

Advance Praise

Innovative and important, this book sheds new light on India's rich, fluid, and fraught landscape of gender and sexual nonconformity. Rather than adding to existing studies on *hijras* and queer subjects, it urges our attention to the emergence of trans women and the ways they fashion themselves at the intersections of regional, national, and global politics. Meticulous ethnography and lucid writing power this eye-opening story of how trans women respond to the imperatives of sexual respectability and caste and class mobility, while distancing themselves from *hijras*. A sobering account of modernity and economic liberalization's impact on *hijra* life-worlds, it also offers fresh insights into the possibilities of trans women challenging social hierarchies. This book is set to become a pivotal reference in fields ranging from trans, gender, and sexuality studies to South Asia studies and beyond.

Jyoti Puri, author of *Sexual States: Governance and the Struggle over Antisodomy Law in India* (2016)

Liz Mount's book provides an ethnographically compelling and sobering assessment of ongoing transformations in the lives and identities of gender nonconforming people in urban India. Drawing on interviews, ethnography, and textual analysis, Mount demonstrates how an increase in the forms of upward mobility available to trans and gender nonconforming people in the context of economic liberalization and NGOization also corresponds to new forms of hierarchization and exclusion that build upon entrenched ideals of middle-class respectability. Mount's book will appeal to all those who are interested in grappling with the complex, conflicted expansion of LGBTQ+ rights and freedoms in a 'new' India, where increased avenues of upward mobility have often been accompanied by the remaking of age-old inequalities.

Aniruddha Dutta, author of *Globalizing through the Vernacular: Kothis, Hijras and the Making of Queer and Trans Identities in India* (2024)

Mount's research on gender nonconforming (GNC) people, especially trans women, in Bengaluru takes us through NGO offices, queer pride marches, and photo exhibitions to offer an account of the growing divide between trans women and *hijras*. Through identity work and aspirations for upward mobility, the "new" trans women not only distinguish themselves from their

“traditional” counterparts (*hijras*), but also uphold values of modesty and respectability often associated with middle-class women. Mount shows in rich detail how gender is central to constructing class differences in contemporary India.

Chaitanya Lakkimsetti, author of *Legalizing Sex: Sexual Minorities, AIDS, and Citizenship in India* (2020)

“New” Women

Recent global attention to transgender issues and new opportunities for trans people can appear as positive and progressive social change. “*New*” *Women* challenges this assumption through an ethnography of emerging trans women and traditional gender nonconforming *hijras* in India. In many countries, people identify as either cisgender or non-cis identities like transgender and nonbinary. India is unique for its recognized, yet stigmatized, gender nonconforming *hijras*. This book explores changes in *hijra* groups due to economic liberalization and LGBTQ+ advocacy, particularly the rise of the trans woman.

Liz Mount locates trans women within patriarchal and postcolonial histories that shape ideal womanhood in India. As trans women align themselves with middle-class, respectable (cisgender) womanhood, they distance themselves from *hijras*, perpetuating their exclusion. Ultimately, this intersectional feminist analysis shows that new forms of gender identity can reinforce old inequalities and what appears as progressive change for some trans people can marginalize others.

Liz Mount is an Assistant Professor of Practice at Texas Tech University. “*New*” *Women* is her first book.

“New” Women

Trans Women, *Hijras*, and the
Remaking of Inequality in India

Liz Mount



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*To the memory of my grandmother,
Helen Deal Mount (1915–1991),
who taught me to read and to love learning.
And to Vihaan,
in whom her fondness for books lives on.*

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