

Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity, and Power Among a Central Indian Community, 1780-1950 (SUNY Series in Hindu Studies)

Saurabh Dube



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Untouchable Pasts constructs a history of an untouchable and heretical community over the last two hundred years. The Satnamis of Central India have combined the features of a caste and a sect to question and challenge the tenor of ritual power that variously defines Hinduism. At the same time, within the community, schemes of meaning and power, particularly those centering on gender, have been imbued with ambiguity and a reproduction of forms of inequality. The book presents an interpretive account of Satnami endeavors, encounters, and experiences by combining history and anthropology, archival and field work. It addresses a clutch of theoretical questions and a range of key and inextricably bound analytical relationships in an accessible manner. Issues of caste and untouchability, sect and kinship, myths and pasts are rendered here as part of a wider dynamic between religion and power, gender and community, writing and the constitution of traditions, ritual and the making of modernities, and orality and the construction of histories.

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