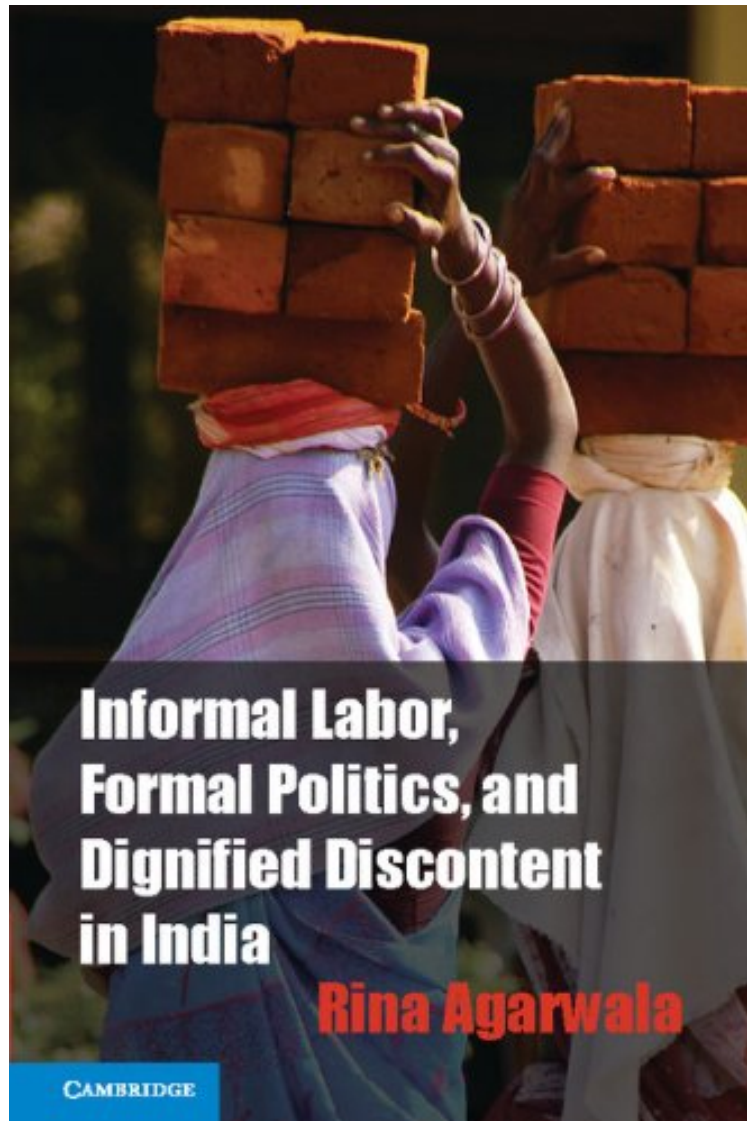


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Rina Agarwala

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Rina Agarwala : Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India (Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India (Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics):

Since the 1980s, the world's governments have decreased state welfare and thus increased the number of unprotected 'informal' or 'precarious' workers. As a result, more and more workers do not receive secure wages or benefits from either employers or the state. This book offers a fresh and provocative look into the alternative social movements informal workers in India are launching. It also offers a unique analysis of the conditions under which these movements succeed or fail. Drawing from 300 interviews with informal workers, government officials and union leaders, Rina Agarwala argues that Indian informal workers are using their power as voters to demand welfare benefits from the state, rather than demanding traditional work benefits from employers. In addition, they are organizing at the neighborhood level, rather than the shop floor, and appealing to 'citizenship', rather than labor rights.

"What a splendid book! In the face of market fundamentalism, Rina Agarwala shows how informal workers in India have managed to exploit competitive politics to wring concessions from the state. A chink of light in a bleak scene. Labor optimists and pessimists alike must read this book." Michael Burawoy, University of California, Berkeley

"Combining rigorous scholarship with remarkable empathy for her research subjects, Rina Agarwala illuminates the surprising capacity of informal sector workers in India to win victories even as the government turned to market-oriented policies. Her study forces us to think differently about the intersection of poverty, unions, government, and social movements." Fred Block, University of California, Davis

"The global rise of neoliberalism, and its increasing strength, means that whether in India or the United States, labor must develop new strategies and forms and organize new constituencies or be increasingly marginalized. As Agarwala brilliantly shows, neoliberalism weakens traditional union forms, increases the importance of informal labor, and - most importantly - creates possibilities for informal workers to act through new organizational forms that pressure the state." Dan Clawson, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

"This book explores the remarkable and surprising organizational successes of women workers in two sectors of India's vast informal economy. In a masterful comparative analysis that cuts across three Indian states, Agarwala not only explains how these women have articulated and claimed rights as workers, but also provides a fascinating account of how their mobilization marks a new paradigm in labor organizing. For anyone interested in understanding the momentous social and economic transformation that India is going through, this is a must-read." Patrick Heller, Brown University

"This is a powerful and measured analysis of how India's informal working class makes effective citizenship claims to the state. Dispelling the myth of an inevitable decline of the labor movement in an age of alleged neo-liberalization, this fascinating India story offers an indispensable beacon of hope for working people worldwide." Ching Kwan Lee, University of California, Los Angeles

"This is a beautifully crafted, path-breaking study that upends conventional wisdom about the relentless demise of labor movements. Agarwala's lucid analysis of the ways in which precariously employed informal workers in India have organized to improve their status bristles with insights on every page. This superb book is a must-read not only for specialists in South Asia but for anyone interested in the future of the labor movement, in the global North as much as in the South." Ruth Milkman, City University of New York

"Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India is one of the most thought provoking books produced on the future of labor in recent years. It challenges us to radically rethink how we see labor after globalization but not in a pessimistic way. Instead Agarwala restores agency to ordinary workers struggling to survive in the age of insecurity and identifies their innovative organizational responses in a compelling way. It provides a point of departure for a more grounded debate on the future of labor." Edward Webster, Global Labour Journal

"This is an exciting book that describes successes of informal worker demands in India where workers have used strategies that target the state rather than the employer in the context of economic liberalization ... For those interested in the possibilities for social unionism, development centered on empowered poor women, and organizing for a responsive welfare state, this book is a must read." Jennifer R. Zelnick, Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare

"... this is a highly readable, well-researched, informative, important book. Agarwala shows careful, thorough methodological and conceptual thinking while responding to and building on a large body of scholarly research. Using considerable quantitative data and extensive interviews with government officials and scores of women working in the informal economy in three states (Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu), the author investigates and largely dismantles the notion that poor often-illiterate workers with no formal employer can organize as workers. Summing up: highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above." G. M. Massey, Choice

"Rina Agarwala's book is refreshingly different ... It throws up new ideas about the informal economy through its bold analysis. The author's background of political science and sociology helps raise the analysis above the mundane cost-benefit analysis framework. The most important aspect of the book is that it shows that though informal workers are the wretched of the earth, they are learning to raise their heads and fight for their dignity. It is definitely a very important contribution to the study of informal labour, and should be of interest to all social scientists." Sharit K. Bhowmik, Economic and Political Weekly

"Rina Agarwala's exciting volume *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India* presents itself to the reader as a tale of informal workers' strategies to organize and attain welfare benefits from the Indian state in a context of rapid economic growth and of progressive increase in inequalities ... Agarwala's analysis is thus multifaceted, sophisticated and rich with insightful findings." Annalisa Murgia, American Journal of Sociology

"Who then speak for the IS workers and the growing number of casuals in the formal

labor market? This is where the book of Rina Agarwala - *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India* - comes in as a provocative piece of scholarship on the role of traditional unionism in today's highly segmented labor market that is continuously churning under the pressures of globalization ... Agarwala's book challenges students and scholars of the labor movement to re-think state-labor relations." Rene E. Ofreneo, *Asian Politics and Policy*" Agarwala's work represents an important contribution to the literature in this area. Her analysis is extremely rich both theoretically and empirically ... Advanced scholars interested in changes in the nature of work and the conditions of workers globally should pay attention to this book." Denise Benoit Scott, *Gender and Society*

About the Author Rina Agarwala is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at The Johns Hopkins University. She holds a B.A. in Economics and Government from Cornell University, an MPP in Political and Economic Development from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and a Ph.D. in Sociology from Princeton University. Agarwala is the co-editor of *Whatever Happened to Class? Reflections from South Asia* (2008). She has published articles on informal work and gender in the *International Labor Journal*, *Political Science*, *Research in the Sociology of Work*, *Theory and Society*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Critical Asian Studies*, *Social Forces* and the *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*. She has worked on international development and gender issues at the United Nations Development Program in China, the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, and Women's World Banking in New York.