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DECONSTRUCTING MOTHERHOOD

Indian Cultural Narratives and Ideology (1970s Onwards)

Monica Khanna Jhalani

Through an exploration and analysis of a vast number of literary and cultural narratives from the 1970s to the present, this book explores how motherhood is ideologically constructed as the woman's primary role in India. It deals with various theoretical approaches to motherhood including the bio-determinist, Anthropological, Marxist and Socio-psychological perspectives, and examines issues such as reproductive choice, infertility, assisted reproductive technologies, abortion, voluntary childlessness, lesbianism, illegitimacy, and "working mothers."

The cinematic material ranges from classics like *Mother India* and *Deewar*, to controversial films like *Fire*, to the critically acclaimed *Astitva*, and box office hits like *Hum Saath Saath Hain*, *Gharwali Baharwali* and *Salaam Namaste*. Literary narratives include books or short stories by Indian writers in English such as *Shashi Deshpande*, *Anita Desai*, *Manju Kapur*, *Githa Hariharan* and *Jhumpa Lahiri*, besides translations of regional writings by authors like *Mahasweta Devi* and *Krishna Sobti*.

The book focuses on the average Indian woman, whose identity, regardless of class, caste or religion, seems to be defined by the ideology of motherhood - whether or not she is a mother, why or why she is not a mother, how she can become a mother if she is not one, what kind of a mother she is and what kind of a mother she should be.

Monica Khanna Jhalani teaches Communication Skills at Gahlot Institute of Management Studies and Research, Navi Mumbai and is also a freelance editor. She has a PhD and MPhil in English Literature from SNDT Women's University, Mumbai. She has also worked as a journalist and media researcher. Her research work primarily focuses on gender and media studies on which she has presented papers in national and international conferences.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Preface	vii
1. Introduction	
Constructing Motherhood	1
2. Motherhood:	
A Function with Few Choices	43
3. The Curse of Infertility	101
4. The Myth of the Ideal Mother	153
5. Modes of Resistance and Subversion	208
6. Conclusion	255
Bibliography	258
Filmography	272
Index	275

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