

# Hindustan Times

## New Delhi, 13 July 2024

{ **HT PICKS** } NEW READS

### A NATIONAL ICON OF RESISTANCE

Safdar Hashmi (1954 - 1989) became a national icon of resistance after his death on January 2, 1989, following a brutal attack while performing a street play. The firebrand artist, actor, playwright, poet and activist was at the forefront of the development and subsequent popularity of street theatre, and his group, Jana Natya Manch (Janam), is still considered a leader in the genre of political theatre.

There is little reliable scholarship on the history of theatre in India and on Safdar Hashmi's contribution to Indian theatre.

This book fills both gaps through a close look at Safdar's career, from his early life and the influences that shaped him, to his first forays into theatre in Delhi in the 1970s, the mature work he produced in the 1980s, until his life was cruelly cut short, and the legacy he left behind. Examining the cultural and political environment of the time, Anjum Katyal places Hashmi and Janam in the context of the larger history of Indian political theatre. She argues

that, with the development of a powerful and thought-provoking street form, Hashmi was moving towards a vision and practice of democratic theatre.

**Safdar Hashmi: Towards  
Theatre for a Democracy**  
227pp, ₹900, Anjum Katyal  
Orient Black Swan

