



## Daughters of Parvati Women and Madness in Contemporary India

**Sarah Pinto**

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"A poignant, compelling, complex, and provocative example of anthropological storytelling. Based on original and evidently difficult fieldwork focused on the treatment of women's mental illnesses in north India, the book offers a gendered reading of psychiatry. It is also very much an intimate and intensely reflexive ethnography."—Ann Grodzins Gold, Syracuse University

"An important book, making interventions in how we think about choreographies of clinical mental health work with families broken and repaired. Its ethnographic specificities have to do with India, but its accounts of medical, familial, and narrative crises are of broad theoretical import."—Michael M. J. Fischer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

In her role as devoted wife, the Hindu goddess Parvati is the divine embodiment of *viraha*, the agony of separation from one's beloved, a form of love that is also intense suffering. These contradictory emotions reflect the overlapping dissolutions of love, family, and mental health explored by Sarah Pinto in this visceral ethnography.

*Daughters of Parvati* centers on the lives of women in different settings of psychiatric care in northern India, particularly the contrasting environments of a private mental health clinic and a wing of a government hospital. Through an anthropological consideration of modern medicine in a nonwestern setting, Pinto challenges the dominant framework for addressing crises such as long-term involuntary commitment, poor treatment in homes, scarcity of licensed practitioners, heavy use of pharmaceuticals, and the ways psychiatry may reproduce constraining social conditions. Inflected by the author's own experience of separation and single motherhood during her fieldwork, *Daughters of Parvati* urges us to think about the ways women bear the consequences of the vulnerabilities of love and family in their minds, bodies, and social worlds.

**Sarah Pinto** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Tufts University and author of *Where There Is No Midwife: Birth and Loss in Rural India*.