

THE CRACKED MIRROR

An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory

GOPAL GURU
SUNDAR SARUKKAI

'This explosive and radical book is a dialogue between a philosopher and a social theorist based in India on the nature of experience, theory, ethics, and politics. In addition to its many other virtues, it is also a remarkable reflection on the logic of untouchability and thus of caste in Indian thought and experience, one which should force all social scientists concerned with inequality and humiliation in Indian society to rethink their most cherished dogmas.'

— **ARJUN APPADURAI**, Goddard Professor of Media, Culture and Communication, New York University

'The outcome of a dialogue between two of India's leading thinkers, one a philosopher, the other a political scientist, The Cracked Mirror marks an intellectual event of international importance. Not only is lived experience brought forcefully back into social theory, but it is the inassimilable experience of the Dalit, which for centuries has been distorted in the consciousness of the dominant. This is real "theory from the South", and it demands to be read everywhere.'

— **SHELDON POLLOCK**, Ransford Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Columbia University in the City of New York

About the Book

Western constructs giving precedence to ideas over experience have, for long, dominated theorization in Indian social sciences. Problematizing their tenuous relationship, this book presents a passionate plea to create new frameworks and idioms for describing contemporary Indian social experiences. In particular, it argues for a more careful understanding of the ethics of representation.

Using a dialogic form, Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai debate the possibility of authentic representation of 'Indian' experiences, and also the criticality of rootedness in this exercise. Placing the reality of untouchability and Dalit life at the centre of analyses, this book examines the ontological and epistemological nature of experience, thereby exhibiting the politics of experience. Arguing that the very act of theorizing involves an ethical turn, they illustrate ways of using alternative frameworks for theorizing, thus countering the dominance of the vocabulary and methods of Western intellectual traditions.

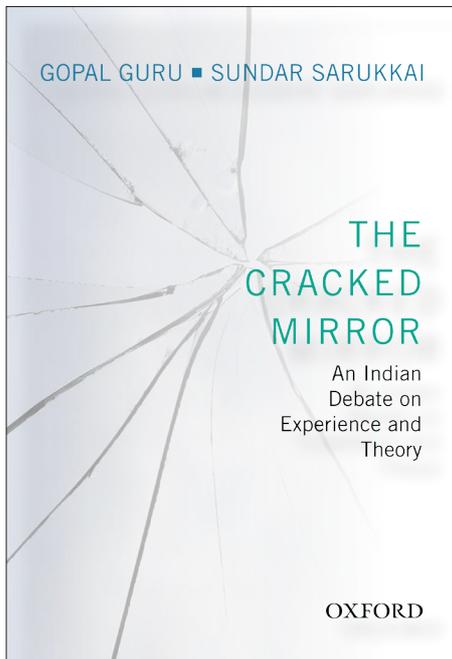
Readership

A refreshing new perspective on the debate over experience and theorization, this book should be an indispensable read for all students and scholars of social sciences and humanities in India and non-Western communities, and of particular interest to those interested in subaltern, Dalit, and feminist studies.

About the Authors

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