From the end of 2003 to the beginning of 2005 I lived for fifteen months in an inner-city colony of Delhi. On my arrival in the metropolis, my intention was to pursue a study that would be classically anthropological, insofar as I wished to document holistically the interrelations between voluntary blood donation activity and kinship, politics, economics, and religion. While I did indeed collect data on each of these themes, for reasons of space and coherence this book has ended up focusing primarily on religious aspects of blood donation. It was never my intention to limit the study to Delhi, and I also spent stretches of time in West Bengal, Mumbai, Haryana, Chennai, and even Beijing at an International Red Cross and World Health Organization conference on techniques to promote voluntary blood donation. This is therefore a pan-Indian study of blood donation activity with an ethnographic emphasis on north India, and Delhi in particular.

I interacted with and gathered information on a very large number of different organizations connected with blood donation. Where it seems apt I provide background information on their activities, but allotting an introductory paragraph to each of them would result in constant interruptions to the flow of the argument, so I have included a glossary that provides some details on each of them.

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Veins of Devotion