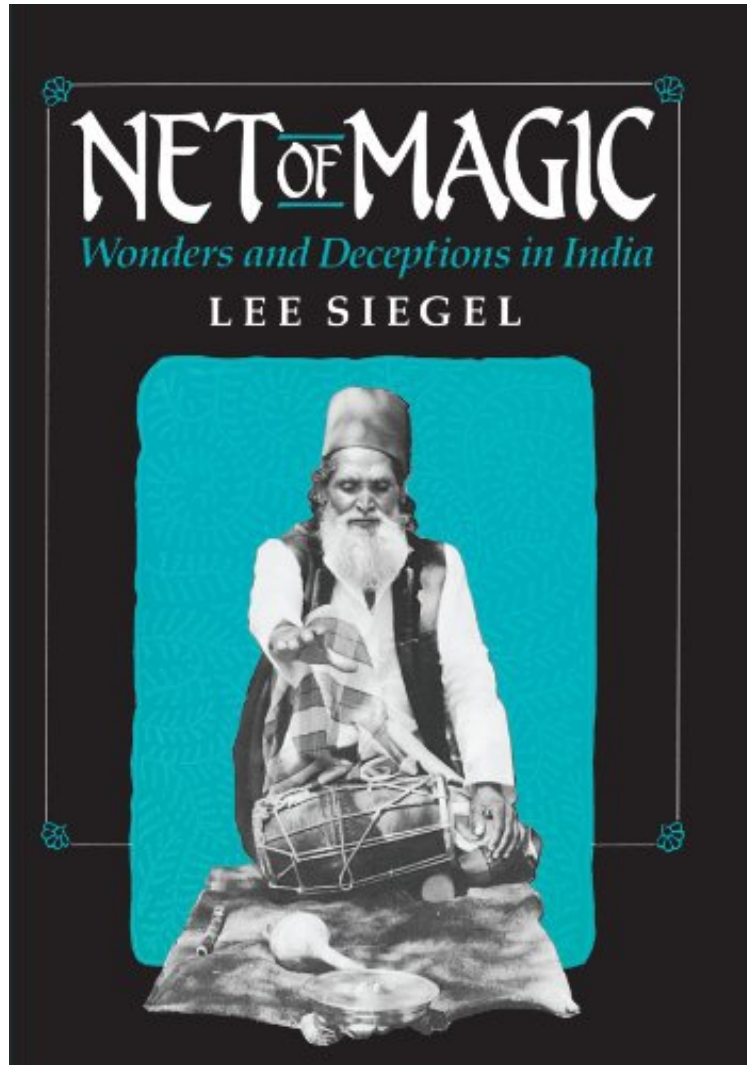


[Free] Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India

Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India

Lee Siegel

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Lee Siegel : Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Daniel Dennett cites this book in discussions on consciousness and free will. By Real Person from the Real World Daniel Dennett refers to this U of Chgo volume... quite interesting, worth a read if you are interested in philosophy/consciousness. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Far more sensational than scholarly... By William This is the first and probably last book that I will likely ever read from Prof. Lee Siegel. I read Net of Magic (here in after will be referred to as 'NoM') expecting a scholarly work on the history of magic in the Indian Subcontinent, instead the reader is lead through a nauseating shifting back and forth of present-to-

past, street-to-stage, personal-to-pseudo-historical perspective on the 'history' of magic in South Asia. Most of 'NoM' reads at times like it could be a script for a movie (which would clearly be rated R, due to all the language, dirty humor, occasional nudity [some of which should/could have been left out especially the crap in the epilogue/closing] and violence) on Siegel's "studies" on magic in India from roughly 1986-'88, at other times it reads perhaps like a bit too earthy historical-fiction. I felt that I was learning a fair amount from NoM on magic, but everything that I learned was more or less dismantled the next page (or chapter) over. Was this intentional? Understandably Siegel wrote and researched this topic in the late '80's, and therefore it is likely presumed that will not be much literature available for an English reading/speaking audience, still it would have been nice if he did provide footnotes or endnotes, if not of primary and secondary literature, at the very least for giving more enhancement to certain topics especially in the sections on the "past". Without any real summary introduction or conclusion it's impossible to know just what Siegel thinks on the origin of Magic in India. Several strands of theories are entertained but none are explored in any real scholarly depth. IMO NoM's true value for me was its perspective on what India was like in the late 1980's at least for Lee Siegel, for that reason alone I would recommend NoM, but if you were like me seeking a scholarly scope with as little bias and as much open mind as possible on Magic in India then this book may be a slight or even dare I say a great disappointment (personally for me my was more slight than great.) PS does anyone know any well rounded scholarly work/s on magic with a focus in South Asia, particularly 'modern' 16th century to the 20th? Recommendations are most welcomed. PPS Lee Siegel isn't a bad writer and as I said you will likely learn a lot from NoM, but a lot will leave you probably scratching your head on just exactly why he wrote in the way he wrote it. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Lyrical revisiting of roots of street magic and stage magic in North India and Kashmir. By Joe O'Laughlin Personal participant observation, frequently cast into narrative fiction. Themes recycled into diverse population groups reimagining of myths and how to act them out.

Vast like the subcontinent itself and teeming with outrageous and exotic characters, Net of Magic is an enthralling voyage through the netherworld of Indian magic. Lee Siegel, scholar and magician, uncovers the age-old practices of magic in sacred rites and rituals and unveils the contemporary world of Indian magic of street and stage entertainers. Siegel's journeys take him from ancient Sanskrit texts to the slums of New Delhi to find remnants of a remarkable magical tradition. In the squalid settlement of Shadipur, he is initiated into a band of Muslim street conjurers and performs as their shill while they tutor him in their con and craft. Siegel also becomes acquainted with Hindu theatrical magicians, who claim descent from court illusionists and now dress as maharajahs to perform a repertoire of tricks full of poignant kitsch and glitz. Masterfully using a panoply of narrative sleights to recreate the magical world of India, Net of Magic intersperses travelogue, history, ethnography, and fiction. Siegel's vivid, often comic tale is crowded with shills and stooges, tourists and pickpockets, snake charmers and fakirs. Among the cast of characters are Naseeb, a poor Muslim street magician who guides Siegel into the closed circle of itinerant performers; the Industrial Magician, paid by a bank, who convinces his audience to buy traveler's checks by making twenty-rupee notes disappear; the Government Magician, who does a trick with condoms to encourage family planning; P. C. Sorcar, Jr., the most celebrated Indian stage magician; and the fictive Professor M. T. Bannerji, the world's greatest magician, who assumes various guises over a millennium of Indian history and finally arrives in the conjuring capital of the world Las Vegas. Like Indra's net the web of illusion in which Indian performers ensnare their audience Net of Magic captures the reader in a seductive portrayal of a world where deception is celebrated and lies are transformed into compelling and universal truths.

From Publishers Weekly Siegel, a professor of religion at the University of Hawaii and an amateur magician, explores magic in India, a place that is for him a "cauldron of illusions." He enters the magicians' world by eating with them, performing his own tricks for them and ultimately shilling for them. The first half of the book is devoted to the wandering, low-caste Muslim street magicians. The second discusses stage magicians, descendants of royal court conjurers and seers. Siegel blends history and religious studies, fiction (in the form of short stories centered on traditional tricks in the magicians' repertoire) and travel ramble as he takes us from the slums of Delhi to Madras in the south and Kashmir in the north. For Siegel, India is a country of many nationalities where religion divides and magic is the unifying factor. Using vivid word pictures, he conveys the sights, sounds and smells of a land where truth transcends mere fact, where illusions serve as "escapes from the discomforts" of life. Siegel's (Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India) colorful narrative about our need to be deceived and the delight we take therein avoids the pitfall he finds in many books on magic--what is astonishing when seen becomes astonishingly dull in print. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Siegel, a professor of religion at the University of Hawaii and member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, presents a huge melange of personal experience and Indian mythological tradition that is as overwhelming as a visit to Calcutta. His book will enthrall both magicians and students of Oriental culture with its combination of deep research and exuberant prose. Most striking is the connection Siegel documents between Hindu and Muslim religious lore in India, as contrasted with "magic" as sheer entertainment in the West today. Entrancing but disorganized and overlong, this will have limited appeal for the

simply curious, but is nevertheless a valuable work for aficionados.- Jeanne S. Bagby, formerly with Tucson P.L., Ariz. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Lee Siegel is professor of religion at the University of Hawaii and a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. His books include *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India*, also published by the University of Chicago Press.