



Birth on the Threshold: Childbirth and Modernity in South India

Cecilia Van Hollen

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Even childbirth is affected by globalization—and in India, as elsewhere, the trend is away from home births, assisted by midwives, toward hospital births with increasing reliance on new technologies. And yet, as this work of critical feminist ethnography clearly demonstrates, the global spread of biomedical models of childbirth has not brought forth one monolithic form of "modern birth." Focusing on the birth experiences of lower-class women in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, *Birth on the Threshold* reveals the complex and unique ways in which modernity emerges in local contexts.

Through vivid description and animated dialogue, this book conveys the birth stories of the women of Tamil Nadu in their own voices, emphasizing their critiques of and aspirations for modern births today. In light of these stories, author Cecilia Van Hollen explores larger questions about how the structures of colonialism and postcolonial international and national development have helped to shape the form and meaning of birth for Indian women today. Ultimately, her book poses the question: How is gender—especially maternity—reconfigured as birth is transformed?

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