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## VALMIKI'S DAUGHTER

by Shani Mootoo

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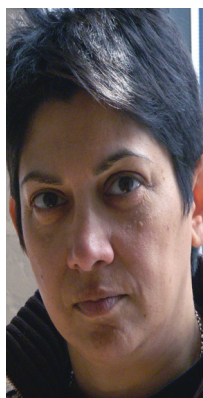
### Some topics to consider while reading *Valmiki's Daughter*:

- Parent-child relationships
- Family loyalty
- Home and family
- Post-colonialism
- Sexuality and relationships
- Homophobia and class systems

In *Valmiki's Daughter*, award winning, internationally acclaimed author Shani Mootoo writes with an unusual and mesmerising combination of clear-eyed affection and expansive humanity about a father and daughter who both conceal painful secrets.

As the daughter, Viveka, gradually discovers the truth about herself, her struggle to break free threatens to unmask her socially prominent father and shake the foundations of her delicately calibrated society.

### About Shani Mootoo



Shani Mootoo was born in Ireland and grew up in Trinidad. She has lived in Canada since the early 1980s. Her acclaimed first novel, *Cereus Blooms at Night*, was published worldwide and was a finalist for the Giller Prize. Her second novel, *He Drowns She in the Sea*, was on the longlist for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Mootoo is also an acclaimed visual artist. She has lived in Vancouver and Edmonton, and now lives in Toronto.

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**Discussion questions**

- 1 What does loyalty to family consist of in Valmiki's world? Has this changed in Viveka's world?
- 2 Discuss the significance of the forest and the garden in the novel.
- 3 Nayan makes an unexpectedly long and thoughtful speech in Part III, as he is driving Viveka to see Anick. How do his words reflect the idea of post-colonialism?
- 4 What role does Merle Bedi play in the novel?
- 5 Nayan speaks of 'the cold of seeing ourselves suddenly naked, without our families, without our cultures, without the spirit and sense of self that back-home could have given us.' What does home and family mean for the novel's characters? Can you relate to Nayan's statement?
- 6 Discuss how keeping caged birds reflects on Valmiki's sense of self.
- 7 How much of the homophobia in the novel is class related and how much is related to sexism?
- 8 The characters keep expecting that marriage will save them in some way. Save them from what?
- 9 How true is Viveka's assessment of her father as 'Brave on one hand, a coward on the other'?
- 10 Does Valmiki have any wisdom to share with his daughters or has a life of duplicity corrupted his judgements?