



# The Right Spouse: Preferential Marriages in Tamil Nadu

*Isabelle Clark-Decès*

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*The Right Spouse* is an engaging investigation into Tamil (South Indian) preferential close kin marriages, so-called Dravidian Kinship. This book offers a description and an interpretation of preferential marriages with close kin in South India, as they used to be arranged and experienced in the recent past and as they are increasingly discontinued in the present.

Clark-Decès presents readers with a focused anthropology of this waning marriage system: its past, present, and dwindling future. The book takes on the main pillars of Tamil social organization, considers the ways in which Tamil intermarriage establishes kinship and social rank, and argues that past scholars have improperly defined "Dravidian" kinship. Within her critique of past scholarship, Clark-Decès recasts a powerful and vivid image of preferential marriage in Tamil Nadu and how those preferences and marital rules play out in lived reality. What Clark-Decès discovers in her fieldwork are endogamous patterns and familial connections that sometimes result in flawed relationships, contradictory statuses, and confused roles.

The book includes a fascinating narration of the complex terrain that Tamil youth currently navigate as they experience the complexities and changing nature of marriage practices and seek to reconcile their established kinship networks to more individually driven marriages and careers.

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