in dairying, animal husbandry and poultry while women beneficiaries are encouraged to set up tailoring and beauty parlour enterprises. The self-employed women expressed a sense of satisfaction, independence and purposefulness in their enterprises.

The chapter on political participation of religious minorities in Karnataka points out that they have been underrepresented in the Lok Sabha from the first general elections to the 2019 elections. It states that ‘the absolute numbers of Muslim MPs in Lok Sabha are abysmal and nowhere close to their population proportion’. It is no different in the rural and urban local bodies where the representation is ‘appalling and inadequate’. Hence, their participation in governance is low.

Regarding human trafficking, the chapter points out that ‘Karnataka was identified as the major supply hub for human trafficking in India’. It was ranked third in human trafficking in cases registered across the country. The marginalised sections of society are taken advantage of and trapped in perpetuity by traffickers. There are stringent laws against human trafficking. The Indian courts have held that human trafficking is largely a socio-economic problem, and rehabilitation and reintegration must be the main focus. Every citizen has the right to live a life of dignity.

The Government of Karnataka runs numerous welfare schemes for women: Stree Shakti (self-help groups to inculcate thrift and self-reliance in women), hostels for girls and working women and Santwana (providing legal assistance and counselling to women victims of atrocities). Women can also benefit from central government schemes.

The Quran promulgated the doctrine of human equality, including gender equality. Islam lays down various rights for women, such as the right to justice,

right to freedom, right to acquire knowledge and right to work. However, the Sachar Committee report found that Muslim girls have the highest dropout rate, the educational attainment of Muslims is approximately like SCs and STs, Muslim women have the lowest work participation rate, and about 60% are self-employed and working in local handicraft and embroidery works.

An honest appraisal of governance in Karnataka, the book does not mince words in pointing out the weak spots in governance. As such, it is a valuable addition to the literature for policymakers, administrators, planners, academics and laypersons interested in the progress of the state and the well-being of its people. It effectively brings out the lack of governance in Karnataka, resulting in regional disparities, stark gender differences, vulnerabilities of OBCs, SCs, STs and religious minorities, deficiencies in the quality of governance etc. However, the concept of 'development', a word that appears in the book's title, has not been adequately discussed. The Bangalore-centric development of the state and the development of services rather than manufacturing may also be taken up.

The Karnataka model of governance and development—hailed once as one of the best in the country—seems to have slid downwards. It needs to be restored by strengthening institutions and improving accountability, transparency, equity, performance, citizen participation, strategic vision, ethics and integrity, as the editors V. Anil Kumar and D. Jeevan Kumar suggest in their introduction.

Lalita Chandrashekhar  
*Senior Independent Scholar*  
*[lalitachandrashekhar@gmail.com](mailto:lalitachandrashekhar@gmail.com)*