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Autobiography & Memoir

Shooting Water: A Memoir of Second Chances, Family, and Filmmaking
Devyani Saltzman
Newmarket Press
978-1-55704-711-3
(April 30, 2006)

When the author's Indian mother and Jewish father announced their divorce, she was eleven years old and was asked to choose whether she wanted to live with her father or mother. Saltzman chose to live with her father.

This book takes up the story eight years later, when Saltzman accepts an invitation to reunite with her mother, the award-winning filmmaker Deepa Mehta, and join her in shooting the film *Water*. This memoir spans five years, following Saltzman's journey through India, England, and Sri Lanka; mostly, though, it is a look at the author's journey back to her mother and her attempt to struggle out from beneath the weight of the decision made in her youth. "Our time together was painful," Saltzman writes, "and always haunted by my choice."

Saltzman's choice haunted her during the eight years she spent living with her father, and was still troubling when she joined her mother in India to work on the film. The choice hangs over her, creeping through the pages of the book as Saltzman attempts to part with the guilt of her decision and truly connect with her mother and make amends.

The book twists and turns around difficult circumstances surrounding shooting the controversial film—about Hindu widows in Colonial India—and around the lives of these two women. According to Hinduism, widows are expected to atone for their husbands' death by living as ascetics. With child marriage common in India, many young widows are left shackled to the memories of their dead husbands.

Being born to a Hindu, Indian mother and a Jewish, Canadian father, and raised between Canada and India, Saltzman writes with cultures crisscrossing all over the pages, providing weight to the profound questions that plague her as she tries to figure out what her culture is and where she belongs.

At its core, this is a beautiful portrayal of a mother-daughter relationship that is naturally imperfect and therefore profoundly significant. The reader experiences the film developing

despite the obstacles that surround it, and observes a mother transforming through her daughter's eyes, and a girl transforming through her relationship with her mother.

The author is a freelance writer in Canada; *Shooting Water* is her debut book. She received a degree in Human Sciences at Oxford University, specializing in Sociology and Anthropology, and was the recipient of the Young Professionals International Internship Grant toward a feature-length documentary in India.

The book provides a deep, profound look at the lives of women, through Mehta's camera lens and Saltzman's bittersweet tale.