

[Mobile ebook] Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty (Forms of Living)

## Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty (Forms of Living)

Veena Das

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Health, Disease, Poverty



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**Veena Das : Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty (Forms of Living)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty (Forms of Living):

Affliction inaugurates a novel way of understanding the trajectories of health and disease in the context of poverty. Focusing on low-income neighborhoods in Delhi, it stitches together three different sets of issues.First, it examines the different trajectories of illness: What are the circumstances under which illness is absorbed within the normal and

when does it exceed the normal putting resources, relationships, and even ones world into jeopardy? A second set of issues involves how different healers understand their own practices. The astonishing range of practitioners found in the local markets in the poor neighborhoods of Delhi shows how the magical and the technical are knotted together in the therapeutic experience of healers and patients. The book asks: What is expert knowledge? What is it that the practitioner knows and what does the patient know? How are these different forms of knowledge brought together in the clinical encounter, broadly defined? How does this event of everyday life bear the traces of larger policies at the national and global levels? Finally, the book interrogates the models of disease prevalence and global programming that emphasize surveillance over care and deflect attention away from the specificities of local worlds. Yet the analysis offered retains an openness to different ways of conceptualizing what is happening and stimulates a conversation between different disciplinary orientations to health, disease, and poverty. Most studies of health and disease focus on the encounter between patient and practitioner within the space of the clinic. This book instead privileges the networks of relations, institutions, and knowledge over which the experience of illness is dispersed. Instead of thinking of illness as an event set apart from everyday life, it shows the texture of everyday life, the political economy of neighborhoods, as well as the dark side of care. It helps us see how illness is bound by the contexts in which it occurs, while also showing how illness transcends these contexts to say something about the nature of everyday life and the making of subjects.

In this beautiful volume, Veena Das continues her quest into the minor events and enduring suffering, the mundane intensity of the present and remembrance of things past that constitute ordinary human existence, thus opening a novel line of reflection and research in what can be called an anthropology of life. (Didier Fassin author of *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*) Veena Das offers a complex ethnographic meditation on illness among the urban poor and the diverse kinds of response (practical, methodological, ethical) it invites. As Das so precisely attends to affliction, readers have the privilege of following one of anthropology's most distinctive and distinguished voices." (Michael Lambek University of Toronto) Told with delicacy, vigour and a sharply critical eye, this compelling account of the everyday events of illness in low income neighborhoods [in Delhi] shows what anthropological attentiveness can do. If its power comes from the evident power of the mind behind it, it also comes from a modestly understated account of how to be both in the company of people and a recorder of affliction. Above all, it is a work of exquisite attention to the incoherences and normalizations that disease makes of family circumstances, medical practices, state provisioning, singular lives, and that these make of it. Socially sensitive and world-alert at the same time, Das's narrative holds the reader in (gripping, edifying) suspense between its different planes. No less perhaps than one would expect from this author, but a model of social science writing all the same. (Marilyn Strathern University of Cambridge) Reading *Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty* is like observing a master at work. [This is a] formidable piece of scholarship immersed in more than a decade of ethnographic engagement etched in stunningly crafted anthropological prose. This longitudinal immersion in the everyday lives of urban poor produces a tender and intimate account without lapsing into unwitting sentimentality. An ethnographic and theoretical tour de force! (Aditya Bharadwaj The Graduate Institute, Geneva) This is a must read for scholars and researchers who work on matters related to health and illness and for those in the academy who see their research as being inherently applied and interdisciplinary in nature. (SCTIWI)...a compelling read that should be of interest to scholars working in medical anthropology, psychological anthropology, and the anthropology of South Asia (Leslie Jo Weaver *Anthropology Quarterly*) Over four decades Veena Das has established herself as one of the most imaginative and sensitive writers to be found in any of the human sciences. In this brilliant book, she attends to the everyday work of care and endurance that makes up the life of the poor in Delhi. As ever, her ear is attuned to the fateful turn of phrase, the pause, the silence. But in this new volume she attends to other voices as well [not only] the voices of health professionals and economists, struggling to put their understanding of the objective conditions that shape the experience of health and poverty to practical use but also the voices of fellow anthropologists wrestling with the limitations of their theoretical and descriptive language. *Affliction* is a work of great generosity and no little beauty. It is, if anything even more remarkable than its predecessors in Das's remarkable oeuvre. (Jonathan Spencer University of Edinburgh) Veena Das' book, '*Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty*' provides an important, ethnographically powerful, laddering of scenes of instructions for us all. (Michael M.J. Fischer *Somatosphere*) About the Author Veena Das is Krieger Eisenhower Professor and Professor of Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, where she teaches in the Department of Anthropology. She is Foreign Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Third World Academy of Sciences. She has published widely on questions of social suffering and violence, and her books include *Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual* (1977, 1987, 2011), *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (1995, 2001), and *Life and Words: Violence and Descent into the Ordinary* (2007). She is the recipient of an honorary doctorate in letters humaines from the University of Chicago and an honorary doctorate in the social sciences from the University of Edinburgh. Her most recent book is *Affliction: Health, Disease, and Poverty* from Fordham University Press (2015).