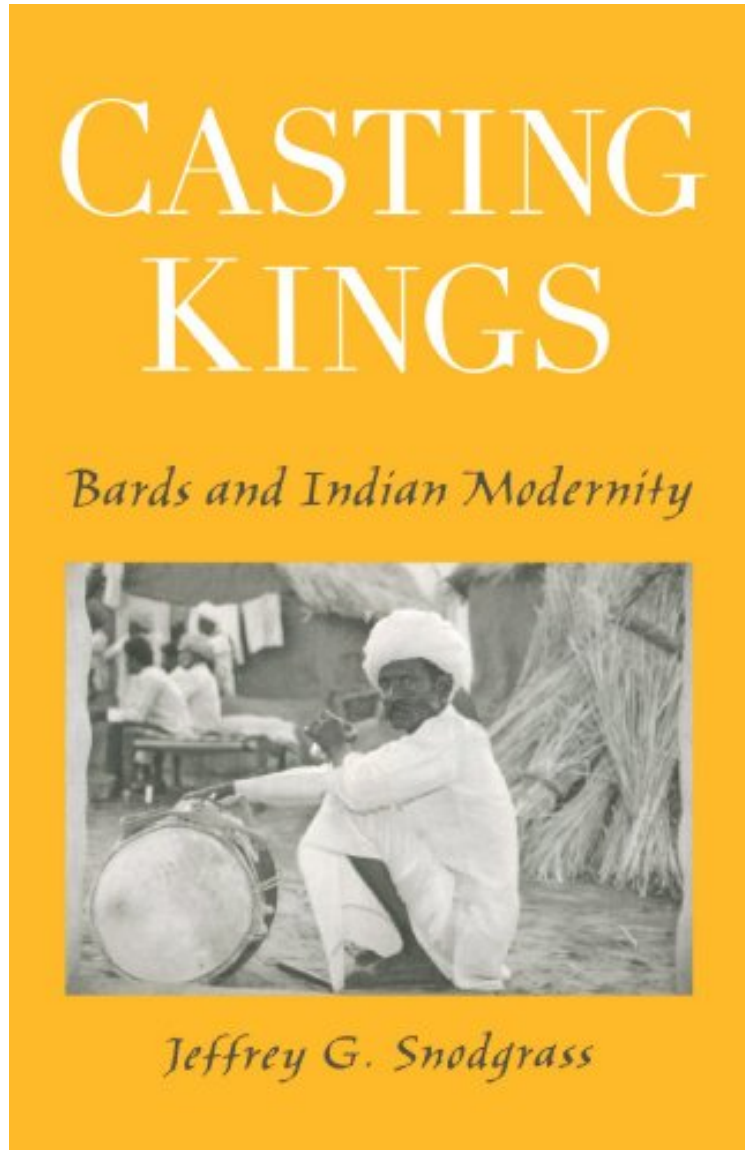


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## Casting Kings: Bards and Indian Modernity

*Jeffrey G. Snodgrass*

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**Jeffrey G. Snodgrass : Casting Kings: Bards and Indian Modernity** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Casting Kings: Bards and Indian Modernity:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating readBy J. Vyvial-larsonThis book is an incredible analysis of the Bhat culture. Smart, interesting and sensitive, Casting Kings is a must for those learning about identity in modern India.

Based on three years of anthropological fieldwork in the Indian state of Rajasthan, *Casting Kings* explores the manner in which semi-nomadic performers known as Bhats understand, and also subvert, caste hierarchies. A number of scholars have recently contended that caste is invented and thus a fiction of a kind. But focus in these studies is typically placed on the way caste is imagined according to the agendas and desires of elite Westerners such as colonial officials. In this book, by contrast, the author argues that Bhats themselves understand the imaginative dimensions of caste relations. Indeed, such insights are shown to lie at the heart of the Bhats traditional profession of praise- and insult-singing. Likewise, the author demonstrates how the ability to cleverly rework and even sabotage lingering caste inequalities continues to form the basis for Bhat claims to status and dignity in contemporary India.

"By approaching South Asia's famous social hierarchies, often glossed as "caste," through the minds, eyes, performances, histories, proverbs, songs, jokes, tricks, and money-making tactics of a community that calls itself Bhat -- currently puppeteers to tourists, but historically genealogists to leatherworkers (as well as acrobats) - Snodgrass provides fresh views on overworked but perpetually compelling issues. From their marginal position, Bhats offer wonderful insights into how hierarchy may be instrumentally constructed and deconstructed. They keep both Snodgrass and his readers guessing about the nature of history, power, identity and truth. " --Ann Grodzins Gold, co-author of *In the Time of Trees and Sorrows: Nature, Power, and Memory in Rajasthan* About the Author Jeffrey G. Snodgrass, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Colorado State University, has published widely on caste, ritual performance, spirit possession, and religious healing in India. He is the recipient of grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and most recently the National Geographic Society. He is currently examining how the health and healing practices of Tribal communities in southern Rajasthan are being impacted by environmental change in the form of deforestation.