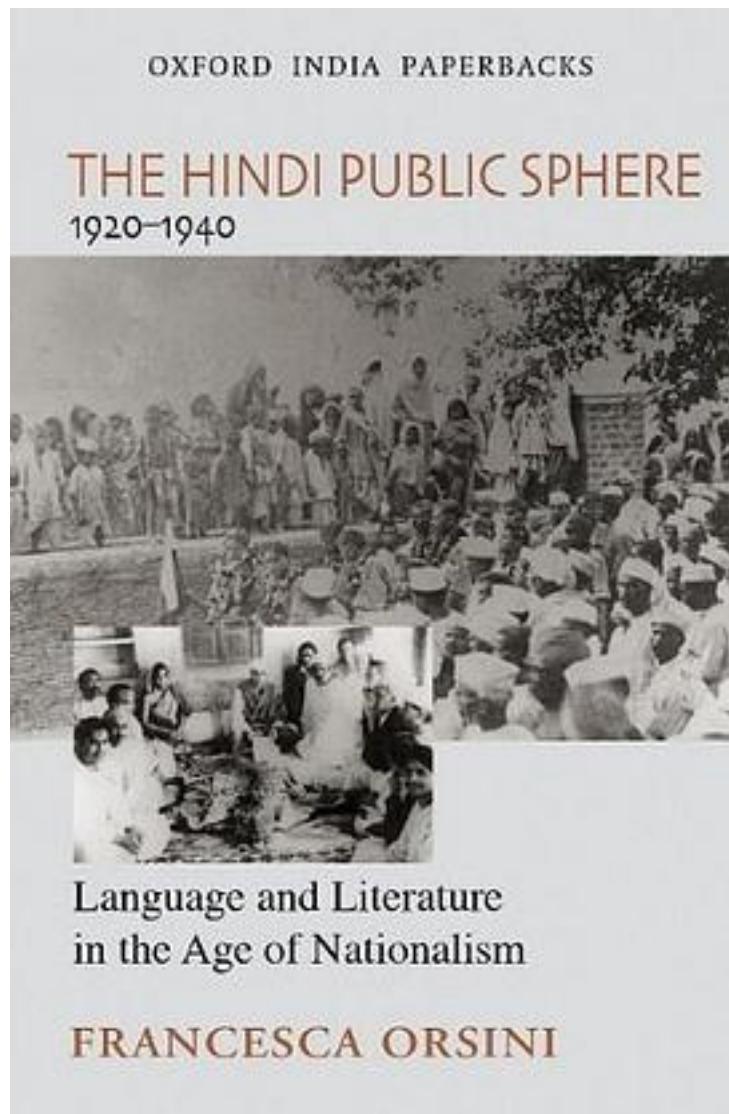


The Hindi Public Sphere



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This book analyses how a language became the instrument with which the contours of a new nation were traced. To a colonized people agitating for freedom, a people divided by many languages, cultures and religions, the one language--one nation concept of nationalism proved to be both powerful and seductive. In polyphonic India, however, such a single 'national' language had to be created, its power established. Most nineteenth-century Hindi intellectuals believed the chosen language to be the 'Hindu' Hindi, not the 'Islamic' Hindustani or Urdu nor any other prominent language like Bengali. Orsini shows how early twentieth-century discourses on language, literature, women, history, and politics form the core of the Hindi culture that exist today. She also recovers the many voices, written out of history, which were critical to the national Hindi project. With its depth and scope of research and thinking, this book will be crucial for any scholar engaging in the issues of nationalism, religion, language, and literature that Orsini so ably weaves together and scrutinizes here.

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