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Cultural Labour

Conceptualizing the
'Folk Performance' in India



FOLK PERFORMANCES REFLECT THE LIFE-WORLDS OF A VAST SECTION of subaltern communities in India. What is the philosophy that drives these performances, the vision that enables as well as enslaves these communities to present what they feel, think, imagine, and want to see? Can such performances challenge social hierarchies and ensure justice in a caste-ridden society? In *Cultural Labour*, the author studies *bhuiyan puja* (land worship), *bidesia* (theatre of migrant labourers), *Reshma-Chuharmal* (Dalit ballads), *dugola* (singing duels) from Bihar, and the songs and performances of Gaddar, who was associated with Jana Natya Mandali, Telangana: he examines various ways in which meanings and behaviour are engendered in communities through rituals, theatre, and enactments. Focusing on various motifs of landscape, materiality, and performance, the author looks at the relationship between culture and labour in its immediate contexts.

Based on an extensive ethnography and the author's own life experience as a member of such a community, the book offers a new conceptual framework to understand the politics and aesthetics of folk performance in the light of contemporary theories of theatre and performance studies.

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