



Veins of Devotion: Blood Donation and Religious Experience in North India (Studies in Medical Anthropology)

Dr. Jacob Copeman

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According to public health orthodoxy, blood for transfusion is safer when derived from voluntary, nonremunerated donors. As developing nations phase out compensated blood collection efforts to comply with this current policy, many struggle to keep their blood stores up.

Veins of Devotion details recent collaborations between guru-led devotional movements and public health campaigns to encourage voluntary blood donation in northern India. Focusing primarily on Delhi, Jacob Copeman carefully situates the practice within the context of religious gift-giving, sacrifice, caste, kinship, and nationalism. The book analyzes the operations of several high-profile religious orders that organize large-scale public blood-giving events and argues that blood donation has become a site not only of frenetic competition between different devotional movements, but also of intense spiritual creativity.

Despite tensions between blood banks and these religious groups, their collaboration is a remarkable success story—the nation's blood supply is replenished while blood donors discover new devotional possibilities.

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