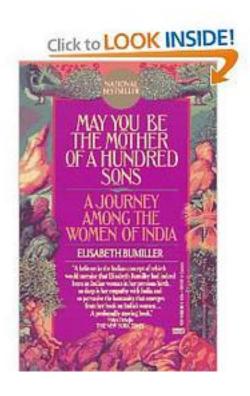
May You Be The Mother Of A Hundred Sons



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Before Elisabeth Bumiller lived in India in the mid-1980s, she had reported mainly on upper-crust Americans for the Washington Post. Her four-year stay turned her romantic image of India and largely unexamined feminist sentiments upside down and shook them hard. Although Indian women are guaranteed equality by their constitution, religious and cultural conceptions of their lowly role make this a hollow boast for many. Bumiller's well-spun book deals with admittedly sensational topics: a bride burning case; a rare death by sati, in which a young widow joined her husband on the funeral pyre; poor villages where girl babies are so unwelcome that some don't survive and cities where boy babies are given the edge by prenatal tests and the availability of

abortion. Arranged marriages, the lives of village women, and the great histrionic appeal of the Indian film industry also catch her Western eye. Beneath the surface of each story several others bubble up, sometimes illuminating customs or obscuring easy outrage. Other times, though, they emphasize the limitations of being an outsiderFrancesca Coltrera
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