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University of Wyoming
Assistant Professor Antoinette E. DeNapoli, Department of Religious Studies

Real Sadhus Sing to God: Gender, Asceticism, and Vernacular Religion in Rajasthan (Oxford University Press 2014)

Antoinette E. DeNapoli draws on ethnographic research, which spans more than ten years, to offer a new perspective on the practice of asceticism in modern India. Her work brings to light the little-known and often marginalized lives of female Hindu ascetics (sadhus) in the North Indian state of Rajasthan. Examining the everyday religious worlds and practices of the mostly unlettered female sadhus, who come from a number of castes, Real Sadhus Sing to God illustrates that these women experience asceticism in relational and celebratory ways. They construct their lives as paths of singing to God, which, DeNapoli suggests, serves as the female way of being an ascetic. Those interested in religious and women’s studies will find this book enthralling.