The Inheritance of Loss

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF KIRAN DESAI

Kiran Desai was born in 1971 in India to another author, Anita Desai. Kiran left India at 14 years old, moving to England with her mother for a year before landing in the United States. She remained in the U.S. for her secondary education, studying creative writing at Bennington College. She later earned two M.F.A.'s—one from Hollins University and another from Columbia University. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, was published in 1998 and received high praise and numerous awards. While working on her second novel, Desai spent various amounts of time in New York, Mexico, and India. *The Inheritance of Loss* was published in 2006 and won the Man Booker Prize that year. Her third novel is currently in progress.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Inheritance of Loss requires background information on two major historical movements in India. The first is British colonial rule in India and eventual Indian independence. At the end of the 16th century, the British aimed to challenge the Portuguese monopoly of trade with Asia. The British East India Company was chartered to carry on the spice trade. In the mid-18th century, the British forces, whose duty until then consisted of protecting Company property, teamed up with the commander in chief of the Bengali army, Mir Jafar, to overthrow the leader of Bengal. Jafar was then installed on the throne as a British subservient ruler. The British then realized their strength and potential for conquering smaller Indian kingdoms, and by the mid-19th century, they had gained direct or indirect control over all of present-day India. In 1857, the Indian Rebellion of 1857 took place in an attempt to resist the company's control of India. The British defeated the rebellion, and the British crown formally took over India and it came under direct British rule and the Indian Civil Service (ICS). The ICS was originally headed by British state officials, but these were gradually replaced by Indian officials in order to appease the public. In the ensuing decades, a reform movement slowly developed into the Indian Independence movement, which was popularized by Mahatma Ghandi and the Indian National Congress Party in the 1920s. In 1947, the British granted Indian Independence, partitioning British India into India and Pakistan. Jawaharlal Nehru of the Indian National Congress became the first Prime Minister of India after Independence. The second political movement backgrounding the novel is the Gorkhaland movement. After the British granted India independence in 1947, they drew India's border in Darjeeling such that many Nepali people were now in India. In the 1980s, Subhash Ghisingh began a movement calling for the creation of a state called Gorkhaland within India, separate from the existing Indian state of West Bengal. A violent movement was created in 1986 called the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), which creates much of the political conflict of Desai's novel. Various strikes and protests led to the deaths of over 1,200 people. A particularly bloody conflict on July 27, 1986, serves as one of the book's climactic scenes.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

One of Desai's biggest literary predecessors and influences in this genre is V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*. Early in *The Inheritance of Loss*, two of the characters discuss this book, which tells the story of post-colonial, traditionalist Africa encountering the modern world through an Indian merchant. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the characters criticize the author for being stuck in the past and not progressing past "colonial neurosis." In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai attempts to push past these perceived lacks in *A Bend in the River* by demonstrating how colonialism has transformed into a more discrete but sometimes equally as harmful form of oppression and bias against Eastern countries through globalization.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Inheritance of Loss
- **When Written:** 1998-2006
- **Where Written:** New York, Mexico, India
- **When Published:** 2006
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Historical fiction, drama
- **Setting:** Kalimpong, India and New York City in the 1980s; various locations in India and England in the 1940s-1980s
- **Climax:** Biju returns to Cho Oyu
- **Antagonist:** Colonialism, the GNLF, the police
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Literary legacy. Kiran Desai's mother, Anita Desai, was also an author and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize three times, but never won. When Kiran won the award, she became the youngest woman to do so, at 35 years old.

Family ties. Many of the book's characters draw from Desai's own family and life. Like the judge, Desai's paternal grandfather journeyed from India to Cambridge University as a penniless student before becoming a civil service judge. Like Sai, Desai

herself had attended a convent school in Kalimpong, and had a cook that she loved when she was growing up.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel opens on the judge and his granddaughter Sai sitting on the veranda of their home, Cho Oyu, while their cook makes tea and the judge's dog, Mutt, sleeps on the porch. A set of boys from the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) arrive and demand that the judge hand over his guns, threatening them with a rifle and stealing anything of value they can find in the house. The judge then sends the cook to the police station. The police return home and accuse the cook of having a hand in the robbery. They tear apart his meager hut and read letters from his son, Biju.

Biju works at Gray's Papaya in the heart of Manhattan, but is asked to leave when the manager of the restaurant is instructed to do a green card check. Biju then cycles through a series of restaurants, but the situation is often the same. Biju is fired from a French restaurant when customers complain about the smell of the food.

The narrative jumps back to Sai's arrival at the judge's home nine years earlier, at age eight. She had left St. Augustine's convent, where she had grown up with English customs, because her mother and father had recently been hit by a bus. The nuns then found the address of her grandfather and returned her to him. When Sai arrived, she and the judge exchanged few words, but the judge was pleased that they seemed to be accustomed to similar cultures.

The judge remembers when he had left his own home at age twenty. He had been accepted at Cambridge to study for the Indian Civil Service. He had also just been married to a fourteen-year-old wife, Nimi. At Cambridge, he was treated like an outcast and a second-class citizen, and barely spoke to people. He began to find his own skin color odd, and his own accent strange. He spent most of his time studying.

The morning after Sai arrives, the cook takes her to meet her new tutor: Noni, who lives with her sister Lola. They pass the houses of Uncle Potty, Father Booty, the Afghan princesses, and Mrs. Sen—all of whom are upper-class and well-educated.

Biju's second year in America begins at an Italian restaurant, where he is once again fired because the owners believe he smells bad. He then takes a job at a Chinese restaurant, delivering food on a bicycle. In the winter, it is freezing, and he is fired because the food he delivers becomes too cold by the time he arrives. Biju returns to a basement in Harlem, where he lives with other undocumented immigrants in destitute conditions. He then gets another job at the Queen of Tarts Bakery.

Over the years the cook had become ashamed of the judge's poor treatment of him, and he began to lie to other servants and Sai to exaggerate the judge's wealth and social standing. In reality the judge had been born to a family of the peasant caste, but his father saved up money to send him to the mission school. He had studied hard and risen to the top of his class. He attended Cambridge, passed his exams and was admitted to the Indian Civil Service. He was placed in a district far from his home and toured around India, even though his knowledge of regional Indian languages was minimal.

When Sai turns sixteen, Noni realizes that she will need another tutor for math and science, because her own knowledge has been exceeded. The judge asks the principal of the local college if he can recommend a teacher or graduate for her. Twenty-year-old Gyan, a recent graduate who has not yet been able to find a job, is hired. He and Sai quickly become entranced by one another.

At the Queen of Tarts Bakery, Biju meets a Muslim man from Zanzibar named Saeed Saeed, He admires Saeed because of the way he seems to stay afloat in the underground system of being an illegal immigrant rather than drowning in it, the way Biju feels. Biju begins to question his prejudice against people from Pakistan, and then questions his prejudice against people of many other ethnicities, as they had never done anything harmful to him or to India, unlike white people.

Back in Kalimpong, Sai asks the cook about the judge's wife. At first the cook lies and says they loved each other, but he then remembers that the judge hated his wife. Sai then questions the judge about her grandmother. He rebuffs her questions, but begins to remember her for himself.

Before the judge had left for England, his family didn't have enough money for his travel expenses and so they looked for a wife for him in order to gain a dowry. One local man named Bomanbhai Patel was extremely wealthy, and was very interested in the judge because he planned to enter the ICS. Patel offered up his most beautiful daughter, who was fourteen years old at the time. The two married shortly after, and she was renamed Nimi by the judge's family. The night of the wedding, he had tried to consummate the marriage, but she was terrified, and so they did not. Before he left for England, the two shared one gentle moment in which he took her on an exhilarating bicycle ride.

The cook sends letters to Biju asking him to help others get to America. Biju feels overwhelmed by these requests, and Saeed empathizes with him because he is experiencing the exact same thing. More than anything, the two aim to get their green cards. One day, they are swindled by men in a van who say that they can get them green cards, but in reality simply steal their money. Shortly after this incident, the Queen of Tarts Bakery closes.

Gyan and Sai's romance begins to bloom when he is stuck at the house due to a monsoon. They flirt and play games, measuring each other's hands, feet, and limbs. One day, Gyan asks her to

kiss him, and she does. They begin to sightsee together, going to cultural institutions, the zoo, and a monastery. Gyan tells her a little of his family history, about how they had been taken advantage of serving in the British Army.

Meanwhile, Lola and Noni discuss the growing political rumblings of the Nepalis living in India, who are demanding a separate state, more job opportunities, and schools that teach Nepali. Noni is more understanding of their cause than Lola, but Lola begins to see her own prejudice when her neighbor, Mrs. Sen, starts speaking about Pakistanis with the same kind of bias.

Biju now works at a restaurant called Brigitte's, but is unhappy because they serve steak. He realizes that it's important to him to retain his values, and so he quits and goes to work in the Ghandi Café, which is run by a man named Harish-Harry. Harish-Harry invites the staff to live in the basement below the kitchen, but then pays them a quarter of minimum wage.

Sai celebrates Christmas with Lola, Noni, Uncle Potty, and Father Booty. After New Years, Gyan is in the market when he sees a procession of young men from the GNLF. He is quickly caught up in the procession and relates to their demands and complaints, which echo many of his own as a young Nepali man. The next day, Gyan arrives at Cho Oyu and yells at Sai, frustrated by her complicity in English cultural elitism.

The judge remembers how his and Nimi's relationship had turned sour. When he had returned from England, she had taken his **powder puff**. As he looked for it, his family ridiculed him for using it. By the time he discovered that Nimi had taken it, he was furious, and he raped her. In the following days, he insisted that she speak English and follow English customs, which she refused to do. He took off her bangles, threw away her hair oil, and pushed her face into the toilet when he discovered her squatting on it. He then left her at their home while he went away on tour.

The day after Gyan's eruption at Sai, he tries to apologize, but they only return to their fight about English customs, and Sai accuses him of being a hypocrite for enjoying Western things like cheese toast with her but making fun of them with his friends. He leaves, and tells his friends in the GNLF about the judge's guns, giving them a description of Cho Oyu and telling them that there is no telephone.

The cook thinks about his attempts to send Biju abroad. For his first attempt, Biju had interviewed and been accepted at a cruise ship line. They had paid eight thousand rupees for the processing fee and the cost of training before realizing that it was a scam. His second attempt involved applying for a tourist visa. Despite the fact that it was difficult for poorer people to be approved for a visa, Biju was allowed to go to America.

At the Ghandi Café, three years after that visa was approved, Biju slips on rotten spinach. He demands Harish-Harry pay for a doctor for him, but Harish-Harry refuses and calls Biju ungrateful. He suggests that Biju return to India for medical care.

Father Booty, Uncle Potty, Noni, Lola, and Sai go to exchange their library books before the GNLF closes more roads and shops. When they start to walk back to their car, they spot a procession of GNLF, and Sai sees Gyan there. He ignores her. On the way back, Father Booty takes a picture of a butterfly at a checkpoint and is stopped by the police. It is discovered that he is in India illegally, and he is quickly deported.

The narration skips ahead, after the incident in which the boys from the GNLF steal the judge's guns. A few days later, the police pick up a drunk and accuse him of the crime, beating him brutally. Meanwhile, in America, Biju becomes informed about the Nepalis' strikes. He tries to call the cook, and they have a very disjointed conversation. Biju feels even more empty than before. The strikes in Kalimpong continue, and the Nepalis put up tents in front of Lola and Noni's property. The sisters begin to feel that the wealth that always protected them now makes them vulnerable.

Sai goes to find Gyan at his home and sees how poor he actually is. Gyan becomes angry at her pity, and the two argue before he throws her in a bush and beats her. Sai returns home and sees the wife of the drunk who had been beaten by the police begging the judge for money and mercy. They turn her away. Meanwhile, Gyan's sister informs his family of what he's been doing, and they forbid him from going to the GNLF protest the following day.

The next day, the cook attends the protest because the GNLF is forcing each family to send a male representative. Rocks start flying from nowhere, and the protesters and police, in equal confusion, begin to throw rocks at each other. The police then begin to open fire on the crowd. Many young boys are killed, and the protesters begin to wrestle weapons away from the police and turn on them. The police run away and seek shelter in private homes. Lola and Noni turn them away.

Biju decides to return home to India despite warnings not to. He buys various souvenirs to bring home to his father, and takes the cheapest plane possible to Calcutta. When he arrives, the airline loses many bags, and only compensates the foreigners and non-resident Indians. Biju waits for his luggage, which arrives intact, and steps out into the street. He feels at peace in his homeland.

The incidents of horror continue in Kalimpong. There are many robberies and acts of arson. The woman that the judge had turned away returns and steals Mutt in order to sell her. When they realize she is missing, the judge, the cook, and Sai all set out to search for her. When the judge goes to the police station, he is mocked because this seems like a minimal crime relative to the atrocities being committed.

The judge thinks back to the family, the culture, and the wife he had abandoned. One day when he was on tour, a woman had

knocked on Nimi's door and taken her, unknowingly, to be a part of the Nehru welcoming committee for the Indian National Congress Party. The judge had returned and been confronted by the district commissioner. He lost a promotion and had been incredibly embarrassed. When he arrived home, he had cursed Nimi, beaten her, and kicked her. Six months later, his daughter had been born. He never met her. It is then implied that Nimi's brother-in-law had orchestrated her death, when her sleeve had caught fire on the stove.

Biju is told that there are no buses to Kalimpong because of the political situation. Biju catches a ride with some GNLF men. They take him most of the way before dropping him off and robbing him of all of his possessions, money, and clothing. He is forced to walk the rest of the way to Kalimpong.

The judge grows more and more distraught over Mutt's disappearance. He blames the cook and threatens to kill him. The cook then goes to the canteen, where he runs into Gyan. Hearing what has happened and growing increasingly guilty, Gyan resolves to find Mutt for Sai. The cook returns to Cho Oyu and begs the judge to beat him. The judge hits him over and over again with a slipper. Sai yells for him to stop, and makes the cook tea. At that moment, the gate rattles, and the cook goes to answer it. It is Biju. The cook and his son leap at each other as morning breaks over the mountains.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Judge / Jemubhai – Called Jemubhai or Jemu in flashback scenes, the judge is the head of the household at Cho Oyu and Sai's grandfather. He grows up in a family belonging to the peasant caste, who pour all of their resources into ensuring that he gets a good education. He attends a mission school and then goes on to Cambridge University on a scholarship, aiming to join the Indian Civil Service. Before leaving, he marries fourteen-year-old Nimi in order to gain a dowry, though the two do not consummate the marriage. In Cambridge, even though he is viewed as an outsider, he tries to imitate British culture. He passes his exams and is accepted into the ICS. When he returns to India, he is humiliated when she steals his **powder puff** and, in retaliation, rapes her. The judge spends much of the rest of their marriage abusing her and trying to strip her of her Indianness. He eventually sends her away, fearing that he will kill her. In the present, the judge is a deliberate, angry old man filled with self-loathing because he is accepted by neither British culture nor his own society. His only solace comes from the company of his dog, Mutt, and eventually his granddaughter. The judge serves as the primary character who experiences colonization firsthand. Though he benefits from it, he must also come to terms with his abuse of his wife and the oppression he has inflicted on others because he was forced to adopt British culture.

Sai – The judge's granddaughter. Before arriving at Cho Oyu, she had attended St. Augustine's convent, where she was "Anglicized" (taught British customs and ideas) just as the judge had been. At age eight, Sai's mother and Sai's father are killed in a bus accident, and the nuns bring Sai to Cho Oyu to live with her grandfather, whom she had never met previously. Over the years, she becomes friends with Noni (who tutors her), Lola, Father Booty, and Uncle Potty—the judge's neighbors who are also upper-class, and who share English traditions with her like celebrating Christmas and listening to the BBC. The judge is stern with Sai, and so she feels closer to the cook, who often treats her like a daughter. When Sai is sixteen, she gets a new tutor, Gyan. The two have a fast and full romance, before realizing that their cultural differences are too great. Sai is naïve and somewhat self-absorbed, but she is also smart and understands that many of Gyan's issues with her have little to do with her, and more to do with the circumstances of her upbringing and her privilege.

Biju – The cook's son. At the cook's urging, Biju travels to New York City in order to earn money and make a better life for the family's future generations. He hops from one restaurant job to another, either due to green card inspections, customer complaints about his smell, or his own distaste for the business owners and customers. He comes to confront his own bias in globalized America when he meets Saeed Saeed, a Pakistani man he admires. Biju also recognizes his own values: he quits his job at a restaurant that serves steak because he realizes that he needs to live according to the principles of his family and his religion. This then brings him to the Gandhi Café, where he meets Harish-Harry. Biju is optimistic and at times gullible, but he also becomes worn down by the life of an illegal immigrant in New York City, whom he calls a "shadow class." Eventually Biju becomes so exhausted from being overworked and taken advantage of that he decides to return to India, even though he knows he will likely disappoint his father. Biju thus embodies the yearning for home that many of the characters experience.

The Cook – The judge's cook and Biju's father. The cook had worked for the judge since he was fourteen years old, and his servant status is very much ingrained in him. He does whatever the judge asks, though the judge often abuses him verbally, and at the end of the novel, physically. While he understands his own place, the cook also works hard to make sure that his son Biju can have a better life in America. He has a minor illegal business selling liquor on the side in order to make a small sum of additional money. He is proud hearing from his son hopping from job to job, knowing that his own hard work has paid off. Even though the cook is often humiliated by other characters, he has a streak of vanity as well. He exaggerates his position as well as the judge's wealth and kindness in order to make himself feel better about working for the judge. The primary

characterization of the cook, however, is as a servant. The judge and the cook, though they have spent more time with each other than with anyone else, have no personal familiarity. This is reinforced in the novel's writing as the cook's name, Panna Lal, is not revealed until the second to last page of the novel, when his son returns. He does not become a fully realized person, then, until he is reunited with his son.

Gyan – Sai's twenty-year-old Nepali math tutor, though their relationship blooms into a romance. Gyan begins the novel as naïve as Sai, but eventually he matures due to the GNLF movement that arises in Kalimpong. He recognizes that he shares many of their complaints and concerns, and marches in protest with them. After this political awakening, Gyan becomes frustrated at Sai's innocence and cultural elitism. He betrays her for the movement by telling his friends that the judge has guns at his house and no telephone, leading to the robbery of Cho Oyu. Eventually Gyan becomes wracked with guilt and tries to reconcile with Sai, though their relationship remains unresolved at the end of the novel. Gyan, like Sai, holds some hypocritical views, because he enjoys tea parties and cheese toast with her, but he also recognizes that these British imports are byproducts of a system that has led to his own subjugation. Ultimately, Gyan is a character reckoning with generations worth of systematic oppression, which becomes personal when it leads to his own coming-of-age process.

Nimi – The judge's wife and Sai's maternal grandmother. She is fourteen when she marries the judge. The two do not consummate their marriage before the judge leaves for university because Nimi is so terrified, but they share one affectionate bicycle ride before he leaves. However, when the judge returns, he begins to expect her to relinquish her culture, as he has done. He becomes angry when Nimi steals his **powder puff**, and he rapes her as punishment. He then begins a cycle of abuse, trying to get her to conform to English culture. Eventually, after Nimi is accidentally a part of the Nehru welcoming committee for the Indian National Congress, the judge sends her away because she has humiliated him and he fears he will kill her in anger. Nimi then has a daughter, Sai's mother, and spends the rest of her life living with her sister before she catches on fire from the stove (it is implied that her sister's husband may have caused this accident). Nimi becomes an embodiment of the Indian culture from which the judge is attempting to separate himself.

Noni – One of the judge's neighbors, Lola's sister, and Sai's first tutor when she arrives at Cho Oyu. She and Lola are upper-class Bengali women who have also assimilated many parts of British and Western cultures, such as celebrating Christmas, reading Jane Austen, and listening to the BBC. Noni becomes a mother figure for Sai in many ways. Noni has never been in love, and counsels Sai to take life's chances as they come, and to avoid being stuck in an environment in which time does not seem to move forward.

Lola – Noni's sister. She and Noni live in a house which had belonged to Lola and her late husband Joydeep before he suddenly died of a heart attack. Lola is more opinionated than her sister, holding strong negative stereotypes of the Nepalis and enforcing India's rigid caste structures. She believes that there should be strict divisions between servants and upper-class people. Her daughter, Pixie, is a reporter for the BBC, suggesting that like Noni and many of the judge's other neighbors, she has also bought into the cultural superiority of the British.

Father Booty – Another of the judge's neighbors, Father Booty is a Swiss priest who runs a dairy farm. It is implied that he is in some kind of relationship with Uncle Potty. Over the course of the novel, it is discovered that Father Booty is actually in India illegally, and should not own property. He is told he must leave the country immediately, and so he becomes an odd and accidental victim of the GNLF movement.

Uncle Potty – The judge's nearest neighbor, "a gentleman farmer and a drunk." It is heavily implied that he is in a relationship with Father Booty. He is well-educated and from a well-known family, and so Lola and Noni put up with him even though they consider him to be less cultured than they are.

Saeed Saeed – One of Biju's coworkers at the Queen of Tarts Bakery. Saeed is a Muslim man from Zanzibar, and Biju comes to admire him for his resilience and his ability to not only survive but also thrive as an undocumented immigrant. Eventually, Saeed convinces a young hippie woman to marry him and sponsor him for a green card, which Biju sees as the loftiest of goals in America.

Harish-Harry – The owner of the Gandhi Café, the last restaurant in which Biju works. Harish-Harry uses globalization to his advantage in selling generic Indian food to Americans. Though he is kind to Biju, he also takes advantage of him and refuses to pay for a doctor when Biju is injured in the restaurant.

The Judge's Father – Like the cook does for Biju, the judge's father works hard to allow the judge to get the best education and improve his social class. However, when he sees that the judge has completely forsaken Indian culture, he says that the judge has become like a stranger to him and the rest of the family. The judge, for his own part, becomes ashamed of his father and the culture in which he was brought up.

Bose – The judge's only friend after he graduates from Cambridge. Bose is Indian, but also strove to rid himself of his Indian culture in the hopes of being accepted by the British. When he and the judge reunite for a final lunch, however, Bose has come to realize how mistaken they were to idolize a culture that oppressed them so thoroughly.

Sai's Father (Mr. Mistry) – An orphan himself and a member of the Indian Air Force. He and Sai's mother travel to Moscow for him to be interviewed for the space program, but the couple is

hit by a bus when they are crossing the street, leaving Sai to be taken care of by her grandfather.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Sai's Mother (Mrs. Mistry) – The judge's and Nimi's only daughter. She and Sai's father leave Sai in a convent while the two travel to Moscow for him to be interviewed for the space program. Crossing the street, they are killed by a bus, leaving Sai orphaned and in the care of her grandfather.

Mrs. Sen – Another of the judge's neighbors and Lola's rival. Like Lola's daughter Pixie, her daughter Mun Mun is also a reporter, except in America, and the two debate constantly over whether the U.S. or Britain is a better country.

The Afghan Princesses – Two more of the judge's neighbors, who were given refuge by Nehru when the British seated someone else on their father's throne.

Mrs. Rice – The judge's British landlady while he attends school in Cambridge.

TERMS

Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) – A violent movement created in the 1980s by Subhash Ghisingh, on which much of the political conflict in Desai's novel is centered, and which **Gyan** briefly joins. The GNLF called for a separate state called "Gorkhaland" for the Nepalis in India, and turned particularly violent in 1985-1986. Various strikes and protests led to the deaths of over 1,200 people. An especially bloody conflict on July 27, 1986, serves as one of the book's climactic scenes.

Indian Civil Service (ICS) – The elite higher civil service of the British Empire in British-ruled India. The ICS oversaw all government activity in the 250 districts that comprised India. At first, almost all of the top members of the ICS were British, but eventually the service attempted to "Indianize" in order to appease those calling for Indian Independence. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, **the judge** is appointed to a position in the ICS overseeing the district courts.

Indian National Congress – A political party in India (sometimes simply known as "Congress") founded in the late 19th century. Under the leadership of Mahatma Ghandi after 1920, it became the principal leader of the Indian independence movement, eventually leading to freedom from British rule in 1947. The first Prime Minister of India was Jawaharlal Nehru, a member of the Congress Party. When **Nimi** is unwittingly taken to be a part of Nehru's welcoming committee, the **judge** is furious because he opposes the Congress party and Indian independence, having benefited greatly from British rule.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

COLONIALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

The Inheritance of Loss takes place in the 1980s between two worlds: the austere, upper class home of the judge and Sai at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas, and an assortment of New York City restaurants where Biju works. With India still just beginning to establish itself as an independent nation less than 40 years after the end of British colonial rule, and New York continuing to experience waves of immigration, the book explores the effects of colonialism and globalization. Desai's novel contains a great deal of cynicism about globalization, treating it as a harmful consequence of colonialism as well as showing that it negatively impacts all the book's characters, both economically and personally, regardless of social standing.

For the judge, who experienced colonization firsthand in his youth and owed his career to the British, globalization results in a loss of identity and an extreme feeling of self-hatred. When the judge is nineteen he studies at Cambridge in order to join the civil service. However, he finds that he quickly becomes isolated because even the lowest members of English society turn their noses up at him and complain that he stinks of curry. In response to this, he begins to reject his Indian identity. His studies and exams focus solely on British cultural staples, like trains and British poets. When he passes these exams and achieves his judgeship in the Indian Civil Service, he is showered with more and more praise, and is treated like a "man of dignity." He begins to envy the English and loathe Indians. Yet even on the train back to India, he sits alone reading "How to Speak Hindustani," because he is still ill at ease with the English, but doesn't speak the language where he is being posted as a judge. Globalization is shown to be particularly harmful for Indian people in positions like the judge's because it pushes them to idealize a culture into which they are never fully accepted, and one which exploits their own people. After the judge's education and career is over, and after India gains independence, he moves to the house at Kanchenjunga (which had been built by a Scotsman) because of its isolation. Desai writes that "the judge could live here, in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country, for this time he would not learn the language." His complete separation from both British and Indian cultures shows the lasting and deeply harmful effects of colonization, even after it is no longer in effect.

Years after the judge moves to Kanchenjunga, his granddaughter Sai moves in with him. She and their upper-class neighbors around Kanchenjunga believe that their foreign imports, like Swiss cheese, Italian opera music, and Russian paintings, are simply a way for them to express themselves in the modern, globalized era. They don't realize, however, that these preferences come from a deep-seated cultural elitism imposed by the British, which eventually harms them as well. Lola, Noni, Sai, and the judge's neighbors all speak English and watch the BBC. They have paintings by Russian aristocrats and an entire collection of Jane Austen books. They become fascinated by the fact that chicken tikka masala has replaced fish and chips as the number one takeaway dinner in Britain, finding it humorous that the British would prefer tikka masala. Their laughter demonstrates their bias: they seem to take it for granted that British food is better than Indian food. By repeatedly elevating all forms of Western culture above their own, they implicitly denigrate their own cultural heritage as Indians. Eventually, due to the strikes in town brought on by Nepali protests, Lola and Noni are forced to fight to maintain their quality of life. However, they begin to stand out more and more for their wealth, and thus become afraid of what others might do to them or their homes. The things they had previously seen as the harmless trappings of a cosmopolitan life—Trollope, the BBC, Christmas—suddenly make them a target for robberies. Gradually, Nepalis begin to move onto their land in huts. In this way, their British imports become liabilities for them, as others begin to see them as signs of cultural elitism and economic exploitation.

Biju's storyline provides an alternative perspective on globalization through the lens of foreigners arriving in New York City. Biju understands that while foreign cultures and cuisines may be fetishized and highly valued in cosmopolitan cities like New York, actual immigrants continue to be undervalued. In each of the restaurants in which Biju works, the food is appreciated more than the workers themselves, particularly when the food is from Western countries, and the people are from Eastern (or African) countries. Customers at the French bistro are satisfied with the food until they realize that it is being prepared by Algerians, Senegalese, and Moroccans. Thus, globalization can devalue the people from certain countries, particularly those, it seems, that have previously been colonized. Biju himself then begins to realize the hypocrisy of his own actions toward others, in both India and America. Many people in India hold prejudice against Pakistanis as well as black people, and Biju comes to see the irony of the admiration he had felt toward white people, even though they "arguably had done India great harm." On the other hand, he showed prejudice toward many others in America (such as Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese people), though they had never done a single harmful thing to India. Thus, even though these cultures have a shared history of oppression under colonial rule, they hold similar prejudices against each other. Biju's storyline points to the ways in which one of the legacies of colonialism is that the people who were once its subjects often internalize the colonizer's hatred of non-whites and non-Westerners in a globalized world.

Because *The Inheritance of Loss* spans a large amount of time and two continents, it is able to show the effects of colonization firsthand and the ensuing harm wrought by globalization. Whether it reveals subconscious prejudices, leads to a rejection of one's own culture, or engenders feelings of self-hatred, globalization visibly perpetuates the oppressive legacy of colonialism. Because it is perpetuated even by those to whom it is harmful, it becomes a particularly insidious form of oppression—a form which, the novel argues, seems impossible to erase in the world as it currently exists.

POVERTY VS. PRIVILEGE

The characters in Desai's novel have diverse economic backgrounds, from the judge's wealth to the poverty of the cook. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the gulf between those with extreme privilege and those living in poverty is generally shown to be a direct consequence of the legacy of colonialism. Though privilege comes in many forms, Desai illustrates the vicious and self-reinforcing cycle of class privilege by showing how those who have privilege continue to gain wealth and social standing, while those without such privilege live in poverty that only deepens their disadvantaged position. Colonialism reinforces the existing rigid class structure in India by enabling those with existing privilege and disadvantaging those without it, all while falsely claiming a meritocratic attitude towards poverty and privilege.

The central cultural and economic struggle in the novel is experienced by the Nepali people living in India. Gyan and his family represent the typical experience of those who had been displaced and experience a cycle of poverty because of their position in the caste hierarchy. In 1947, the protestors explain, the British granted India freedom and also formed the Muslim nation of Pakistan but did not create an arrangement for the Nepalis in India. Though they represent eighty percent of the population in Kalimpong, they have neither schools nor hospitals that are Nepali-run, and jobs are not given to Nepalis. They are laborers often working as servants. Even though they constitute the majority, the wealth is not in their hands, and so they remain relatively powerless because no one will afford them opportunities. On a more individual level, Gyan is ashamed of his home, which is somewhat modern but very close to ruin. Desai comments that this is not "picturesque poverty" but something even more dismal. Because of this, Gyan is ashamed of being with Sai and bringing her back to his home, which creates a rift between them. She calls him a hypocrite because he enjoys cheese and chocolate at her house but condemns these foods when he's with the Nepalis because he is unable to afford them. What she doesn't realize, however,

is that he is condemning the fact that some live in luxury while others are extremely poor.

Though the judge himself had not come from a particularly wealthy family, the opportunity to attend school in Britain creates a cycle of more and more wealth and opportunity for his future generations. After going to school in Cambridge, the judge passes the British exams needed to be admitted to the Indian Civil Service and join the government's judiciary body. Because of this, the judge's salary increases from ten pounds a month to three hundred pounds a year. He and another Indian friend together resolve to put their Indian-ness behind them, and they avoid the other Indian students. Because they start to associate Indians with poverty, they divide themselves even further from their culture. When the judge's daughter (with whom he had very little contact) and her husband move to Moscow, her daughter Sai is then sent to a convent and grows up "Anglicised" as well. Sai describes how she only learned how to make tea in the English way; she had never learned the Indian way. When she leaves the convent, she talks about some of the lessons she had implicitly learned: cake is better than *laddoos* (a type of Indian confection); silverware is better than using one's hands; worshipping Jesus is better than worshipping a phallic symbol; English is better than Hindi. But she only learns these lessons because the judge is able to pay for her to attend school at the convent. When Sai is on the train to Cho Oyu (the judge's home), the nun accompanying her criticizes the people who defecate on the train tracks. Thus, not only are they too poor to have a system of plumbing, but they are then criticized for trying to go to the bathroom—a basic human necessity.

Biju provides another, similar perspective on poverty and privilege as experienced by immigrants journeying to America, noting that those with fortune continue to gain fortune, and those who are poor continue to be luckless. At the immigration desk, Biju observes how the more desperate the people are, the more likely they are to be turned away by the embassy officials. On the other hand, those who are rich enough to travel can prove that they will not stay in America illegally because their passports show that they have already been abroad. Stamps from places such as England, Switzerland, America, and New Zealand and corresponding return dates prove that they reliably return to India. Therefore, the more traveled a person is, the more likely it is that they will be allowed to travel again. And in New York, even with aspirations of social mobility, being an undocumented immigrant means being relegated to a "shadow class," because people must often keep moving, finding new addresses, jobs, and names. This happens to Biju as well: after he secures a job, it often comes under threat when there are green card checks, or when people complain because he smells. Thus, the social mobility America promises is not extended to those who are the poorest. When Biju returns to India, discouraged by this "shadow" life, the bags of everyone on the airplane are lost. The airline states it will only give compensation to nonresident Indians and foreigners, not the resident Indians. The resident Indian passengers complain about this injustice—those from rich countries and those who are wealthy enough to live outside of India are treated better than those who live within it. Biju then remarks on the nonresident Indians' good manners as they stand in line for their compensation, thereby "proving" how much they deserved that good fortune.

In both locales—India and America alike—poverty and privilege are each treated as earned and deserved. Though this belief system is an extension of the caste system that India had prior to colonization, this system is also reinforced by colonization and meritocratic myths of capitalism. Those who are most able to afford and adopt British culture are rewarded for their assimilation, and are then assumed to be deserving of that reward. This idea also carries into America, as people immigrate in search of opportunity, but are largely denied it unless they are already wealthy. Those who are most able to afford to be there are accepted into the country most readily—a direct contradiction to the mythology of opportunity and social mobility in America which brings so many immigrants there in the first place.

HOME AND BELONGING

As the story stretches itself between two worlds and several different cultures, many of the characters experience alienation from the different places they inhabit. Each character, in their own way, exhibits a yearning for home. Biju seeks out a restaurant in New York City that serves Indian food; Gyan and the boys in the GNLF work to establish a political state they can truly call home. The book shows home is a place that is characterized above all not by geographic location but by a feeling of belonging engendered by one's own culture, traditions, and family.

Two of the physical houses in the novel—Cho Oyu and Gyan's home—serve as "homes" because they reflect the cultures and socioeconomic statuses of those who inhabit them. The judge's house had been built by a Scotsman, who had read accounts of the period and the area, such as *The Indian Alps and How We Crossed Them* and *Land of the Lama*—accounts that were written by the English about Indian culture. It had been fully outfitted with piping, tiling, tubing, and wrought-iron gates, representing how the judge feels at home in an Anglicised setting (which extended to Sai's upbringing as well). It is also interesting to note that the house is rotting and being eaten by termites, a metaphor for the outdated and rotting customs of Anglicised Indians. Gyan's house, meanwhile, is described as "modernity proffered in its meanest form, brand new one day, in ruin the next." The house has a tin roof, walls made of cement corrupted by sand, and electrical wiring coming in through the windows. The second floor had been attempted but unfinished, leaving

only a few bare posts. Though it tries to be modern, it demonstrates the way the middle class in India can teeter very quickly into poverty. Even though Gyan wants to better his life and the situation for Nepalis in India, he argues that he prefers this house over a house like Sai's, because to him Cho Oyu represents elitism and foreign luxury.

The Nepalis in India are also trying to establish an atmosphere of belonging for themselves, as they are protesting in order to create a state in which their culture is recognized. After Indian independence in 1947, the British created the nation of India and the nation of Pakistan—a division primarily based on the religious practices of those in the region, but the way in which the border between India and Nepal was drawn left many Nepalis displaced in India. The Nepalis' primary demands include the ability to establish their own schools (which would teach in their language), run their own hospitals, and have their own army. In India the Nepalis feel like outsiders because they are treated like servants, even though they represent eighty percent of the population in Kalimpong. Thus, in this post-colonial world, they work to have a "home" of their own, striking and protesting in the hopes that a state will be created within India that values them and their culture.

Biju, on the other hand, is physically displaced from his home. Instead, he tries to create a sense of home for himself in seeking out a living space and workplace that values and validates himself and his culture. Biju comes to work in a restaurant that serves steak, a fact that makes him uncomfortable because cows are considered sacred in his religion. He feels that it is imperative to not give up one's religion and the principals of one's parents, and so he quits his job. After this incident, he goes to work in another restaurant: the Ghandi Café. He feels at home with the food, the music, and most importantly, the people. The respect for his culture, which he is unable to find anywhere else in New York, is what makes him feel most at home. Ultimately, he returns to India, not only because of his poor treatment in America but also because he feels he has his lost connection to his father. When he arrives, he describes how he feels "the enormous anxiety of being a foreigner ebbing—that unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant." But while home may be more about people and culture than physical place, people and culture are inextricably linked to physical places. Biju's return suggests that while people may try to set down roots elsewhere, their connection to a particular place as home often remains strong. Thus, Biju only feels truly comfortable when he reunites with the cook in India.

Particularly in the newly globalized world presented in *The Inheritance of Loss*, "home" becomes less of a place and more of a sensibility or idea as people and products of all different backgrounds mix. Ending on a hopeful note with the reunion of Biju and the cook seems to suggest that one can never truly feel at home outside of one's immediate family and culture, which together are what defines a community. As a contrast to Biju at the end of the novel, the judge and Sai feel restless and ungrounded as they live in the gaps between two communities, belonging to neither one. Home thus becomes a physical manifestation of a sense of belonging to a community, and without that community, home is nonexistent.

GENDER AND MISOGYNY

The Inheritance of Loss examines the dynamics of two relationships in the colonial and post-colonial world: the judge and Nimi's, and Sai and Gyan's. These relationships develop many years apart, but they contain similar patterns. When there is equality between the partners in each relationship, the relationships remain gentle and even loving. However, when the men in these relationships begin to believe themselves superior to their female partners, any challenges to this superiority result in violence. But rather than supporting this violence or viewing the events only through the male lens, Desai focuses on the women in these relationships and paints them in a sympathetic light. The book thus takes a critical attitude of the misogyny often found in Indian culture, and exposes how it reinforces sexist and oppressive attitudes in its men.

Before the judge leaves for university in Britain, he is shy in his new marriage with Nimi, even showing room for love. When he returns from Britain, however, he is armed with a sense of superiority that causes him to criticize Nimi for her cultural background and eventually leads him to physically and emotionally abuse her. Initially, the judge had been hesitant with his new wife: she had been fourteen and he had been twenty when they married. The night of the wedding, she had cried in terror as he tried to have sex with her, and so he restrained himself. Over the ensuing days, the judge's family mocks him and eventually grows worried upon realizing that they have not had sex, and they tell him to force her. Instead, the judge takes Nimi out for a bike ride—perhaps the single loving experience of their relationship. When the judge goes away to university their marriage is essentially forgotten, but upon his homecoming their relationship takes a turn for the worse. Nimi unthinkingly takes the judge's **powder puff** and his family makes fun of him for being so distraught when looking for it. When the judge realizes that Nimi had taken it and embarrassed him, he grows violent, and rapes her in fury. These violent actions are supported by the misogyny in the surrounding society as well: the judge's family views the girl as "too spirited" and they lock the door to the bedroom to make sure that she cannot escape. His violence continues: when he discovers that she had been squatting on the toilet seat, he pushes her head into the toilet bowl. As a result, Nimi grows dull and invalid from her misery, and her skin breaks out. She stops caring for her appearance, which gives the judge more license to criticize her because her loss of beauty is seen an

affront to him. When Nimi unwittingly becomes a part of a welcoming committee for an opposing political party, the judge calls her ignorant, hits her, swings a jug of water into her face, and rains down punches on her. When he sends her back to her family, fearing that he might kill her, she is the one who is criticized for angering her husband. Thus, not only is Nimi the victim of physical and emotional abuse of her husband, but society also sanctions the attitude that this abuse is her own fault.

Sai and Gyan's relationship begins from a more affectionate place, but eventually Gyan's own political awakening leads him to view Sai as entitled and childish, and he begins to abuse her as well. At first, the two fall in love innocently when Gyan comes over to tutor Sai in math and science. The tension builds during their lessons until he asks her to kiss him, and she does. They call each other pet names, treat each other as equals, and seem unconcerned with the political rage that is rising around them. They visit various cultural institutes, have tea parties, and take in views of the valleys below. Yet when Gyan begins to see the perspective of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), he starts to feel superior to Sai, who has been sheltered and privileged all her life. Gyan sees a procession of protestors one day and is accidentally caught up in it. He feels comfortable in the masculine atmosphere and is ashamed when he remembers his and Sai's tea parties, viewing them as adolescent. Armed with this superiority and rage, he begins to be annoyed with Sai and eventually cruel to her. He betrays her by telling the GLNF that there are guns in her house. This leads to the episode in which boys from the GLNF to come to their house and threaten to kill Sai and the judge if they don't hand over their guns and give them valuables from the house. When Sai goes to confront Gyan for abandoning her and also betraying her to the GNLF, they argue. Though they match each other verbally, eventually Gyan throws Sai into a bush and beats her with a stick in an attempt to prove his dominance. Sai then worries that she will be called a lunatic, and that Gyan will be cheered on for his conquest. Like Nimi, Sai becomes the victim of violence in addition to societal misogyny, which only reinforces men's abilities to disrespect women.

Though the two primary romantic relationships in the novel begin under very different circumstances, they both end in violence. In both cases, the relationships become more violent as the men become invested in political causes, drawing a link between the absence of women from the political sphere and the abuse of women in the home. When the women attempt to claim equal status to their male partners, this is viewed as an affront, demonstrating that the culture of violently-reinforced patriarchy has remained unchanged across these two time periods. In this way, Desai also suggests that this pattern of violence within supposedly loving relationships is a pervasive one, symptomatic of the culture at large rather than something specific to these individual relationships. Yet by revealing the women's concerns and portraying their suffering sympathetically, Desai is exposing and critiquing the root of misogyny not only in Indian culture, but in all patriarchal cultures.

POWER AND HUMILIATION

Throughout the novel, various characters express feelings of humiliation. Most of the time, these feelings are caused by the actions of someone else in a more powerful position. Though power and humiliation are not necessarily opposites, *The Inheritance of Loss* illuminates a correlation between the two as Desai paints a portrait of a society wherein humiliation is used as a tool by some to retain power over others.

The novel begins as young boys from the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) come to Cho Oyu (the judge and Sai's house) in order to steal their guns. Their means of doing so is by proving their power over the judge, Sai, and the cook by threatening and humiliating them. The judge understands that the boys are more dangerous because of their age, as they have an insecure need to feel superior. When they take his guns, they also force the judge to set the table for them like a servant. They taunt him by saying that he can't do anything on his own, demonstrating a need to feel proud through the denigration of others. Their treatment of the cook, who is a servant, is no better. He hides under a table and is made to beg for his life, asking not to be killed because he is only a poor man. They finish by forcing the judge, Sai, and the cook to say "I am a fool" and "Jai Gorkha," meaning "Long live Ghorkaland," the separate state that Nepalis demand in India. Thus, not only are the residents of Cho Oyu personally humiliated, but they are forced to denounce their pride in their country in order to lift up another state for the benefit of vigilante children.

The judge's interactions with his wife, Nimi (which take place in flashbacks) demonstrate the push and pull of power within a marriage. In these interactions, the judge uses humiliation as a means of revenge for Nimi's ignorance and mistakes as well as to maintain dominance in the relationship. When Nimi takes the judge's **powder puff,** he is humiliated by his family because he is so distraught looking for it. When he discovers that his wife was the one who took it, he demeans her and rapes her. He grows to enjoy being cruel to her, as it buoys his own pride. If she cannot name a food on her plate in English, it is taken away from her. One day, after the judge returns from a tour, the district commissioner for the Indian Civil Service informs him that Nimi had taken part in the Nehru welcoming committee for the anti-colonialist Indian National Congress Party. Though she had done so unwittingly, the judge is mortified, because he supports colonial Britain, and in turn he humiliates Nimi through verbal and physical abuse before sending her back to her home, dishonoring her family.

The town government also has its fair share of corruption and

need to assert power over others, which can be seen in its police force. The police's many acts of brutality show that even (and perhaps especially) the most powerful members of society feel the need to use violent humiliation as a tactic in order to retain their status. When the cook goes to inform the police of the robbery at Cho Oyu, they treat him harshly and brutally even though he has been the victim of the crime, because he is far beneath them as a servant. When they go to Cho Oyu they suspect him of the crime and search his hut, exposing his poverty. After the robbery, the police pick up a drunk for the crime solely out of boredom. They beat him, and the more he screams the harder they beat him. Blood streams down his face, his teeth are knocked out, he is kicked until his ribs break, and the police blind him. When the GNLF begin a protest to burn the Indo-Nepali Treaty of 1950, an unknown group of people begins throwing rocks onto the protestors. In the confusion, the police and the protestors begin to bash each other with sticks and rocks, until the police open fire on the protestors. Thirteen local boys are killed, and several police are killed in return. They are locked out of the police station by their own men, and run to Lola and Noni's house to be sheltered from the mob.

In a society in which so much is defined by social status, humiliation can often feel like an even greater violation than physical violence. Because reducing someone to less than their perceived social stature is a great offense, it becomes an effective tool in bolstering one's own status. But this tactic is also shown to be symptomatic of the human desire for power in its cruelest manifestations, as many of the victims of this humiliation are already destitute. Desai thus demonstrates that those who use humiliation as a means of strengthening their power do so in cowardice, as they can only target the most vulnerable members of society.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE POWDER PUFF

A powder puff is a kind of pad used for applying powder to one's skin. The judge's powder puff, which he uses for his job, takes on a much larger significance when he returns from Cambridge as a part of the Indian Civil Service. It represents the judge's adoption of British culture and his rejection of Indian culture, not only in a metaphorical sense but also in a literal one, as he whitens his skin with the powder puff during his trials. When he returns home and Nimi steals the powder puff, the judge's discovery of her deception initiates his attempts to "Anglicise" her as well, as following this episode he gets a British companion for her, throws away her hair oils and bangles, and demands that she learn English. Additionally, the powder puff serves as a way of further culturally separating the judge from his own family. When he is looking for the powder puff, he tries to explain what it is and what purpose it serves, but they don't understand why he needs it and laugh at him for using it. This foreshadows the later feelings that the judge's father expresses, when he tells the judge that he has become a stranger to the family.

RATS AND OTHER ANIMALS

Rats appear throughout the novel, primarily surrounding Biju in New York City. These and other animals come to represent the abuse of society's poorest people. There are many instances in which animals are killed simply for entertainment, such as when Saeed Saeed kicks a rat up into the air until it comes down dead, or when another immigrant sets a garbage can with a rat inside it on fire. Some instances involve animals who are killed for food, but are no less gruesome, such as when a goat is butchered and skinned in India. Animals serve as an extension of a dynamic frequently seen between people in *The Inheritance of Loss*—that the most vulnerable individuals are the ones who are most likely to be preyed on, because they are easy to take advantage of—as when Biju is swindled time and time again in his quest to get to and then remain in America. This also makes the cook's statement that Biju was always very good with animals more symbolic, as it demonstrates that Biju is unwilling to take advantage of others in order to benefit himself.

KUKRIS

Kukris are the particular kinds of sickled knives used by the GNLF. The kukris signify the dedication as well as the growth of violence within this movement. Even when the GNLF begins as a peaceful movement, its members use the kukris to slice their own fingers in order to write posters in blood. This serves as a test of dedication and sacrifice for the young boys joining the movement. In the end, though, this insurgency does turn violent, particularly at the protest in which the police open fire on the crowd. Initially, the protesters only have their kukris to fight back, demonstrating the institutional disadvantage that the movement is up against, just as the Nepalis are institutionally disadvantaged by the Indian-run society in Kalimpong.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Grove Press edition of *The Inheritance of Loss* published in 2006.

Chapter 1 Quotes

His lines had been honed over centuries, passed down through generations, for poor people needed certain lines; the script was always the same, and they had no option but to beg for mercy. The cook knew instinctively how to cry.

Related Characters: The Cook

Related Themes:

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

When the boys from the GNLF arrive at the judge's home to steal his guns, they point a rifle at him and threaten his life, dragging him out from his hiding place underneath the dining table. This passage keys into some of the more expansive themes of the novel. First, the boys use humiliation as a tactic to assert their power over the cook, even though he is far older than they are, and they are of relatively similar social standing. Humiliation is particularly effective here because the cook's lack of wealth makes him especially defenseless, so the boys exhibit the cruelest form of power in targeting a man who is already so vulnerable. But the passage also expresses how those who are poor, like the cook, have been systematically oppressed over generations and stuck in a cycle of poverty that leads to their degradation—so much so that they have memorized a metaphorical script because they have been humiliated so frequently.

Chapter 2 Quotes

They surveyed the downfall of wealth with satisfaction, and one of the policemen kicked a shaky apparatus of pipes leading from the *jhora* stream, bandaged here and there with sopping rags.

Related Characters: The Judge / Jemubhai, Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

After the boys from the GNLF steal the judge's guns and various goods in the house, the police arrive to investigate the robbery. They walk about the house, supposedly looking for evidence, but actually taking pleasure in seeing the estate falling apart, which causes Sai to be ashamed of her living situation. Though it is a small gesture, kicking the pipes is an expression of aggression and an assertion of power over the home, especially with the knowledge that at any minute the house could crumble because it is being hollowed out by termites. This is therefore a small bit of foreshadowing of the cruelty and brutality the police exhibit towards those they feel are beneath them, as shortly after this episode the police rip apart the cook's own hut and then torture an innocent man for this robbery.

Additionally, the leaky pipes and the termites serve as a reflection of the way the judge's beliefs and values are crumbling. Indian independence had put him on the wrong side of history because he had been pro-Britain and pro-colonialism. Now, however, his social status and wealth teeter on the edge of disintegrating.

An accident, they said, and there was nobody to blame—it was just fate in the way fate has of providing the destitute with a greater quota of accidents for which nobody can be blamed.

Related Characters: Sai, Biju, The Cook

Related Themes:

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

When the police investigate the cook's home, turning over the mattress and piling his possessions in a heap, Sai sees a photograph on his wall of him and his wife. The cook's wife had died seventeen years earlier; she had fallen out of a tree while trying to gather leaves to feed the family's goat. This quote is one of the instances in which Desai's own voice comes through the text, as it is not from any single character's perspective. Here Desai gets at the heart of what constitutes privilege, which is protection from these kinds of "accidents for which nobody can be blamed," and how poverty can mean the opposite, trapping people in a cycle of misfortune.

Chapter 6 Quotes

Still, they considered themselves lucky to have found each other, each one empty with the same loneliness, each one fascinating as a foreigner to the other, but both educated with an eye to the West, and so they could sing together quite tunefully while strumming a guitar. They felt free and brave, part of a modern nation in a modern world.

Related Characters: Sai's Mother (Mrs. Mistry), Sai's Father (Mr. Mistry)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

In a flashback explaining some of the history of Sai's parents, Desai describes how the couple feels when Sai's father proposes to Sai's mother. The two provide an example of how globalization has in many ways taken up the mantle of colonization. They consider themselves to be part of a society that is a mix of their own cultures and Western cultures, feeling "free and brave" because of it. Globalization, for them, represents opportunity and an ability to become Westernized. Yet at the same time, it demonstrates how only the wealthy are able to have this opportunity, as they are both educated people. Like the judge, they become selected for opportunity because of their willingness to adopt a foreign culture and to forsake their own. And for Sai's parents, they already had the economic opportunity that allowed them eventually to travel to Russia in the first place. Thus, globalization does not afford them new opportunity; rather the fact that they already had economic opportunity gives them the ability to partake in globalization.

> The judge could live here, in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country, for this time he would not learn the language.

Related Characters: The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

When the judge looks at Cho Oyu for the first time, which had been built by a Scotsman, he is attracted to its architecture, described as resembling the rib cage of a whale: hollow, rough, and dark. Here, the judge expresses his desire to live in the space. The home thus becomes a reflection of the judge. It resides in India but is distinctly Westernized. This is true of the judge as well, because at this point the judge acknowledges his distance from his family, and understands the damage that colonialism has wreaked upon him, alienating him from his wife and the rest of his family.

He also acknowledges himself as a foreigner in his own country particularly because he would not learn the language. This implies that the judge feels a parallel experience with his first voyage to England, where he had learned the language, yet this time he would *not* make an effort to become reintegrated into his own culture. For many of the characters—including the judge, the cook, Sai, and Gyan and the Nepalis, language is an enormous part of what constitutes a home. Thus, the judge's refusal to learn the language of his country means that he will forever be isolated from it.

> This underneath, and on top a flat creed: cake was better than *laddoos*, fork spoon knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and consuming a wafer of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than Hindi.

Related Characters: Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

After Sai's parents are killed in the car crash, Sai leaves the convent for Cho Oyu. She reflects on the lessons she learned there, particularly remembering the cultural doctrines to which she was not so subtly introduced. This list demonstrates the wide variety of lessons she learned, and how bluntly she learned them. Though each one covers a different type of conduct, they all carry the same thesis: British culture is better than Indian culture. This allows Sai to connect more with her grandfather, who had also received many of these lessons, as well as the surrounding neighbors with whom she is able to partake in Western culture. At the same time, it alienates her from her country in many ways, as these lessons ultimately become the basis of the conflict between her and Gyan. Eventually, she realizes how harmful these cultural institutions are not only to those that don't have the privilege to indulge in them but also to herself, because it eventually makes her vulnerable to the political uprising that occurs later in the novel.

Chapter 8 Quotes

> Jemubhai looked at his father, a barely educated man venturing where he should not be, and the love in Jemubhai's heart mingled with pity, the pity with shame.

Related Characters: The Judge's Father, The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

As Jemubhai prepares to leave his home town to study at Cambridge, his father gives him a coconut to toss into the waves so that the gods might bless his journey. When Jemubhai boards the ship that will take him away, his father yells to remind him to throw the coconut, and the judge is embarrassed at the attention he is drawing towards himself. This moment represents a breaking point for Jemubhai as he subconsciously realizes the transformation he will have to undergo to be a part of the Indian Civil Service, an institution that played a direct part in the upkeep of colonialism in India. Not only will Jemubhai have to undergo a cultural transformation, but he will also have to separate himself from his family's origins. Indirectly, this moment is also an example of the humiliation experienced by those in poverty. Though the judge's father's embarrassment is self-inflicted because he shouts to Jemubhai, humiliation requires the presence of a more powerful entity: in this case, those around the ship who are onlookers, seeing the judge's father and looking upon his poverty with disgust. In this moment, the judge decides that he cannot be associated with this kind of person if he wishes to further his own opportunities.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ It was important to draw the lines properly between classes or it harmed everyone on both sides of the great divide.

Related Characters: The Cook, Sai, Noni, Lola

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

During Noni's last tutoring session with Sai, they worry that Sai might be lonely having only her grandfather for company. Sai replies that she also has the cook, who talks often about his family. Noni disapproves of this dynamic, explaining here that there should be a more tangible divide between classes. Not only does this show Noni's personal bias against those of lower classes, but it also perpetuates harmful systemic imbalances in society. Trying to separate the wealthy from the poor reinforces these social strata and creates more economic inequality, like the fact that people will not hire Gyan for a job because he is from a poorer family even though he is qualified for it. Yet this dynamic also becomes harmful to Noni herself, because this inequality builds and builds over generations, until (as with the GNLF) people become so unhappy that they see that the only solution is through violent uprising.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ This habit of hate had accompanied Biju, and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India.

Related Characters: Saeed Saeed, Biju

Related Themes:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

When Biju begins to work in the Queen of Tarts Bakery, he meets a Muslim man from Tanzania named Saeed Saeed. He comes to admire Saeed's ability to make the American system work for him, and starts to question some of his long-held biases against Muslims and other minority groups. Once again, the harmful effects of colonialism and globalization rear their ugly heads. Just as with the judge, Biju had come to internalize stereotypes that supported those who had oppressed Indian people and damaged minority groups. Globalization in some ways magnifies those stereotypes, because now people of many different minority groups are competing with each other for these low-paying jobs—and Biju can also see how some of these stereotypes have affected him negatively as well. However, there are some positive effects, as one can see in the fact that getting more direct, personal exposure to people of different backgrounds can actually mitigate and disprove those stereotypes. While it is easy for Biju to get this direct experience, others (particularly white Americans) might not because of other racial or class divides.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ The dowry bids poured in and his father began an exhilarated weighing and tallying: ugly face—a little more gold, a pale skin—a little less. A dark and ugly daughter of a rich man seemed their best bet.

Related Characters: Nimi, The Judge's Father, The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

When the judge's family is trying to send him off to England, they realize that they need more money to help him make the voyage. They attempt to arrange a marriage for him so that the woman's dowry might add to their finances. In this quote, there are several dynamics at work. First, pretty overt misogyny can be seen in full force here, as women become explicitly commodified. Their beauty equates to literal monetary value; having a lack of beauty means they must compensate in other ways. Secondly, one can also see subtle racism propagated by colonialism in seeing how skin color is related to beauty here. The paler a woman is, the more beautiful she is considered, while the darker she is, the uglier she is believed to be. Even though eventually the judge gains a beautiful wife in Nimi, she still doesn't escape this commodification. Her father, Bomanbhai, is very wealthy and the dowry reflects that affluence, but he gives the judge his most beautiful daughter in order to make the marriage more appealing (but the dowry smaller). At no point do the judge and Nimi speak or even meet before the wedding, as the marriage is purely transactional.

Chapter 17 Quotes

"The more pampered you are the more pampered you will be the more presents you receive the more presents you will get the more presents you receive the more you are admired the more you will be admired the more you are admired the more presents you will get the more pampered you will be—

Related Characters: Biju, The Cook

Related Themes:

Page Number: 104

Explanation and Analysis

When Biju's application for a tourist visa is accepted and he is able to travel to America, the cook begins to field questions from people in Kalimpong, asking for advice on how to get their children to the United States. People bring him little gifts in exchange for his help, which usually consists of giving them Biju's contact information and sending a letter to his son asking him to help. The cook realizes how fortune can be experienced in a cycle (such as Biju's ability to go to America followed by the reception of many gifts). The quote in and of itself is cyclical here, as one long run-on sentence demonstrates a recurring pattern of presents, pampering, and admiration. The downside to these gifts, of course, is that momentary fortune is not the same thing as privilege. Over in America, Biju is in the depths of poverty, and the cook's flooding of letters and people arriving in America only makes it harder for Biju to stay afloat.

"You lived intensely with others, only to have them disappear overnight, since the shadow class was condemned to movement. The men left for other jobs, towns, got deported, returned home, changed names. [...] The emptiness Biju felt returned to him over and over, until eventually he made sure not to let friendships sink deep anymore.

Related Characters: Saeed Saeed, Biju

Related Themes:

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

After the Queen of Tarts Bakery is closed by the health inspectors, Saeed Saeed and the other employees scatter to different jobs and lives. This quote serves as a counterpoint to the cook's thoughts earlier in the chapter, when fortune piled upon fortune. Here, readers can see the opposite happen, as poverty leads to more poverty. Working in an unclean bakery because it is in need of staff willing to work there eventually leads to the bakery's closing. Following that, Biju is forced to spend all of his money between jobs because he has no source of income. But more than that, this quote describes how these immigrants are forced to essentially start over each time they are fired from a job, leading to a cycle of both poverty and loneliness. The inescapability of this cycle is one of the main reasons that Biju decides to return home, because not only can he not make a better life for himself in America, but he must also do it in near-complete isolation.

Chapter 18 Quotes

"Don't work too hard."

"One must, Mrs. Rice."

He had learned to take refuge in the third person and to keep everyone at bay, to keep even himself away from himself like the Queen.

Related Characters: Mrs. Rice, The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

When the judge goes to study in Cambridge, he begins to isolate himself and devote himself completely to his readings. Just before he takes his final examinations, he becomes so engrossed in his studies that his landlady, Mrs. Rice, takes his trays of food right to his door. When he speaks to her in the third person, this impersonality is in a way a completion of relinquishing his old self. Not only does he take on a kind of British affect in speaking like the Queen, but he has ceased to even acknowledge himself in the first person. Keeping himself away from himself, as Desai writes here, demonstrates the way that colonialism separates the judge's Indian identity from his new one. He relinquishes his old culture and in doing so, relinquishes much of his old personality and sense of self.

Chapter 21 Quotes

Noni: "Very unskilled at drawing borders, those bloody Brits."

Mrs. Sen, diving right into the conversation: "No practice, na, water all around them, ha ha."

Related Characters: Sai, Lola, Mrs. Sen, Noni

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

After one of Sai's lessons, Lola, Noni, and Mrs. Sen all talk about the growing trouble being caused by the GNLF. Although the protests are for the creation of a state in India, the troubles date back to Indian independence, when the British created the nation of India and the nation of Pakistan, but the way in which they drew the borders left many Nepalis stranded in India. Here, Noni and Mrs. Sen joke about the inability of the British to draw borders correctly. While this may be true, the fact that the women can joke about the topic also speaks to their own privilege. While they sit comfortably in Kalimpong, many of the Nepalis feel truly underserved by the way they are displaced. Even though they constitute eighty percent of the population, they are still treated like their culture is inferior. It's also difficult to tell whether Noni is also explicitly making a joke when she uses the word "bloody"—a distinctive British-ism. Nevertheless, in many ways, colonialism has benefitted her lifestyle at the expense of people of other cultures. However, the political uprising and the strikes that come later in the novel also demonstrate that even those who did benefit from colonialism are eventually harmed because of the stratified society it left in its wake.

Chapter 22 Quotes

One should not give up one's religion, the principles of one's parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what. [...] Those who could see a difference between a holy cow and an unholy cow would win. Those who couldn't see it would lose.

Related Characters: Biju

Related Themes:

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis

When Biju is working in the Queen of Tarts Bakery, he finds that he is extremely uncomfortable serving steak to customers because in his religion, cows are considered sacred. Here, Biju resolves that he is unwilling to give up his values, and so he quits his job. This conflict keys into why America will never feel like home for Biju: because his values are disregarded in America. Those who assimilate will survive, but those who wish to retain their cultural heritage and expect others to respect that cultural heritage will be sorely disappointed. This idea also provides an argument for why globalization is merely an extension of colonialism. Though it might not be as direct as the way in which the British expected their culture to be adopted in India, there is a tacit understanding in America that one will put one's culture aside in order to fit in. If not, as Biju notes, it is just as easy to replace a person with someone who will.

Chapter 26 Quotes

❝ It was a masculine atmosphere and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk—

It suddenly seemed against the requirements of his adulthood.

Related Characters: Sai, Gyan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

After Gyan is swept up in the GNLF procession, he goes to the local canteen with friends to drink and discuss the movement. He begins to become ashamed of his prior political inactivity, thinking back on his earlier time with Sai. This quote represents a turning point in Gyan's character arc as he finds himself involved in the movement, but his reasons for becoming involved are many. One of the things that *The Inheritance of Loss* does so well is to demonstrate that no person is motivated or affected by one thing. Thus, Gyan is certainly spurred by the desire for a sense of belonging, and a way of escaping the cycle of poverty to which the Nepalis have been subjected. At the same time, Gyan is motivated by a misogynistic desire to push against Sai, who he associates with femininity and childishness. Gyan is intent on growing up, and so the "masculine atmosphere" of the GNLF provides him with an opportunity to do that. Fighting for a political cause thus almost becomes an indirect result of his need for adulthood.

Chapter 27 Quotes

❝ "You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere."

Related Characters: Gyan (speaker), Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis

Gyan confronts Sai after the GNLF procession and explains why he is upset with her. Even though he doesn't have the words to communicate his logic or knows that his major issues are not directly caused by Sai alone, his argument is sound. Colonialism led to two systemic issues that have culminated in the current political situation: first, the poor drawing of borders by Britain, which left the Nepali people in India without a sense of belonging even though they constitute a majority. Second, even after Indian independence, those (like the judge, Lola, Noni, and Sai) who have been either chosen by the British to be the elite class (like the judge) or who are wealthy enough to afford it (like Lola and Noni) perpetuate these dynamics and accrue cultural capital at the expense of the poor. What Gyan also tries to communicate is that this "running after the West" is also harmful, because it makes them relinquish their own culture and, in many ways, sacrifice their own people's and country's well-being.

Chapter 28 Quotes

❝ They belonged to this emotion more than to themselves, experienced rage with enough muscle in it for entire nations coupled in hate.

Related Characters: Nimi, The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

The judge explains how his and Nimi's relationship came to be so damaged: he would attempt to force British culture (like English or certain foods) on her and take her Indian culture (like bangles and hair oils) away from her, using tactics of humiliation in order to assert his power over her. This quote demonstrates how in this conflict, they came to represent more than themselves. Their clash of cultures ultimately paralleled the dynamics of colonialism, with each one representing a different culture. Thus their rage had "enough muscle" for entire nations, tapped into a hatred that exceeded individuals and instead crossed into national sentiments. An additional comparison with colonialism is that this would be a battle that Nimi, like India, would not win.

Chapter 29 Quotes

❝ Don't you have any pride? Trying to be so Westernized. They don't want you!!!! Go there and see if they will welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets and even then they won't want you.

Related Characters: Gyan (speaker), Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 191

Explanation and Analysis

After Gyan is swept up into the wave of the GNLF, his next visit to tutor Sai results in an outburst about her hypocrisy and her Westernization when she speaks about how much fun she had at Lola and Noni's Christmas party. Gyan's thoughts here tie the two major storylines of the plot together. First, there is the harm of colonization and globalization on all of those who have been a part of an oppressed culture. For someone like Sai or the judge, one can imitate the culture but never really belong to it, and in turn are laughed at by fellow Indians (like when Indians laugh at Lola's daughter when they hear her name pronounced with a British accent). Second, the quote relates to Biju as well. His circumstance exactly matches what Gyan describes—taking up jobs with terrible conditions, and still not being welcomed or accepted into the culture. This is one of the harshest problems that a character experiences, because the way in which Biju and other immigrants live in America necessitates that it is an isolated experience. But for Gyan and the other Nepalis, they attempt to improve their situation collectively.

Chapter 31 Quotes

But the child shouldn't be blamed for a father's crime, she tried to reason with herself, then. But should the child therefore also enjoy the father's illicit gain?

Related Characters: Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

When Sai goes with Lola, Noni, and the others to the library, she becomes incensed at seeing titles like *The Indian Gentleman's Guide to Etiquette* because of its explicitly racist assumptions and arguments, and she describes in quite violent language how she'd like to stab the children of the author, because he is likely dead. In this quote, Sai hits upon the unfairness inherent in the cyclical nature of poverty and privilege. Even though she seems to understand the crimes of the English, here she still seems ignorant of the ways in which her own questions apply to herself. She has also gained a lot from her grandfather's dedication to relinquish his Indian culture and to believe that Indians are inferior, but she has not paid for her grandfather's crimes. This is what much of Gyan's struggles with Sai center on, because he acknowledges that she has not done anything terribly wrong herself, but she has also gained a lot by being a part of and perpetuating systemic oppression.

There was no system to soothe the unfairness of things; justice was without scope […] For crimes that took place in the monstrous dealings between nations, for crimes that took place in those intimate spaces between two people without a witness, for these crimes the guilty would never pay. There was no religion and no government that would relieve the hell.

Related Characters: Noni, Lola, Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 219

Explanation and Analysis

When Lola, Noni, Sai, and others go to exchange their library books, Noni and the librarian debate the merits of Christianity versus Hinduism, and eventually Lola and Sai jump in as well. They come to realize that neither religion brings the most unsettling crimes—which Desai enumerates here as crimes between nations and crimes between two people—to justice. It is interesting that Desai equates these two crimes, as it reflects the relationship dynamic between the judge and Nimi, who are also in many ways seen as stand-ins for nations. Just like the judge is never truly brought to justice for the crimes against Nimi, neither is England truly brought to justice for its crimes against India. It should also be noted that Christianity in the novel is yet another means of spreading colonialism and the injustices wrought between nations.

Chapter 32 Quotes

He thought of how the English government and its civil servants had sailed away throwing their *topis* overboard, leaving behind only those ridiculous Indians who couldn't rid themselves of what they had broken their souls to learn.

Related Characters: Bose, The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 224

Explanation and Analysis

When the judge and his friend from his time in England, Bose, reunite, the judge remembers what had happened to many people, including himself, after India had gained independence from Britain. This quote describes how the British left behind many Indians who had relinquished their own culture and "broken their souls" to do so. Here Desai recovers a little bit of sympathy for the judge, because even though he had bought into systems of oppression, he had done so only to gain social mobility, and he had also been severely harmed in the process. His abuse of Nimi was borne largely of a superiority that he learned in England, and though his crimes were severe, the British share some blame for them as well because of the excruciating isolation he had to learn in order to improve his socioeconomic situation.

❝ The man with the white curly wig and a dark face covered in powder, bringing down his hammer, always against the native, in a world that was still colonial.

Related Characters: Bose, The Judge / Jemubhai

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 224

Explanation and Analysis

When Bose and the judge have lunch a final time, thirty-three years after they had last seen each other and one month before Sai's arrival in Kalimpong, it causes the judge to remember his time in the ICS. While Bose had been more aware of the issues that colonialism posed to Indians, the judge was either ignorant of them or too complicit in them to be empathetic towards a culture he was striving to escape. But this quote communicates how ironic the judge's position had been, juxtaposing his white wig and white powdered face with his dark complexion underneath. The judge carried out the laws of colonial Britain, but he was always putting it on in the form of a costume, never truly belonging to that culture or being accepted by it.

Chapter 37 Quotes

❝ They rushed out: "This is our land!"

"It is not your land. It is free land," they countered, putting down the sentence, flatly, rudely.

"It is our land."

"It is unoccupied land."

Related Characters: Noni, Lola (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 264

Explanation and Analysis

As the political troubles escalates in Kalimpong, the boys from the GNLF come to raid Lola and Noni's house. A few days later, Lola and Noni see a hut sprout up on their property below. They rush outside and have this exchange with the Nepalis living in the hut. What is most remarkable about the exchange is its repetition of colonialist arguments—that land can simply be taken. Thus, Desai's parallel shows the connections between the original instances of colonialism in India and what is happening now. The results of that colonialism benefitted Lola and Noni while the Nepalis were left symbolically homeless. After a generation, they are refusing to perpetuate that power dynamic and have flipped the circumstances on Kalimpong's most affluent residents.

Chapter 38 Quotes

❝ The wealth that seemed to protect them like a blanket was the very thing that left them exposed.

Related Characters: Noni, Lola

Related Themes:

Page Number: 266

Explanation and Analysis

Nepalis begin to raid the homes of the wealthy and sleep in their houses, knowing they will not be searched by the police, and Lola and Noni finally realize how much privilege their wealth has afforded them. In a way, they are even more recognizable as individuals than those of the lower classes when they see how the poor know their names, while they can barely distinguish people's faces. But now, in the face of political upheaval, they are exposed as targets—for robbery, for squatting, and for humiliation,

which they will continue to experience through the rest of the novel. Thus, the system from which they had benefitted from for so long finally gets flipped on them. Even if the Nepalis don't eventually succeed in establishing their own state (and the novel's plot doesn't extend long enough to find out what actually happens in history), they at least make the upper class more keenly aware of the experiences of the lower class.

Chapter 40 Quotes

❝ There were houses like this everywhere, of course, common to those who had struggled to the far edge of the middle class—just to the edge, only just, holding on desperately—but were at every moment being undone, the house slipping back, not into the picturesque poverty that tourists liked to photograph but into something truly dismal—modernity proffered in its meanest form, brand-new one day, in ruin the next.

Related Characters: Gyan, Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 280

Explanation and Analysis

After Gyan stops showing up to tutor Sai because of his involvement in the GNLF, Sai walks to his home in order to find him. What she sees there surprises her, as it doesn't match up with Gyan's education. But still, she sees how the home reflects the those who are teetering on the edge of the middle class. Like his home, which is crumbling from corrupted cement, has a rudimentary piping system running from the nearby stream, and has an unfinished second story, those who live in it are constantly striving to lift themselves out of this poverty but can be easily set back. This quote is also applicable to all the less privileged characters in the novel. Biju and the other immigrants in America, for example, arrive fresh every day, but realize how quickly their financial situations can turn into ruin. Biju lives a modern life, but finds that he often has to start over.

❝ The chink she had provided into another world gave him just enough room to kick; he could work against her, define the conflict in his life that he felt all along, but in a cotton-woolly way.

Related Characters: Gyan, Sai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 285

Explanation and Analysis

When Sai visits Gyan at his home, angry that he has been swept up in this political movement and is ignoring her, they get into an argument that results in Gyan pushing her into a bush and beating her with a stick. The setting of his home creates a further division between Gyan and Sai, as he is adamant that she should not pity him. But he begins to see how Sai defines his hatred, because she represents a multitude of things he is fighting against: colonialism, Western culture, wealth. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, he thinks of her as a young silly girl, while he wants to set childhood behind him and become a man. Thus, all of these ideas begin to mingle, and in order to become an adult and push against Sai, Gyan finds that he can also access his hatred for the things she represents as well.

Chapter 48 Quotes

❝ He felt everything shifting and clicking into place around him, felt himself slowly shrink back to size, the enormous anxiety of being a foreigner ebbing—that unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant.

Related Characters: Biju

Related Themes:

Page Number: 330

Explanation and Analysis

After Biju's long flight home, he finally arrives in Calcutta. Upon stepping outside, he is relieved to finally be back in India. Although his ultimate goal is to see his father, Biju also finds a certain sense of home simply by returning to his native country. Although people and family make up a lot of what constitutes home, a more general sense of what they represent can also be seen here. The cook shares religions, customs, food, languages, and a skin tone with Biju—but so do many of the people in Calcutta as well. Thus, Biju's storyline adds nuance to the idea that people are the primary things that constitute a home, as people are inextricably linked to places as well. In many ways, home is constituted by a sense of belonging, which Biju here describes as shrinking down to size, or fitting in. Whereas his invisibility in America made him feel dehumanized, his invisibility in India gives him a sense of comfort.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Settled in the mist of Mount Kanchenjunga, Sai and her grandfather, the judge, are sitting on the veranda of their home, which is called Cho Oyu. She is reading an old *National Geographic*; he is playing chess against himself. Underneath the judge's seat, his dog Mutt is sleeping. The cook is in the kitchen, lighting damp wood to make a fire for tea.

From the very opening of the novel, the activities of the characters point to a theme of colonialism and globalization: the judge plays a European game; Sai reads a geography magazine in English. The cook, meanwhile, is stuck in a past age, which will become important in his own quest for modernity coupled with a desire to see his son escape the servant caste.

Sai looks out into the mist and notices that her algebra tutor, Gyan, is more than an hour late. She excuses his absence because of the thickening mist. The judge complains that the cook is late with his tea, and Sai offers to get it for him.

Both Sai and the judge exhibit the privilege of being able to wait for things to be done for them, while those who are poorer than they are must work: the cook is late because he is making the tea with damp wood; Gyan is (presumably) late because of the weather.

In the hall mirror Sai notices herself. She kisses her reflection. Sai ponders the melancholy situation of the giant squid, whose lives were so solitary that they might go an entire lifetime without finding another giant squid. Sai concludes that love is "the gap between desire and fulfillment."

Sai's apparent narcissism is given a little more context later in the novel when her relationship with Gyan is revealed; however, traits like these are part of the reason Gyan becomes so upset with her in the first place—because she is naïve and self-involved while he and the other Nepalis struggle for a grander political cause.

The cook complains about his aching bones and joints, thinking that he might as well be dead, if not for his son Biju who lives in America. Sai takes the tea to the judge, who grumbles that there is nothing to eat with the tea. Sai tells him that the baker left for his daughter's wedding, and the judge complains that the cook is too lazy to make something himself. He is disappointed at the inadequacy of his "teatime." The cook comes out with chocolate pudding for the judge.

The judge's frustration at not being able to have a proper teatime displays how, even after so many years of living in India, he still aims to imitate British customs. Yet readers can also see how much of the world, including Biju's son, is looking to America for advancement because it is a center of globalization and is comparatively freer from the shadow of colonialism.

Meanwhile, several boys are crawling across their lawn, and no one notices them until they are on the steps. There are no neighbors within calling distance except for Uncle Potty, who is probably drunk on the floor by this hour. One of the boys carries a gun, and the team of them are searching for any weapons they can find.

The fact that Cho Oyu is so far from other people also plays into the judge's desire for isolation because he doesn't feel that he fits in with any culture. Though it is not yet evident, this lack of belonging in the culture is one of the reasons why the boys from the GNLF target the house in the first place.

Mutt barks at the boys once and they recoil in fear, but she then turns around to show a wagging tail to them. The boys come back up the steps, and the one with the rifle says something the judge cannot understand. The boy sneers at the fact that the judge cannot speak Nepali, and continues in Hindi. He asks for the judge's guns. The judge denies having any guns and threatens to call the police (an empty threat, as there is no telephone).

The boys' sneers hint at one of the reasons they are at the house, as it will be revealed that they (Nepalis) constitute the majority population in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, but they are treated like servants. One of their primary demands is to have schools taught in their language, which would provide them with a sense of belonging.

One of the boys points the gun at Mutt, and Sai goes to get the judge's rifles, which he earned in the Indian Civil Service. The boys take the guns and ask for tea and snacks. They drag the cook out from where he is hiding under the dining table. He begs for his life and they tell him to make the tea, and command the judge to set the table for them.

It is symbolic that the guns, which the judge earned in the ICS, now become the thing that threatens him most, as he is also targeted for the wealth that he earned in the civil service. The cook's ready ability to beg for his life also demonstrates that he is used to being humiliated.

The cook fries pakoras for the boys while the judge is forced to set the table, something he would never do as the head of the house. The boys, meanwhile, carry on a survey of the house and take anything of value they can find: rice, lentils, sugar, tea, oil, soap, and all of the alcohol.

The humiliation continues, as the judge is made to do things far beneath his social standing and set the table for these young boys from a much lower caste.

The boys finish by making the judge, Sai, and the cook say "I am a fool" and "Jai Gorkha" before leaving with Sai and the judge's engraved trunks, which the boys use to carry the food they've stolen. Sai and the cook try not to look at the judge in his humiliation.

Finally, the degrading scene ends with a politically symbolic gesture. Forcing the cook, Sai, and the judge to say "Jai Gorkha"—"long live Gorkhaland"—advances their cause at the expense of those who have profited from old systems of colonialism.

These events take place in February of 1986. The newspapers describe a gathering insurgency. Where Sai, the judge, and the cook live, Kalimpong, the Indian-Nepalese are treated like a minority, even though they constitute the majority of the region. They are demanding their own country, or at least their own state. The region, however, has always had a messy map, with borders that are blurred even further by the mist from the Himalayas.

Here the "insurgency" of which the boys are a part is given an explanation. Their demand for their own state further explains their definition of "home." The Indian-Nepalese already live here, but they're attempting to create a state in which their culture, language, and people are valued as much as anyone else.

CHAPTER 2

The judge sends the cook to the police station, knowing that the police could very well be bought off by the robbers and would likely expect a bribe. As he goes, the cook thinks of his son, Biju, and of the 250 rupees he had hidden in his hut before moving it to the garage of the house, worried that **rats** might eat it.

The cook's poverty is more fully detailed in this incident. He is so poor that he cannot even keep his own money in the house for fear that the rats—which also come to symbolize poverty—might eat it.

The policemen question the cook harshly, but they cannot ignore a member of the judiciary, and so they travel to Cho Oyu. They ask if threats were made, and when the cook tells them that the boys asked the judge to set the table and bring tea, the policemen begin to laugh.

The cook's interactions with the police demonstrate a different kind of humiliation, as they have state-sanctioned power, but they treat the cook in much the same way as the young boys do in order to assert their superiority over him.

The judge's house had been built by a Scotsman, who had read accounts of the period and the area, such as *The Indian Alps and How We Crossed Them* and *Land of the Lama*. It had been fully outfitted with piping, tiling, tubing, and wrought-iron gates.

The judge's home is a prime representation of colonialism: the house is built by a foreigner using Western architecture. The judge, likewise, feels like a foreigner in his own homeland because he has been steeped in British culture.

The police then go to the cook's hut, suspicious because they assume that robberies are often the fault of servants. Sai goes along as well. The cook's hut is very bare, and Sai is pained at how little he has. The police turn over his mattress and leave his few belongings in a heap. She notes the two photographs on the wall: one of the cook and his wife, and one of Biju. She thinks to herself that they are "poor-people photographs" because they are standing stiff and serious.

The police's visit to the cook's hut provides an example of how poverty can work in a cycle (in the same way privilege is shown to work in a cycle later). Because he is poor, the police suspect him for crimes. They then expose his poverty even further and also leave his hut in a disastrous state, piling misfortune upon misfortune.

The cook's wife had died seventeen years earlier, when Biju was five. She had fallen from a tree gathering leaves to feed the goat—an incident described as "the way fate has of providing the destitute with a greater quota of accidents for which nobody can be blamed."

The incident with the cook's wife is another example of the unfortunate cycle poverty can provide, which does not have any direct source of blame, but is undeniably linked to systemic forms of classism.

Sai remembers how the cook would often describe how Biju was naughty but had a good nature. He had beamed with pride when recounting how good Biju was with **animals**, and how unafraid he was. In the present, the police pick up the letters that the cook has received from Biju. In the letter they read, Biju had assured the cook that he was doing well in America, and the cook had reported its contents to everyone in the market.

The initial description of Biju provides a good foundation for understanding his character and his arc. He is willing to break the rules to travel to America illegally, but at the same time he doesn't have the cutthroat disposition needed to get ahead there. The fact that he is good with animals also becomes symbolic later, as he does not participate in much of the animal cruelty that permeates the novel, demonstrating his unwillingness to mistreat those who are helpless.

CHAPTER 3

The narrative jumps to Biju, who is working at a restaurant called Gray's Papaya in the heart of Manhattan, New York. He recounts the hectic sights, sounds, and smells of the restaurant, serving hot dogs for less than a dollar in hundred-degree heat.

Biju's storyline in America provides an argument for globalism as being an extension of colonialism. Biju makes very little because of the way he is treated as a second-class citizen, and because it is easy to take advantage of undocumented immigrants.

After work, the other restaurant employees invite him to "visit" the Dominican women in Washington Heights for thirty-five dollars. Biju is timid and feigns disgust. Each time they ask him, he thinks of an excuse not to go. He is almost relieved when the manager of the restaurant is instructed to do a green card check on his employees, and asks those without green cards to quietly leave.

Biju losing his job due to the green card check becomes an example of the vicious cycle experienced by members of what he later calls the "shadow class." Thus, those who are not wealthy enough to be able to get a green card are then unable to get the very jobs that might allow them to become green card holders.

CHAPTER 4

The cook is sure that because Biju is cooking American food, he has a higher position than if he were cooking Indian food. The other letters Biju had sent trace a string of jobs he has had, each in a different restaurant. In letters, the cook tells Biju to make sure he is saving money.

The cook demonstrates just how internalized cultural elitism can be: even characters in India believe that making American food contains more cultural capital than making Indian food.

Sai had once ordered an inflatable globe from *National Geographic*, which traveled all the way from Nebraska. When it arrived, she and the cook blew it up and examined India and New York. The cook was surprised to hear that India experiences the day first, as that fact didn't seem to mirror anything else about the relationship between the two countries.

The globe that Sai orders is a literal and metaphorical reflection of the way globalization makes the world smaller. She ordered and received a globe which itself traveled from America, and then she and the cook compare the two countries in miniature. Again, the cook's thoughts reflect his implicit bias that America and other Western countries are superior, a direct result of colonialism.

The policemen, having exposed the cook's poverty, leave. Sai is embarrassed at seeing the cook's hut, a place into which she rarely goes. She sees that their friendship is shallow, particularly because she speaks English and he speaks Hindi.

Sai's pity stems from their difference in wealth. Unlike the policemen and the boys, however, she does not wish to see the cook humiliated. She is one of the few characters that wishes (at least some of the time) to traverse the class divide.

Sai recalls when she first met the cook—nine years earlier, when she had left St. Augustine's convent. When she arrived, the door had been locked, and the cook had unlocked the gate for her. She had seen how he aged very quickly from his lifetime as a servant.

Sai further explains her background, and how her life, like the judge's, differs so greatly from the cook's life.

In the present, Sai expresses her frustration at the way the police left the cook's hut, and the mess they have made of his letters. The cook is less disturbed, knowing that they had to search his hut in order to complete their investigation. He collects the letters, hoping that one day Biju will find some pride in seeing them after accomplishing so much.

Again, one of the cook's strongest traits comes out in his self-deprecation. The judge (and the culture as a whole) has biased him against people like himself, teaching him to trust wealthy people and British people more than other servants, an idea that Biju will echo later.

CHAPTER 5

The chapter opens with descriptions of different restaurants through which Biju has cycled: a French bistro (staffed by Mexicans and Indians); a "colonial" restaurant (staffed by Colombians, Tunisians, Ecuadorians, and Gambians); an American diner (staffed by Guatemalans). He asks where Guatemala and other countries are, and is surprised to hear that there are Indians in almost every country.

The restaurants of a certain kind of cuisine are staffed by people of nationalities that do not match the cuisine, providing another example of globalization, as people are able to learn and pick up cuisine styles that are not native to them. It is also interesting to note that the restaurants are all Western, and that the cuisine is valued more than the people who work there are.

Biju doesn't know how to handle the people working in the kitchens and their different nationalities, to the point where he is relieved when a Pakistani is hired. The cook is shocked to hear in his letters that American restaurants would hire Pakistanis. At work Biju and the Pakistani trade insults, but Biju isn't fully satisfied by this rivalry.

Biju, being new to this globalized setting, feels more comfortable when he has a culture from which he can separate himself. This provides another perspective on "home" by providing cultural institutions one can work against and feel isolated from.

Customers at the French restaurant begin to complain about the smell of the food, and are outraged when they realize that their "French" cuisine is being made by Indians, Algerians, and Moroccans. The owner of the restaurant fires Biju.

The complaints about the smell of the food and the people who cook it again demonstrate that while products from another culture might be valued, their people often are not.

CHAPTER 6

The narrative slips back to Sai's arrival at Cho Oyu, when she is eight years old. The cook asks where she's from, and she says Dehra Dun. He asks why she didn't come before, if she's been so close. She tells him her parents are dead; Sai's father was a space pilot, and he and Sai's mother both died in Russia. The cook asks how they died.

The circumstances of Sai's arrival in Cho Oyu provide an explanation for her English upbringing, and also explain her relationship to "home," because she had been separated from her parents for most of her life. Thus she, like the judge, feels caught between two worlds.

The narrative jumps back even further, explaining the circumstances of Sai's parents' deaths. Sai's father had been a resident at the Society for Interplanetary Travel in Moscow, during "the last days of Indo-USSR romance."

Sai's father's job demonstrates the whole family's opportunity for globalization. He is recruited by the Russians, but he had also had a job in the Air Force which allowed him to travel, which could perhaps be one of the reasons that Sai says she is interested in traveling.

Sai's mother and father (referred to as Mrs. and Mr. Mistry) had met in a public park in Delhi, when her father had been stopped in his tracks on a jog by her mother's beauty. Less than a year later, he proposed. She wished to "be an adult" and said yes.

Note that Sai's mother's beauty is what draws Mr. Mistry to her—this is ironically what also led to Nimi's marriage to the judge.

As space exploration grew, a visiting Soviet team had been instructed by the government to find candidates to send to space in India. They had been impressed by Mr. Mistry and asked him to come to Moscow. Sai, only six at the time, was left in India and entrusted to the same convent her mother had attended. But one day as Mr. and Mrs. Mistry were crossing the street, they were crushed by a local bus, in which thirty ladies were speeding from the provinces to barter and sell their nesting dolls.

The accident that takes Sai's parents' lives adds to the misfortune that has permeated the family's tale, which will be explained more fully later. Even though it would be simplistic to blame globalization entirely for the circumstance, each generation (from the Judge and Nimi down to Sai) has experienced misfortune due to colonialism and the ensuing globalization.

Hearing the news at the convent, Sai has a hard time picturing Moscow. The nuns try to console her, but she admits to herself that she couldn't really remember her mother and father, because she had not seen them in two years. She finds herself unable to cry about their deaths.

Sai's inability to cry at her parents' deaths only reinforces the cultural homelessness she feels. The only values she has ever had have been instilled in her by the convent, which she is soon to leave.

The nuns worry about what to do with Sai. Under the emergency contact information in their register, they find the judge's name and address, and remember that he was the one paying for her to stay at the convent. Sai had never met him.

Even though the judge had not met either his daughter or Sai, his wealth has still enabled them to continue his cultural lineage as Anglophile Indians.

Meanwhile, the Scotsman who built Cho Oyu is showing the judge the home. The judge finds the house appealing because he could live in it as a "shell," and would take solace in "being a foreigner in his own country."

The judge's thoughts demonstrate how the home is a reflection of himself: like the house, he would belong to a different culture than what surrounds him.

Sai says goodbye to the nuns at the convent, who had taught her fear and humiliation but who had also defined sin for her in a way that made it tantalizing. She describes other lessons she had learned: cake is better than *laddoos*, silverware is better than hands, worshipping Jesus is better than worshipping a phallic symbol. English is better than Hindi.

Sai's lessons illustrate the way cultural elitism is instilled. Even though she is Indian, she begins to forego Indian cultural staples in favor of English ones. This will make her later interactions with Gyan all the more difficult, as they share few traditions.

A nun delivers Sai to Cho Oyu. On the train they see a panorama of village life, and on the railway tracks they see dozens of people defecating. The nun calls these people dirty, but a scholar seated next to her tells her that it's because the ground drops to the railway track, so it's a good place to do that.

Like the concept that wealth breeds support, the train trip demonstrates the way poverty breeds criticism. The people on the railway tracks are simply trying to perform a bodily necessity in the least intrusive way, and yet they are still criticized by those who have far more wealth than they do.

The nun and Sai part ways at the base of the mountains, just as night falls. Sai travels the rest of the way in a car, terrified because of the dangerous turns on the path and the fact that there are no streetlights in Kalimpong.

Sai's car ride up the mountain is symbolic of a journey towards a new, isolated, and often dangerous home. The mountain also makes no distinctions between those who are wealthy and those who are not, putting everyone on the same level.

CHAPTER 7

When Sai first arrives at Cho Oyu, the cook had made a huge dinner for her, modeling the mashed potatoes into the shape of a motorcar, with vegetables serving as the various parts of the car. The judge sits with her at the dinner table but seems not to have noticed her arrival.

The cook wants to make Sai feel at home, and it is interesting to note that the way he tries to accomplish this is by modeling a symbol of modernity (the motor car) and using foods that are distinctly British, like mashed potatoes.

The judge finally asks Sai her name. She tells him, and compliments Mutt, which pleases the judge. The judge tells Sai that he is going to hire a tutor for her, because a convent is too expensive, and a government school would give her the wrong accent.

Once again, the judge demonstrates his own bias against Indians as a result of colonization in his judgement that the government school would give her the wrong accent (presumably an Indian one).

Later that night, Sai lies in bed under a tablecloth because the sheets had worn out. She would later learn that untreated wood could be chewed up in a season and becomes very aware of the termites eating through the house.

Cho Oyu's slow rotting carries symbolic meaning, as it mirrors how British power in India is slowly dissipating, but also how its effects have eaten away at the judge's sense of self.

CHAPTER 8

Across the hall from Sai's room, the judge lies awake in bed as well. He realizes that Sai's arrival has upset him. He thinks of his own journey. The judge had left home at the age of twenty, with a black tin trunk just like the one Sai had. It was 1939, and he had traveled from his ancestral home of Piphit to the Bombay dock, then to Liverpool, and finally arrived at Cambridge.

Sai's arrival upsets the judge because of the way it makes him think of his own journey, which leads to his alienation from his culture both literally and figuratively. Colonization in many ways causes him to change his values in order to survive, and thus his return home is difficult because he finds that he no longer shares his family's values.

The judge (then called Jemubhai) had been accompanied by his father to his departure point. His mother stayed weeping at home. With him, Jemubhai had a sweater that she had knit him, a new Oxford English Dictionary, and a decorated coconut to be tossed as an offering into the waves, so that his journey could be blessed by the gods.

The gifts that the judge's mother gives him reflect his new culturally hybrid life: they give him a dictionary, which will lead to his forsaking his own language; a sweater, which reflects a new climate; but they also give him a coconut, in the hopes that he will retain his religion.

Jemubhai thought of his fourteen-year-old wife, Nimi, whom he had married only a month ago, and whom he would not see for many more years. He had not properly seen her face before leaving.

This story will be explained more in depth later, but here it is interesting to note that a woman was expected to marry and have sex with a man even without his seeing her face, which plays into the objectification of women in this society.

As the judge departed on the ship, the judge's father yelled at him to toss the coconut. Jemubhai was embarrassed by his father, a barely educated man. He didn't throw the coconut, and felt that he would never know love for a human being that wasn't also tempered by other, contradictory emotions.

The judge's decision not to throw the coconut marks the opposite decision from Biju later: Biju comes to realize that he cannot relinquish his religion, whereas the judge readily abandons it for his new life.

The judge continues to remember his journey. Jemubhai had discovered spoiled food that his mother had packed him—in case he lacked the courage to go to the dining salon in the ship because he couldn't eat with knife and fork. His cabinmate was disgusted by the smell of the food, and Jemubhai felt humiliated.

Jemubhai is humiliated not only because his cabinmate was disgusted at his food, but also because his mother lacked confidence in him and believed he would be embarrassed by his own culture, which became a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Jemubhai arrived at Cambridge, and when he tried to look for a room to rent, he was turned away several times. One woman, Mrs. Rice, finally accepted him, desperate for the money. Twice a day she gave him cold food. Eventually he worked up the courage to ask her for a proper hot dinner. She told him that she and her husband don't eat much for dinner either, but that evening he found baked beans on toast that she had left for him.

The cultural bias of the British comes out in even fuller force when Jemubhai arrives in Cambridge. Residents will not take him in simply because he is Indian, even forgoing a source of income. This is true of Mrs. Rice as well, but she is simply more desperate for the money. This treatment is a direct extension of Indians being treated like second-class citizens under colonialism.

Jemubhai began his studies at Fitzwilliam, spending most of the day working so as to avoid the humiliations of being a foreigner. He grew completely solitary, barely speaking. He began to find his own skin odd, and his own accent strange. He forgot how to laugh. He washed obsessively, trying to keep from being accused of smelling strange. He felt barely human. In the present, the judge turns on the light, frustrated that he cannot fall asleep and instead is reliving a nightmare.

During his time at Cambridge, the judge had internalized the bias of the British. In adopting their values, he came to hate himself and his own culture, leading to his complete isolation. He never truly recovers from this isolation, eventually walling himself into Cho Oyu and only enjoying true companionship with a granddaughter who was raised in a similar fashion.

In the morning, the judge instructs the cook to bring Sai to meet her new tutor, Noni. On the road to Noni's house, the cook points out the neighbors' houses to Sai. Their nearest neighbor is Uncle Potty, a gentleman farmer and an alcoholic. There is also his friend Father Booty, who runs a Swiss dairy, and who drinks each night with Uncle Potty. Lower down the hill live two Afghan princesses who were given refuge by Nehru when the British ousted their father. In another smaller house lives Mrs. Sen, whose daughter, Mun Mun, had gone to America.

Each new character that is introduced continues the patter of the last: Each of these people is wealthy, foreign, or educated, and most of them are some combination of the three. They profit from the social system as it currently stands, and though most of them do not remember the experiences of colonialism, all of them benefit from the newer system of globalization.

Finally, they reach Noni's house. Noni lives with her sister Lola in a rose-covered cottage named Mon Ami. Lola's husband Joydeep had died of a heart attack, and so Noni moved in with her sister. They live on Lola's husband's pension, but still needed more money to pay all of the people who work in their house—a maid, sweeper, watchman, and gardener. So, Noni agrees to become Sai's tutor, and over the years, the two sisters grow very fond of her.

Lola and Noni also continue the pattern of wealthy neighbors who have profited from globalization. It is never revealed exactly where Joydeep is from, but it is implied that he is from a Western country, and the two sisters are in their own way reliant on maintaining the appearance of leading a European lifestyle. Noni only takes up the job, in fact, in order to keep the servants that they have around the home.

CHAPTER 9

When Lola hears that the judge's guns have been stolen from Cho Oyu, she is terrified that the boys will also come to Mon Ami. Sai remarks that they have a watchman, but Lola tells her that he is Nepali, and can't be trusted. Noni tells her sister to calm down and reassures her that their watchman has always been a comfort to them. He has been less of a watchman and more of a handyman, making sure that they can watch the BBC by twisting their satellite.

Though Lola's bias against Nepalis is not entirely racial like the British bias against Indians under colonialism, her bias comes from a place of classism. Throughout the novel, the wealthy characters attempt to maintain their privilege, often at the expense of the poorer characters—an argument that comes up in Sai and Gyan's conflict.

There is an ongoing food shortage, and Lola says that they must go to the market for food and to change their library books, because she has almost finished *Bend in the River*. Lola comments that the book's author is stuck in the past, and he has "colonial neuroses." She remarks that colonialism is such a different thing now, and laughs at the fact that chicken tikka masala has replaced fish and chips as the number one take-out dinner in Britain.

Again, the fact that Lola is worried more about her library books than the food shortage demonstrates her privilege, because she doesn't have to worry about food. Lola's discussion regarding Bend in the River *also makes an argument for the idea that globalization is the heir of colonialism.*

Lola every so often visits her daughter Pixie, who is a BBC reporter in England. Whenever she returns, Lola brags about the plays, the strawberries and cream, and the loveliest gardens. She and Noni listen to Pixie nightly on the BBC, but other Indians hear her name announced with a British accent and laugh. But Lola is only proud.

Pixie's story makes clear how detached Lola and Noni are from other Indians, who hear Pixie's name in a British accent and mock her privilege. Yet Lola sees it as a means for her to enjoy luxury, highlighting the difference for what globalization means for those who have wealth and the ability to travel freely, and those who do not.

CHAPTER 10

Biju's second year in America begins at Pinocchio's Italian restaurant. The owner's wife complains that he smells, having hoped for men from the poorer parts of Europe instead. The owner tries to buy him shampoo and conditioner, toothpaste, and deodorant, but Biju doesn't use them. He is fired.

Jumping off the bias that even many wealthy Indians have against Indian culture, Biju continues to face prejudice simply for existing in America. America strives to be globalized, but it also has a definite hierarchy of which people and cultures are worth more than others.

Biju looks for another job. He finds one at Freddy's Wok because he can ride a bicycle. One day he delivers food to three Indian girls who are studying in America. They discuss a friend of theirs who doesn't want to date Indian boys, but instead wants "the Marlboro man with a Ph.D." They are condescending to Biju and he sees how they are lauded as extraordinary in America simply for being Indian women who have escaped their "downtrodden" lives. He is impressed by them, but also hates them.

Again, the young Indian students demonstrate how quickly globalization can lead to racism and bias against one's own culture, opting instead for American boys who have higher education. This also plays into Biju's later struggle in finding a green card, as he doesn't think that anyone—not even women with similar backgrounds—would want to marry him.

At the time, Biju is living in the basement of a building in Harlem. The superintendent supplements his income by renting out the basement to other undocumented immigrants. It is cramped and dark, because if too many lights are turned on, the electricity goes out.

Biju's living situation demonstrates how his economic status has relegated him to what he calls the "shadow class." Here, this classification becomes more literal than metaphorical as he is literally relegated to a place without light.

As winter falls, people start to complain that the food Biju delivers is cold. More than the food, Biju himself starts to freeze, and one day it is so cold that he begins to weep. The owner tells Biju to pedal faster. When he says he cannot, he is fired. He returns to the building exhausted, and hears the sound of **rats** around him.

Biju's firing from Freddy's Wok reinforces yet again how the owners of these restaurants prioritize the food that their staffs make over the actual people making them. At this point Biju lives a similar life to the rats that nest beside him.

By the time Biju finds his next job at a bakery called the Queen of Tarts, he has spent all of the money he had been saving. He is introduced to Saeed Saeed, an Indian man from Zanzibar whom Biju comes to admire. Saeed Saeed sings and dances numbers from Indian movies, and Biju regains some pride in his country.

The fact that between jobs, Biju is forced to spend all of the money he has saved serves as another example of how poverty and racism can be experienced in a self-defeating cycle. Separately, Biju's happiness at hearing songs from Indian movies demonstrates that away from one's physical home, a sense of belonging can come even from cultural institutions.

CHAPTER 11

Back at Kanchenjunga, the cook drops Sai off at Mon Ami for her tutoring with Noni. In between dropping her off and picking her up, the cook goes to the market to sell his *chhang* (liquor). He had started the business on the side for Biju's sake, because the judge refused to give him a substantial raise throughout his years of service.

Like Biju, the cook is forced to engage in illegal activity in order to stay above water financially and support his son, providing another aspect of how poverty can cycle into further poverty if the cook were to be caught.

This liquor business has led the cook to become a link in the underground system of subsidized army liquor and fuel rations. Military trucks stop at his shack, and their crates are unloaded. The cook carries the crates to his shack and then to the merchants in town, who give him a small cut of what they sell.

The military trucks' complicity in this underground system shows another angle of the society's corruption. Like the police, they use their power to further advantage themselves.

The cook had entered this underground business for Biju, but also for himself, as he strived for modernity: toaster ovens, electric shavers, and watches.

The cook's attempts demonstrate that the wealthy aren't the only ones who wish to participate in this global system, even if it inherently disadvantages those who are less affluent.

The cook found that the most awful part of his life was in serving a family he couldn't be proud of. Other servants told him that they were treated extremely well by their employers. The cook starts telling lies to brag about the judge's former glory and the religious piety of his late wife (whom he had not known).

The cook's mistreatment by the judge not only becomes personally denigrating but also doesn't allow the cook to have good standing in the eyes of others. The cook is so upset by this humiliation that he resorts to lying in order to feel like he's being treated better.

The cook also told many of these lies to Sai. He would tell her that the judge was born a rich man, and that he had been sent off to England with an enormous farewell: ten thousand people saw him off at the station; he went on top of an elephant; he had won a scholarship allowing him to go, etc.

The cook's lies demonstrate what he believes to be important in order to have pride in someone: that is, primarily, wealth. This echoes his later advice to Biju in asking him to save his money.

The judge was actually born to a family of the peasant caste. His town had been owned by the Gaekwad kings of Baroda before being overtaken by the British. After that, it quickly became home to a variety of people at a pit stop between Kobe, Panama, Port-au-Prince, Shanghai, and Manila.

Even though the judge was born into the peasant caste, the town is a direct part of colonization and becomes a hub for the global market. These opportunities as well as a willingness to comply with the British system are what allowed the judge to find upward social mobility.

The judge's father had a small business procuring false witnesses to appear in court. He was proud of his ability to influence people and corrupt justice, and had placed a lot of hopes in Jemubhai to improve the family's social standing.

It is ironic that the judge's father corrupts justice while the judge eventually carries it out—this becomes another way in which the judge actually reacts against his father, family, and culture.

Jemubhai was sent to the mission school, and his mother would wake him every day with cold water so that he could review his lessons. At the entrance to the school stood a portrait of Queen Victoria. The more he looked at the portrait, the more his respect for her grew. Jemubhai was fed to excess at the expense of his sisters, who were deprived of love as well as food.

Jemubhai's schooling demonstrates how colonialism affected how he viewed the British. Additionally, note that the daughters' lives and educations were forgone in order for Jemubhai to succeed—another instance of misogyny in the culture.

Jemubhai rose to the top of the class, and his father dreamed of seeing Jemubhai in court. Jemubhai attended Bishop's College on a scholarship, and then left for Cambridge. When he returned, he was put to work in a district far from his home.

It is ironic that the judge's father aimed to see his son in court, but the judge was placed in a district far from home, making this goal unreachable. It signals another step in the judge's alienation from his family.

The narrative flashes forward once more to the cook's stories. He brags to Sai about how many servants there had been before. The cook himself had begun working at ten years old, and then had been hired by the judge at fourteen.

The fact that the cook started working so early provides another insight into the cycle of poverty, as it was necessary for him to work instead of furthering his education, which may have provided him with greater social mobility.

On the veranda, the judge recollects his life as a touring official. The judge heard cases in Hindi, but they were recorded in Urdu by the stenographer, and then the judge would translate the record into English, even though he spoke neither Hindi nor Urdu well. Witnesses who couldn't read at all would put their thumbprints at the bottom, affirming that they had read the record. Despite this, the judge gained a fearsome reputation, with his white powdered wig over a white powdered face.

More than any other anecdote, this one demonstrates the state-sanctioned harm done by colonialism. As the judge had completely relinquished his culture and Indian languages, the various parties involved in trials could not communicate with each other. Though his powdered wig and face gave him authority, it did not give him the ability to truly carry out justice.

The judge continues to remember his routine: in the afternoons, he would have tea before going out to the countryside to fish or hunt (though he was a terrible shot). For dinner, the cook would bring out a chicken, declaring it a "roast bastard," taken from the Englishman's favorite joke book of natives using incorrect English. At 9:00, the judge filled out the registers and the diary that would be submitted to his superiors; at 11:00, he would fall asleep.

The judge continued to partake in British cultural staples simply for the gesture of belonging to the culture. This came not only at his own expense, but at the expense of the cook, whose self-deprecating jokes demonstrate how pervasive the racism propagated by colonialism was and remained throughout the judge's time in the ICS.

The cook had been disappointed to be working for the judge, as his father had only served white men. The judge had likewise been skeptical of the cook, who came with dubious recommendations. The cook's father admitted that he needed to be trained, but that is why he would be cheap. The cook's father then recited a long list of the puddings the cook could make before the judge agreed to hire him.

The cook's attitude here demonstrates that internalized prejudices affect not only the wealthy but also those with less privilege, as the cook believes that serving a white man is superior to serving an Indian man.

CHAPTER 12

Sai's routine continues in Kalimpong until she is sixteen. Noni and Sai ponder a physics textbook, until Noni feels a wave of exhaustion and they put the textbook aside. As the baker arrives with Swiss rolls and various cakes, Noni worries that Sai won't pick up social skills because she lives in a lonely house of only men. Sai explains that she doesn't mind it because the cook talks so much.

As Sai grows closer to an age when she'll experience relationships and love, Noni's concerns spring from a well-meaning place but ultimately one that's rooted in a misogynistic society. Her worries spring from her own experience, because she herself has felt lacking because she is alone, but at this point Sai has little desire to get married.

Sai explains that the cook talks about his wife and Biju, and about their family affairs and finances. Noni believes that it is inappropriate for servants to speak so openly with their employers, and that it is important to draw lines between classes. Noni recalls how she and Lola had been shocked when their maid spoke openly about her romance with the milkman, who lied about her caste so she could marry him.

Here Noni and Lola both reinforce classist ideas that permeated Indian culture and then was propagated by the British during their rule: that it is necessary to draw distinctions between people of different castes. The maid's story thus becomes even more threatening, because she marries across these social divides.

Lola had always thought that servants didn't experience love in the same way that people like her did. Hearing the maid talk, she wondered if she had never experienced real love with her husband, Joydeep. Noni had never experienced love at all, and so was jealous of her maid.

Lola's thoughts not only reinforce the caste structure but also harmful stereotypes within it: that those of higher castes are implicitly better than those of lower castes. However, their doubts about the system reveal insecurities, which are potentially reasons why they cling so tightly to this idea of a caste system.

Noni asks Sai if she wants to meet people her own age; Sai responds instead that she wants to travel, inspired by the books and *National Geographic* magazines she reads. Noni tells her that if she gets a chance in life, she should take it—when Noni was young, she wanted to be an archaeologist, but her father had been old-fashioned and didn't allow her.

Here, Noni opens up about her own experiences with her father's misogyny, encouraging Sai to take a different path. But Sai's desire to travel also reveals her privilege; as Biju explains later, Indians with wealth are usually the only ones who are permitted to travel.

Noni and Sai attempt physics a few more times, but to no avail. Noni tells the judge that Sai needs a more qualified tutor to continue her studies. The judge sends a letter to the principal of the local college, asking for someone to tutor Sai.

In contrast to Noni's own story, it is impressive that the judge seems so bent on educating Sai. Again, this is a privilege that is rarely provided to girls in particular, except by those who are wealthy enough to afford it. By contrast, the judge and Gyan had been taught at the expense of their sisters' educations.

CHAPTER 13

The principal of the local school recommends a student named Gyan—who has finished his bachelor's degree but hasn't yet been able to find a job—to be Sai's tutor. It takes two hours for him to walk to Cho Oyu, and at first, Sai is unwilling to be pried away from her reading.

Though it is not yet revealed that Gyan is Nepali, his inability to get a job is one of his primary motivations for joining in the GNLF's cause—in order to create a place in which he feels valued and treated fairly.

The cook sets out study tools in a semicircle for Sai and Gyan, and this reminds him of the clinical atmosphere at the doctor's. He would emerge happily with his modern medicines but would inevitably run into other servants who counseled him to pray instead and squashed his faith in science.

The cook's interest in modernity reappears here, but it is not without skepticism. In some ways, the cook is the character who is most cynical of globalization because he still retains his religious beliefs very firmly, and resists threats to those beliefs.

During Sai and Gyan's first lesson, the cook brings in tea and fried cheese toast. He then sits just outside the door and is impressed by Gyan's careful and deliberate tone. Little does he know that this deliberateness is borne of a need not to look at Sai and not to embarrass himself in front of her, as she has already begun to have a powerful effect on Gyan.

As the relationship between Sai and Gyan is kindled, it is worth noticing the cheese toast that the cook brings them. This will become part of their debates about privilege and Western culture, when Gyan criticizes these products later, and Sai points out that he also enjoyed them.

Later, the cook remarks to Sai that it is strange that Gyan is Nepali—he would have thought Gyan would be Bengali. The cook explains that Bengalis are more intelligent, reasoning that it's because they eat fish. Sai scoffs at his logic, as she has already found Gyan quite compelling.

The bias against Nepalis is again reinforced by the caste system and the cycle of poverty (the lack of opportunity in getting jobs leads to a lack of opportunity for social mobility), even by those like the cook who are of a similar social standing.

That night, Sai sits and stares at her reflection. She wonders at her own face and body, and whether she might be attractive. Over the next few days, she becomes obsessed with her own face. She looks at her reflection in various objects—knives, spoons, and ponds—and finds that each reflection she sees looks different.

Once Sai begins to have feelings for Gyan, she starts to obsess over her own appearance. This is one example of how sexism in society can affect young girls' mindsets, as they believe they will not be able to marry if they are not thought of as physically attractive enough.

CHAPTER 14

Biju goes to the Queen of Tarts bakery at 4:25 A.M., watching for police who might question him—though he knows that the police and immigration officers operate separately from each other. He bakes the morning bread and says hello to a fellow employee, Saeed Saeed.

Biju's arrival time demonstrates one of the reasons why he is unable to truly call America home. The simple fact of not having his green card means that his ability to remain in the country is constantly under threat.

Biju admires Saeed, even though he is Muslim. Biju sees that Saeed isn't "drowning" being an illegal alien but is instead afloat, to the point where others cling to him in their misery. Biju begins to question his own deep-seated hatred of Muslims and people from Pakistan, and other stereotypes that exist in India about black people.

Saeed represents an exception to the rule in the life of an undocumented immigrant. For every Saeed Saeed, there are far more who are unable to continue that kind of life, forging a path to make America their home. Saeed is both Biju's goal and his contrast when Biju eventually decides to return home.

Biju realizes that he has been in awe of white people, who have arguably done India great harm, and lacked generosity towards almost everyone else in America, who have never done a single harmful thing to India. He has also learned that others hold the same prejudices toward Indians.

Biju's way of thinking serves as an example of how colonialism and globalization can make people buy into cultural beliefs that harm them. Biju tries to dismantle his own bias against people of different races and ethnicities, while coming to acknowledge that white people have done great harm in his country.

Saeed sleeps with many women. He describes the beauty and poverty of Zanzibar to them, and they quickly take him home. His first job in America had been at a mosque, where he arrived at dawn. On the way he would stop at the nightclubs, taking pictures of himself with American celebrities until he was discovered during an INS raid and deported.

Eventually, Saeed's goal is to get a woman to marry him, which he does. Thus, the gender dynamics here are still relatively unfavorable to women, as women are shown only to be useful in what they can provide for men, both economically and sexually.

Back in Zanzibar, Saeed had been hailed as an American. After two months, however, he returned to New York. When he arrived at JFK with a new name, the officer who had deported him stood at the desk but did not remember him.

Saeed's deportation and return provide another example of the racial and class bias that permeates the novel. Just as Lola and Noni later cannot distinguish the poor faces around them, the officer does not recognize Saeed.

By 6 A.M., the shelves at the bakery are stocked. One day, Biju sits outside, eating a roll. As ambulances and police cars pass, he can't help but worry that his father the cook might be sick or dead.

As Biju's concern over his father grows, it also represents a growing concern that his home is disintegrating, and that he no longer has a place in which he feels truly recognized as a human being.

Meanwhile, the cook is writing a letter to Biju, asking if he might be able to help a friend whose son wants to go to America because of the lack of jobs in India. At first the cook had been frustrated by the request, but he quickly comes to take pride in being asked, because it confirms Biju's success story.

Belief in one's own success can be a strong means of feeling powerful, as shown here. Even though these requests overwhelm Biju, the cook continues to pass them on because it makes himself feel good to be asked for help.

Saeed applies for a green card each year, but Indians are not allowed to apply. Not having a green card presses constantly on Biju's mind. After work, he walks down to the river and looks out at New Jersey. He becomes angry with the cook for sending him to America, but also knows that he wouldn't have forgiven his father for not trying to send him.

The arbitrariness of who can and cannot apply for a green card is another extension of the unfairness and racism of colonialism, and globalization by extension. Biju here also provides a commentary on the pros and cons of trying to go to America: even though it might dehumanize him and alienate him from a sense of belonging, it also has the potential to break him free of the cycle of poverty.

CHAPTER 15

Back in Kalimpong, the cook reads a letter from Biju explaining that he has gotten a new job in a bakery. The cook recalls that when he and the judge had first arrived in Kalimpong, he had bragged to everyone he met that his son was the manager of a restaurant business in New York.

Just as he does in speaking about the judge, the cook exaggerates Biju's wealth and social standing in order to bolster the sense of pride he feels and to make others jealous. In a way, this also perpetuates the myth of American success and superiority: that anyone there can rise up very quickly.

The cook walks into town, passing the Travel Agency and wondering when he might be able to visit Biju. He tells Mrs. Sen about Biju's new job. She has a child in America as well, and agrees that it is the best country in the world—better even than England. The cook then delivers his news to Lola and the rest of the judge's neighbors.

In a way, the baton that has been passed from England to America as a desired country demonstrates the passage of colonialism into globalization. Each one perpetuates racism and poverty, but America does so under the guise of being free and meritocratic, and a global hub.

The cook goes to buy potatoes from an attractive girl. He wonders if Biju would like her, thinking about how her father is making money, but also that money isn't everything. There is a simple happiness of looking after someone and having someone look after you, he thinks.

The cook's thoughts, while sweetly caring for his son and nostalgic for his own wife, also reflect the sexism of society. The cook remarks on the girl first for her looks, then for the wealth of her father, and finally, for her ability to look after a husband.

CHAPTER 16

Sai becomes interested in other people's love affairs. She asks the cook about the judge's wife (Nimi). The cook says that she was a great lady, and the judge had loved her very much. The cook then remembers the real story: the judge didn't like his wife at all, and she was mad. She had been the daughter of a rich man, who had only allowed her to marry the judge because he was in the Indian Civil Service.

The cook continues to try and make his employer out to be better than he actually was. But his thoughts about what actually happen introduce the injustice done to Nimi and the theme of misogyny that will run throughout the tragedy of her life. Here, the cook calls her mad, when in reality she had been abused by the judge.

Sai then questions the judge about her grandmother. The judge rebuffs her questions, telling her not to interrupt his chess. But he begins to remember Nimi anyway. His family had wanted to send their son to England, but there wasn't enough money to send him even after borrowing. They began to look for a bride for him. The uglier and darker the woman was, they knew, the higher her dowry would be.

Later, Sai will taunt Gyan for the fact that he may have to undergo the same thing the judge does here: having an arranged marriage in order to gain more wealth, a circumstance borne of poverty. However, the attitudes throughout this courtship demonstrate how objectified the women also become—valued only for the wealth their fathers can provide.

On the other side of the town lived the wealthy Bomanbhai Patel. One day a group of men told Bomanbhai of Jemubhai's departure for England. A week later, Bomanbhai offered Jemubhai his most beautiful daughter Bela (who would later be renamed Nimi), knowing that she might be getting married to one of the most powerful men in India.

Nimi (and eventually her sisters after her) becomes simply a pawn in the men's games. She is just a symbolic link between two families trading wealth and power. This system not only ignores whatever wishes she might possess, but also turns her into a commodity.

The wedding had lasted a week and was exceptionally lavish. Bela's name was changed into the one chosen by Jemubhai's family, and she became Nimi Patel. After the wedding, Jemubhai had pulled off his new wife's sari, ready to consummate the marriage, but discovered that the fourteen-year-old girl was terrified and wept in fear. He replaced her clothing.

The dehumanization of women is particularly clear here. Not only does Nimi lose her identity completely in losing her name, but Jemubhai does not even fully think about her as a human being who might not want to marry and have sex with him until he unexpectedly confronts her face.

The next morning, the uncles laughed at Jemubhai, noting that nothing happened in the bed. More days passed, and they grew concerned, telling him to force Nimi to have sex. They began to think she was spoiled or stuck up and wondered how she could be unhappy with Jemubhai, who would be the first boy from their community to go to England.

The misogyny continues, supported by the family. Though she is only fourteen, Nimi is blamed for the fact that she does not want to have sex with a man she only just met, and they begin to question her character. Particularly disturbing here is the idea that rape is the best solution.

One day, Jemubhai had offered Nimi a ride on his father's bicycle. She at first had declined, but then climbed on with him when he rode up to her. They pedaled faster and faster, flying down a hill, sharing a moment of joy.

Tragically, this episode represents the only moment in the novel where misogyny does not dominate Nimi's story—and also where she and the judge experience a brief time of happiness together.

In the present, the judge looks up from his chess and sees Sai climbing a tree, waiting to see Gyan approach. Each succeeding week of tutoring, their anticipation for each other grows. The judge tells her to come down. Sai remembers that Noni told her time should move—she should not remain in a life where time never passes. Sai resolves to leave someday.

This sequence links the two relationships. Though initially Sai and Gyan's courtship starts in a more affectionate place, their relationship also falls victim to larger political dynamics and society's gender structures.

CHAPTER 17

Saeed catches a **mouse** at the Queen of Tarts, kicking it with his shoe and dribbling up and down it while it squeaks. He laughs at it until it comes down dead. Then he returns to work.

In the book animals, and particularly rats, become associated with the poor and immigrants. As Biju is treated by the rest of the world, so is this mouse treated by Saeed. The most vulnerable members of society are the ones who are most often targeted.

In Kalimpong, the cook writes another letter. He is besieged by requests for help in getting people to America. People begin to give him little gifts, and he realizes that the more fortunate you are, the more fortunate you will be.

This brief episode demonstrates the cycle of privilege. Biju's luck in acquiring a tourist visa leads to the cook getting gifts from people hoping for the same fortune.

Back in New York City, Biju begins to feel overwhelmed by the amount of people asking for his help. Saeed understands how he feels, as his own mother has been dispensing out his phone number and address to everyone in his town. One day, some of the men looking for Saeed's help come to the bakery. He hides under the counter until they leave, lamenting that in their culture, once you let someone in, you have to help them, and they take everything from you.

On the flip side of the fortune the cook experienced from Biju's journey to America, Biju and Saeed experience a cycle of negative effects brought on by their parents' "generosity": an abundance of people to whom they must donate their time, energy, food, and space—things that they have very little of in the first place.

Biju feels sympathy for Saeed, knowing that he also has many people looking for his help. But he also understands that he had done the same when he came to America. He had stood on the doorstep of his father's friend, Nandu. Nandu had told him that there were more jobs in India and that Biju should go back. Nandu brought him to a basement in Harlem, and Biju had never seen him again.

It is interesting to note that characters variously push and pull away from their homes. Biju misses India and his father and tries to seek out someone that he knew. But later, in trying to distance himself from people taking advantage of his resources when he himself is trying to remain afloat, he also fundamentally distances himself from his culture.

Biju wants to leave, but also wants a green card so that he can have the option of returning. He wonders how people move into mainstream American society and bring their families when they are illegal.

Even though he doesn't necessarily want to stay in America if he doesn't have to, Biju wants the privilege of being able to travel. This is the concept underlying the characters' yearning for a green card.

Saeed brings Biju to Washington Heights, having found out about "the van." They wait on a street corner for the van, and when it comes by, Biju and Saeed hand over photos, thumbprints, and money. Two weeks later they wait again, but the van does not return. Biju's entire savings have disappeared.

This deception also serves as a kind of humiliation, proving once again how the weakest members of society are those that are taken advantage of most. Though Biju did not have much to begin with, he has now lost his entire savings—connecting poverty and vulnerability.

In the bakery, a customer finds an entire **mouse** baked inside a sunflower loaf. A team of health inspectors arrive. The Queen of Tarts bakery is closed, and Biju loses his job. The owner of the store yells profanities at his employees.

Again, the appearance of mice signals the mistreatment of immigrants. Even though the staff had nothing to do with the store's closing, the owner tries to regain status by yelling at his former employees over losing his store.

Saeed quickly finds employment at a Banana Republic, a shop whose name is "synonymous with colonial exploitation and the rapacious ruin of the third world." Biju knows he probably won't see Saeed again, as addresses, phone numbers, and jobs rarely remain steady. Biju resolves to stop making friendships, because their loss makes him feel empty.

Banana Republic is a rather explicit example of colonialism morphing into globalization. The term "banana republic" was coined by O. Henry to describe politically unstable countries with an economy dependent on the exportation of a resource (like bananas), which were often then exploited by wealthier countries, particularly the United States. The fact that the term was then adopted as a popular store marketing upscale travel clothes connects these two forms of exploitation.

That night Biju thinks of his village, where he had lived with his grandmother while the cook worked at Cho Oyu. He remembers it fondly: the tall grasses, the fishing eagles, the lamps during Diwali. He misses its peace. When he visited his father, however, he never noticed Sai's jealousy of the cook's love for his son.

Biju experiences home not simply as a physical building, but as a geographic place tied to culture, family, and traditions. Sai's lack of this sense of belonging (due to her upbringing in an Anglophile environment) is visible in her jealousy of Biju.

CHAPTER 18

Two months after Gyan arrives to tutor Sai, a monsoon starts to build. In a flash, it arrives. The wind blows the trees around, and the cook clamps all the doors and windows shut. When Sai opens a door just as he's sifting flour, a gust covers them both in powder. They laugh and say that now they're just like the English.

Although Sai, like the judge, grows up in an environment dominated by British culture, her adherence to that culture is much looser than his, because he was brought up in a time of explicit colonialism. Thus, while he takes powdering his face very seriously and experiences quite a bit of self-hatred over the color of his skin, she sees the humor in it and is able to slip in and out of the cultures as she pleases.

As lightning strikes around the house, Mutt is terrified. This season lasts three to five months, and condensation seeps into everything. Mold starts to grow on their clothes and in their books. The TVs and phones in the neighborhood stop working. Sai enjoys succumbing to this loss of modernity. At Mon Ami, Lola resigns to not being able to listen to her daughter on the BBC.

In contrast to the cook, who longs for modern appliances, Sai enjoys being able to relinquish some of these modern devices. It is clear, however, that this is a dynamic related to privilege: it is easy for Sai to want to give these things up because she has access to them most of the time.

Recently, a series of strikes and processions have indicated growing political discontent, but a three-day strike is postponed because of the weather. Between storms, Gyan walks to Cho Oyu. He worries that he might not be paid, because Sai has fallen far behind in the syllabus—though his worry might, in reality, come from a different place.

Even though Gyan is not yet part of the GNLF, his concerns reflect the same concerns of the movement. He worries that he will not be paid appropriately for his work—a demand that the Nepalis bring up later as well.


Gyan finds Sai reading the newspaper (ironed dry by the cook) and wearing her kimono. She had just been thinking about how the country is coming apart at the seams: police unearthing militants, Punjab on fire, taxes being reduced on ladies' undergarments and raised on wheat, rice, and kerosene. Gyan and Sai begin their lesson, but quickly Gyan realizes he won't be able to leave because the storm has grown so bad.

Contrasted with the end of the novel, here Sai still retains the privilege of being able to look at the growing political turmoil at a distance. Her wealth is still a protective blanket, and she and Gyan are both shielded by the fact that neither has fully come of age yet.

At dinner, the judge is irritated by Gyan's presence (he calls Gyan "Charlie"). The judge realizes that Gyan is unused to eating with cutlery and becomes bitter. He asks what poets Gyan is reading. Gyan answers uncertainly, telling the judge he is reading Tagore. The judge tells him to recite something; Gyan recites a passage every schoolchild in India knows. The judge laughs at Gyan.

As the judge will remember in the next few pages, he endured the same kind of humiliation when he lived in Cambridge. In making Gyan undergo this humiliation, the judge reveals the extent that certain values had been ingrained in him through colonialism, to the point where he wants all Indians to follow suit.


The judge remembers his own study of poetry forty years earlier. He had loved the library because it offered privacy and a lack of thugs. He had read a book entitled *Expedition to Goozerat*, which is an Englishman's account of traveling to India. He had been amazed by the information in it he did not know, like the fact that the East India company had rented Bombay for ten pounds a year from Charles II.

The judge learns about his own country through the lens of colonialism, providing him with a perspective on the world that did not come from his own people. This distinct bias plays into his adoption of colonialist narratives and beliefs, like the fact that British people, places, and products are truly superior to Indian people, places, and products.

The judge rose from his books midmorning and went to the bathroom, having serious digestion issues. As time went on, he worked harder and harder, reading late into the night. Mrs. Rice would tell him not to work too hard, to which he would respond, "One must, Mrs. Rice," like the Queen.

As time goes on, the judge learns to adopt more and more cultural codes. Taking on a speech affect and speaking and reading only in English, however, would make his job (and the rest of his life) more difficult, as his grasp of other native Indian languages became more tenuous.

At the judge's final examination, sitting before a row of twelve examiners, his first task was to tell them how a steam train worked. He was unable to. Then, they remarked that he was from the same part of the country as Gandhi—what was his opinion of the Congress? He had said that his commitment to the current administration was unquestionable.

In the judge's examinations, he is forced to make his opinions on Britain and India clearer than ever, as they demand that he set himself explicitly against the Indian National Congress, a party fighting for Indian independence.

Lastly, the examiners asked the judge to name his favorite writer. Though he did not have a favorite writer, he responded that he was fond of Sir Walter Scott. They asked him to recite a poem, which he did. They began to laugh at him, however, for his thick accent, as he had barely spoken during his years spent in England.

This anecdote creates a direct parallel for the way the judge has just treated Gyan. In a sign of the changing times, Gyan undergoes the opposite political awakening, making sure to protect his own culture rather than to adopt one from those who have oppressed him.


In the present, the judge scoffs at his past self, and leaves the dinner table. Sai apologizes for his behavior, but Gyan is too preoccupied staring at her. The cook clears the dirty dishes and makes up a bed in an extra room. Sai and Gyan immerse themselves in newspapers again until the cook retires to his hut.

The judge's superior behavior towards Gyan foreshadows the coming conflict between himself and Sai over many of the same issues of class. Gyan's preoccupation with Sai's looks seems to precipitate her own obsession with her looks.


Left alone, Sai and Gyan read for a bit longer in an overly focused fashion, until Gyan is unable to bear the tension any longer. Gyan asks if she uses hair oil, then what shampoo she uses, then asks to see her hands because they are so small. They compare the measure of their hands, then arms, legs, and feet. He cups her head, asking if it is flat or curved. He traces her eyebrow with a finger and moves down to the tip of her nose. Just before he continues to her lips, she jumps up and says goodnight.

Gyan's questions show his innocence, but hint at the way he and Sai will act with each other, much like curious schoolchildren. Even though he initiates this dynamic, this will cause him to believe that Sai is too babyish, and he will react against her in joining the GNLF movement and trying to grow out of adolescence. Yet at the same time there exists a fair amount of sexual tension here, brought on by a physical touch that only he is allowed to initiate. Sai, compelled by the knowledge that she bears the burden of preventing their touch from going too far, is forced to leave the room.

The judge lies awake in the damp air and continues to remember. His score had ranked him forty-eighth, but only the top forty-two had been admitted to the ICS. He started to break down, but at that moment a man came out with a new list, which had been conceived in order to "Indianize" the service. The judge was the very last admitted.

The British attempt to "Indianize" the service signals the growing political discontent of the time period. It demonstrates an attempt at compromise on the part of the British, but in bringing in people who hate Indian culture as much as the judge does, it does not really constitute an attempt to make the ICS more culturally inclusive.

The judge had cried with relief. Mrs. Rice was glad to hear his news, thinking to herself how progressive the world was. The judge informed his father about the results, and neighbors and acquaintances visited the house to offer their congratulations.

Mrs. Rice's reaction demonstrates how racism can be so insidious in these kinds of regimes. Though she may genuinely think that the decision by the British is progressive, its decision still works within an inherently oppressive system.

Jemubhai had previously lived on ten pounds a month, but could now expect three hundred pounds a year. At his new boardinghouse, he found his only friend in England: Bose. Bose was a fellow Indian student who had been chosen for the ICS, and who was also in the process of releasing himself from Indian culture. He said things like "Cheerio," ate tea and shepherd's pie, listened to opera, and avoided the other Indian students.

In Bose, the judge finds the closest thing to home that he experiences either in England or in India. Thus, Bose serves as an example that home can be constituted merely by people who share one's values. The judge values relinquishing Indian culture in order to adopt British culture, and Bose has made those same choices.


At the end of their probation, the judge and Bose swore to obey His Majesty and went back to India. On the train home, the judge sipped beef tea and read *How to Speak Hindustani*, since he had been posted to a part of India where the language was foreign to him. He sat alone because he still felt ill at ease with the English.

The judge's return to India already indicates just how isolated he is from both cultures, and from this point is unable to truly find a place to call home. He sips beef tea specifically (the cow is sacred in the Hindu religion) and does not know the language where he is going. At the same time, he still cannot call himself British or even interact with British people.


Meanwhile, Sai walks by the judge's door on her way to the bathroom. She wanders in and out and in and out, absent-minded and forgetting what she did and did not wash: her feet, her face, her teeth? She thinks about Gyan and how gentle he had been.

One of the reasons Sai is at first so taken with Gyan is that he treats her with respect, and like an equal. It then makes sense why their relationship falters, when he begins to feel superior to her.

Meanwhile, the cook sits in his own hut, opening two letters from Biju. The first letter's ink has completely washed away. The second letter does not reveal much new information, only reaffirming that there is an ocean between him and his son. He lies in his bed.

With Biju's letters taking on a formulaic tone, the cook begins to feel the same emptiness that Biju feels. Even though the cook has only ever called India home, he also begins to feel a little alienated from it because he is now completely without family.

In the spare room, Gyan wonders at his bravery in going beyond the bounds of propriety and whether it was the right or wrong thing to do. He feels frightened but also proud. All four inhabitants of Cho Oyu lie awake in thought as the storm rages on.

Even though Gyan questions whether his actions were in the right or in the wrong, it is clear throughout the novel that this society condones going beyond the bounds of propriety—as long as it is the man doing so, and not the woman.

CHAPTER 19

Saeed Saeed runs into Biju and tells him that he has left Banana Republic and gotten married to a woman who worked with him at a restaurant. Now, they're practicing for their INS interview. Biju is surprised that her parents are letting her marry him. Saeed says that her family loves him: they're a family of "Vermont hippies" and support any subversion of the U.S. government. On the way home, Biju tries to smile at American women. They barely look at him.

Saeed's progression further illuminates the mythology surrounding American opportunity and social mobility. If the only way to come to America and succeed is to marry someone willing to subvert the U.S. government, then the cycle of economic inequality is not actually easy to break.


The cook goes to the post office, complaining that the letters are all wet. Lola tries to call her daughter for her birthday, but a man tells her that the satellite for the phones is down. She and the cook commiserate about not being able to phone or send letters.

In many ways, the weather and the natural landscape serve as an equalizer in breaking down economic distinctions. A loss of modern appliances and technology puts the cook and Lola in the same situation.

CHAPTER 20

Whenever the storms pause, Gyan returns to Cho Oyu. He and Sai measure their collar bones, eyelashes, and veins. They continue to play their game until Gyan pleads for her to kiss him. She says no, but then she kisses him. One week later, they are fully immersed in kisses, constantly asking to be kissed on the nose, cheek, and ears.

The initiation of Sai and Gyan's romance keeps in line with its respectful nature as she consents to initiating a physical relationship. This is in direct contrast with the initiation of the judge's and Nimi's physical relationship, which will be explored further at the end of the novel.

Sai and Gyan do not pay attention to the political rumblings that are mounting daily. Posters are put up in the markets; slogans are painted on the sides of buildings, asking for a state and for fair treatment for the Nepalis in India. These acts are dismissed as the protests of a handful of students, until one day fifty boys gather to swear an oath to fight for the formation of a homeland called Gorkhaland. Suddenly, everyone begins using the word "insurgency."

Desai specifically notes that Sai and Gyan are ignoring the political upheaval around them, foreshadowing its eventual role in their conflict. As the GNLF movement gathers, their motivations in asking for their own state are illuminated. They aim to acquire fair treatment by acquiring a separate home for themselves.

CHAPTER 21

Lola and Noni discuss the "insurgency." Noni thinks the insurgents have a point, but Lola thinks that now they'll come after all the wealthy people. She complains about Nehru's introduction of states in India, arguing that now anyone can get a group of people together and demand a state.

Lola's opinions come from the point of view of someone who is privileged and whose values and culture are already respected in society. This comfort leads Lola to be unsympathetic towards the Nepalis.

Noni tells Lola to consider the issue from the Nepalis' point of view. They had been thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya, and Bhutan as well. Lola calls this "illegal immigration." Noni questions why Nepali shouldn't be taught in the schools, and Lola responds by saying that they'll begin statehood demands. Sai is sitting beside the sisters, but she is not really listening; instead, she thinks of Gyan's touch.

Noni, for her part, argues for the point of view of the Nepalis, but Lola's worries about statehood in particular show that she is concerned not about being a minority (which she already is), but about living in a place where her culture is not what is primarily practiced and valued.

At that moment, Mrs. Sen peeks in. Lola continues their conversation, saying that Darjeeling and Kalimpong never belonged to Nepal. Noni says that the British are very unskilled at drawing borders. Mrs. Sen jokes that they have never done it before, because there is water all around them.

This discussion highlights how the current political trouble was largely brought on by colonialism, because when the British left, they drew borders in such a way that left many Nepali people in what became India.

Sai continues to think of her afternoons with Gyan, and how they melt into each other like butter. Mrs. Sen begins to complain about Pakistan and the Muslims in India. Lola is uneasy about Mr.s Sen's stereotypical complaints, because they mirror her own prejudice against Nepalis.

Sai, for her part, is almost willfully ignorant of the conversation, which highlights her own privilege in being able to ignore the political concerns of people like Lola and Noni as well as people like Gyan—a fact that makes her political awakening brought on by Gyan so painful.

Noni asks Mrs. Sen about her daughter in America in order to change the topic, but quickly wishes she hadn't, because Mrs. Sen can go on and on about how they keep begging her daughter to take a green card. Noni and Lola have always looked down on Mrs. Sen, particularly because they view America as inferior to England, where Lola's daughter lives. They debate furiously over which country is better.

The debate here between England and America again reflects the dynamics between colonialism and globalization. England's culture was imperialistic, but America's culture is no less harmful—it only appears to be because it markets itself as a place of inclusion and social mobility. What is ironic is that both of these women are ignorant of many of the issues that immigrants like Biju actually face, as seen in Mrs. Sen's bragging about Americans begging her daughter to take a green card.

Noni asks Sai if she has any news, to try and change the topic a second time. Sai says she has no news, but blushes. Lola asks her why she doesn't have a boyfriend yet. Mrs. Sen counsels her to get one sooner rather than later, while Sai still feels the need to be adventurous.

It is interesting to note the differences between how the men and the women in the novel discuss marriage and relationships. Noni, Lola, and Mrs. Sen give Sai a much greater agency in beginning a relationship than the men believe women have when they contemplate marriage.

CHAPTER 22

Biju now works in Brigitte's, an upscale restaurant in the financial district. In the morning, the owners of the restaurant, Odessa and Baz, drink Darjeeling tea at a table and read the *New York Times*, particularly the international news, which is overwhelming and full of stories of third-world debt, dirty dealings by companies, and "everything run by white people." Odessa says that these are just the rules of nature.

The owners of the restaurant make a similar argument that Lola did in the previous chapter. They are able to discuss the news with a certain remove because they have the privilege to, and again make no effort to change society because the system has placed them in a better position than others (although they also seem to be cynical about the ability to change at all).

A fellow dishwasher complains about the restaurant customers, but admits that America is better than England because Americans want to believe that they are good people, and won't yell at him openly in the streets. He wants a green card for revenge, even though he hates America. Biju comes to think that the more he hates America sometimes, the more he wants a green card.

The debate over which is better, America or England, continues in America. While English colonialism may have been more outwardly cruel, America's quiet complacency in relegating people to the "shadow class" can be just as harmful.

The restaurant serves steak, and Biju is unhappy serving it. He is particularly frustrated when he sees other Indians eating steak, and they pretend not to notice his sneering as they eat. Biju knows that one should not give up one's religion and the principles of one's family—but he also knows that those principles would lose him his job.

Biju's discomfort with the restaurant serving steak (since cows are sacred in the Hindu religion) shows how his sense of belonging stems from the acceptance of his traditions and beliefs, particularly the traditions and beliefs that have been passed down by his family.

Biju learns to sear steaks for the businessmen who come to the restaurant talking about the potential for their products to be sold in China and India. Biju remembers Saeed Saeed, who refused to eat pigs. He resolves to quit, and leaves his job feeling confident in his decision. The owners are shocked and say he will never make it in America with an attitude like that.

At first, Biju sets aside his beliefs for the sake of his job—illustrating the ways globalization and the ensuing drive to assimilation can actually be a means of oppression, because of the financial pressures (or pressures brought on by racial bias) immigrants can experience to set aside their culture or religion.

Biju's first question at his next interviews is whether or not the restaurant serves steak. His first few attempts are unsuccessful until one day he discovers the Ghandi Café. In the dim space, Harish-Harry sits in the back filling out a donation form for a cow shelter in New Jersey. Biju asks if they serve steak, and Harish-Harry looks at Biju as if he's crazy. One week later, Biju is in the kitchen.

Eventually, Biju is able to retain his principles and find a place that values his own culture, because the owner of the restaurant shares in that culture. This is the first place Biju feels truly comfortable, highlighting the idea that belonging and home can be found in a values system or group of people, not only in a geographic place.

CHAPTER 23

Gyan and Sai's romance begins to flourish. They call each other a variety of nicknames. They continue to ignore the political trouble brewing in Kalimpong, and don't say a word when they notice that they eat differently in a restaurant.

Each time the narrative returns to Sai and Gyan's romance, Desai also brings up the growing political trouble around them. This, coupled with their willful silence over the difference in their eating habits, foreshadows the coming conflict between them.

Together Sai and Gyan go to cultural institutes, the zoo, and the monastery on Durpin Dara. From that hill, they see the landscape below, and Gyan asks Sai about her family. She says that her parents eloped and died in Russia, where her father was a scientist. She doesn't want Gyan to feel inferior, and so she does not reveal that he was going to be a space pilot.

As with many of their experiences at Cho Oyu, the things that Sai and Gyan do together later become weaponized, as he criticizes her for taking him to sightsee, and scoffs that she has never been to a temple except for its cultural interest. In a way, she becomes a tourist in her own country because she has been so isolated from its culture.

Gyan tells Sai a little of his own family history. They had left their village in Nepal and arrived in Darjeeling to work on a tea plantation. Then the Imperial Army arrived and recruited Gyan's great-grandfather, offering far more money than his father had ever earned before.

Gyan's backstory also centers on colonization, and how he feels about his family history tracks how his feelings about the British in India change over the course of the novel. Here, he begins with pride in how his family served in the war.

Gyan's great-grandfather swore allegiance to the Crown, and was killed after he married and had three sons. Then two of his two sons were also killed in the army. The third son also served, and returned to the army when Gyan was very small. Gyan asked him what England was like, but he had never been there. The uncle would not say where he had been. Since his departure, the family had invested their fortunes in school-teaching.

Readers can see how the framing of colonialism led to a sustained way of taking advantage of people. The army employed the father, and then out of "kindness" took in his sons in order to allow the family to continue to make money. This creation of dependency is a hallmark of colonial structures.

Sai asks about Gyan's father, but he does not reply. When Sai returns home in the evening, she stops at Uncle Potty's for a torch to light her way home. Uncle Potty and Father Booty tease her about Gyan. When she reaches Cho Oyu, she discovers the cook waiting for her at the gate. He complains that he has been waiting for her. She asks him to leave her alone, having found space and freedom in love.

The pride that Gyan feels in his family history directly contrasts the shame that he feels about his father in the present, as Gyan's financial situation is much worse than what Sai is able to see. In a way, his actions are similar to the cook, who tries to avoid humiliation by taking pride in the things that he can.

CHAPTER 24

In the Ghandi Café, the food is catered to an American market. Harish-Harry has worked to find what he calls the "Indian-American point of agreement." The customers get "all you can eat" for six dollars, while snake charmer music plays in the background.

Even as Biju finds more of a home in the Ghandi Café, the food becomes a means of catering to American customers instead of having actual authenticity. This plays into the commodification of culture that globalization entails, as can be seen by the stereotypical "snake charmer" music.

Harish-Harry's wife suggests that the staff could live below the kitchen. By offering free housing, they can cut the pay to a quarter of minimum wage and reclaim the tips. Biju leaves the basement in Harlem and sets up a new life at the Café—but he is still not able to escape the **rats**. Biju also quickly comes to realize the rift that exists within Harish-Harry himself, who tries to be loyal to both cultures.

Although these actions seem to be generous on the surface, the situation makes Harish-Harry and his wife more able to exploit the staff. The recurrence of the rats shows yet again that the most vulnerable and poor immigrants are being taken advantage of—even by people who share a cultural heritage with them.

Harish-Harry is not the only one who lives a divided life—many Indian students come in with American friends, speaking with one accent to the staff and another to their friends. The Indian-White romances are particularly sneered at by the staff. When the *desis* (a Hindu word meaning a person who is part of the Indian diaspora) order spicy food to show off, they often find the food to be far too hot, and the staff grins at their pain.

Biju starts to become resentful of Indians who have set aside their culture because they live in a society that values Western cultures over Eastern ones. When they try to don their cultural heritage temporarily in order to show off, Biju becomes particularly angry, because Indian culture continues to be treated like a commodity, even by Indian-Americans.

Harish-Harry blames his daughter for part of his assimilation. She was becoming more fully American, and when she got a nose ring, he slapped her. She had told him that she didn't want to be his servant, and that no one was going to wipe his ass. He had been devastated and got drunk, crying on Biju's shoulder and dreaming of revenge on American culture.

Harish-Harry clearly still retains some of the more conservative ideas about gender relations, as he slaps his daughter for something relatively harmless. It is clear, however, that she refuses to be subdued, as she answers him harshly in return.

CHAPTER 25

Mutt is taken to the tailors to be measured for a winter coat. The house grows cold but remains damp. At Christmas, Sai joins Father Booty, Uncle Potty, Lola, and Noni at Mon Ami. They drink and sing, eat soup, mutton, and pudding, and the sisters bring out their ornaments. Gifts are given: knitted socks from the Tibetan refugee village, amber and coral earrings, apricot brandy, and books with blank sheets of paper.

The celebration of Christmas is a major example of globalization in the small community that comprises the judge's neighbors. The fact that they are celebrating Christmas at all is notable, considering most of them are not Christian. Additionally, they make food according to British traditions and give gifts that exemplify the upper class. This celebration becomes a major point of contention between Sai and Gyan later.

Lola drinks more rum and recalls a time when they used to travel on horseback to Bhutan. They would stay in fortresses called *dzongs*, which had been built without a single nail. Father Booty chimes in, remembering the baths in the fortresses, which were made of hollowed-out tree trunks with a slot underneath for heated rocks. When he returned years later, he says, the bathrooms had been redone with pink tiles, showers, and toilets.

The story that Lola and Father Booty tells is another example of how globalization can be harmful on a larger scale: here, an entire set of ancient fortresses are outfitted with plumbing and tiles. These unnecessary updates are made because of the pervasive idea that modernization (often coupled with Westernization) is always better.

That night, Sai gets into bed with her new socks. They are the same design used by Sherpas in mountaineering expeditions, and that Tenzing had worn to climb Everest. Sai and Gyan had recently gone to see Tenzing's possessions at a museum. Gyan said that Tenzing was the real hero of the expedition, and that Sir Edmund Hilary couldn't have made it without him. Sai wondered if humans should have conquered the mountain at all.

The story of Tenzing highlights Sai and Gyan's differing attitudes about colonialism, power, and glory, where climbing the mountain represents maintaining control over land. Gyan argues that Tenzing should get the credit for Hilary's expedition, foreshadowing his eventual involvement with the GNLF movement. Sai's thoughts again portray her as passive and content with what she has, dismissing the idea of climbing the mountain at all.

CHAPTER 26

After the new year, Gyan is buying rice in the market when he hears people shouting. When he exits the shop, he is pulled into a procession of young men holding their **kukris** and shouting "*Jai Gorkha*" and "Victory to the Gorkha Liberation Army." Around him, he sees old college friends that he has lately ignored because of his romance with Sai.

Aside from the opening episode, this exchange marks the first time we see the GNLF movement in action as they work to create a political home for themselves. Of course, with the appearance of their kukris (knives), it is also the first time that the movement begins to turn violent. The passivity of people in the privileged classes has led to the necessity of a more violent revolution.

Gyan has a feeling of history being wrought and views the scene as if it were a documentary. He feels the desire to leave with Sai and go somewhere far away and free from history and debt. He feels cynical—like his frustration is being taken advantage of by the movement. But he looks around and see that the other men do not share his cynicism. Gyan remembers the stories of Indian liberation, and how the citizens had risen up by the millions.

Gyan's initial hope to escape this political revolution (led by his own people) is more idealistic than realistic. As Biju's journey demonstrates, not only is it difficult to escape the stereotypes of one's heritage, but it is also difficult to establish a sense of belonging without others who share one's cultural values.

Gyan watches as a man climbs up on a bench and begins delivering a rousing speech. The man says that in 1947, the British granted India freedom and gave Pakistan to the Muslims, but forgot the Nepalis of India. Since then they have been treated like servants, even though they fought on behalf of the British for two hundred years.

The Nepalis demand a political home for themselves, but they also make it clear that the current dynamics are an extension of the mess that colonialism made of the map around Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

The man asks if they are given compensation; if any tea gardens in the district are Nepali-owned (though they make up eighty percent of the population); if children learn Nepali in schools; if they can compete for jobs. The procession responds to each question: "No." Gyan himself remembers his last job interview—over a year ago in Calcutta, which had been conducted in complete darkness because there was no electricity. Gyan watches as the men cut their fingers with their **kukris** to write a poster for Gorkhaland with their blood.

Each of the questions that the man asks of the crowd key into some of their most pressing concerns. For Nepalis to have the ability for social mobility through wealth, for their language to be valued by being taught in schools, to not be discriminated against based solely on their ethnicity and class. The use of the kukris to write a poster in blood also demonstrates their willingness to escalate the situation to violence, but also their willingness to make sacrifices for their political cause.

Later, Gyan, his friends, and many others sit drinking and discussing what to do. Gyan feels comfortable in the "masculine atmosphere" and tells the story of his family. His friends question whether he thinks that they got the same pension as the English. Everyone else's anger joins his, and he suddenly realizes why he has no money and no job. At the same time, Gyan feels ashamed of the tea parties he has had with Sai, complete with cheese toast and queen cakes. Gyan then voices an opinion that the Gorkha movement should take the harshest route possible.

As Gyan sits drinking with his friends, the environment becomes a perfect storm for his political awakening. He is angry at the way colonialism devalued Nepalis, even more than Indians. He is spurred by an atmosphere of men channeling his anger, setting it apart from Sai's complacency. Lastly, being a part of the movement gives him a sense of belonging, and a way in which he can improve his own personal situation.

CHAPTER 27

The next day, Gyan arrives at Cho Oyu restless and moody. He is angered by the luxury of the house and the fact that he must walk a long way in the cold for such a small amount of money. Sai comments on his lateness, and he becomes annoyed with her. She begins to talk about the Christmas party, but he ignores her and opens the physics book.

Gyan, now fueled by a sense of authority and superiority gained at the protest, begins to realize some of the unfairness in his own circumstances: first, that he is forced to take this job, and second, that he must walk two hours for extremely minimal pay.

They both begin to yawn—Sai yawns playfully; Gyan yawns in spite of himself in response. Sai asks if he is bored by physics. He yells at her that he is bored by *her*. He shouts that she shouldn't even celebrate Christmas. He says that she is embarrassing herself by running after the West, and he calls her a fool. She asks why, if he's so clever, he can't get a job. Gyan yells that it's because of people like her. Sai leaves the table.

Again, because of an atmosphere that hardened his own beliefs about inequality, Gyan begins to turn on Sai. Though he is certainly justified in addressing how the systems that reinforce her privilege also reinforce his poverty, his ability to do so is fueled by a misogyny that was reinforced by an all-male protest environment. He begins to attack her for cultural institutions that aren't even hers, but instead had been propagated by a system of globalization and colonialism.

CHAPTER 28

The judge thinks about his own hatred. When he had returned from England, he was greeted by Nimi, now nineteen, whom he had forgotten entirely. She draped a garland over him but didn't meet his eyes. She remembered their bicycle ride, and he still found her attractive.

Juxtaposing Gyan's cruelty towards Sai in the previous chapter with the judge's cruelty towards Nimi in this one proves that even across generations, misogyny remains deeply rooted in society.

Nimi had later gone through the judge's toiletry case, trying to learn a bit about English culture. She picked up the judge's **powder puff** and powdered her breasts. She buttoned up her blouse and stuffed the puff inside it, filled with greed at the foreign, silky object.

What is particularly tragic about this episode is that Nimi had initially been interested in English culture. After the judge's brutal response to her taking the puff, however, she refuses to adhere to it or learn anything about it.

Later the judge went to check his belongings and discovered that the **powder puff** had disappeared. He questioned the women in his family, asking if they had taken it. They asked what a powder puff was, and when he explained it, they laughed at him for "becoming a lady." Then the rest of the family was questioned, and each time the embarrassment of explaining was repeated. The judge finally asked Nimi, who denied taking it. Then, he spotted the puff beneath her shirt.

The judge viewed the powder puff as a representation of his new attachment to British culture and power systems. He used it in his role as a judge to literally make himself whiter, a parallel to his behavior as a whole. The rest of the family, however, associates it with femininity, and begins to make fun of him and humiliate him for using it.

The judge cornered Nimi in the bedroom. An aunt shouted at the judge to break the bed; another commented that now Nimi would settle down. She tried to escape, but found the door locked. He came at her, and she picked up the powder container and threw it at him. In a fury, the judge wrestled her to the ground and raped her.

The family's responses to the judge's behavior show the extent to which cultural misogyny can go. Thus, not only is Nimi raped in punishment for a relatively harmless crime, but she is also humiliated, and this harsh punishment is condoned by the family.

The judge was glad to be able to disguise his crudity in sex with hatred and fury. Each night he repeated the act; during the day, he never spoke to Nimi or looked at her. The two of them traveled to Bonda, where the judge rented a bungalow. He hired a companion for Nimi named Miss Enid Pott, but Nimi would learn no English. He would hold up food at dinner and if she could not name it, it would be removed from her plate. Enid commented that she was very stubborn.

Nimi's humiliation continues as she comes to represent something larger than herself: an adherence to Indian culture, which the judge now despises. He then sees her refusal to take part in English culture as an affront to himself. Again, her continued rape and humiliation is supported by those around her—even the women, like Enid.

Nimi did not accompany the judge on tour, unlike other wives. Nimi was left alone in Bonda instead, uncared for. She became desolate. Weeks went by without her speaking to anybody. The servants gave her their leftovers, and only cleaned the house the day before the judge returned.

Sexist double standards continue even when the judge is not at the house, as the servants treat Nimi with immense disrespect until the judge returns from his tour.

The judge grew more and more upset by Nimi's facial expressions, and then by her blankness. He took off her bangles, threw away her hair oils, and when he saw that she was squatting on the toilet from her footprints, he pushed her face into the toilet. By the end of the year, Nimi and the judge experienced internal rage "with enough muscle in it for entire nations coupled in hate."

Desai's comment that they have hate enough for "entire nations" expresses the true essence of the conflict: the judge treats his interactions with Nimi as a battle between English culture and Indian culture. This can be seen in the fact that he takes offense at everything she does that expresses her Indian-ness.

CHAPTER 29

Gyan leaves as he hears Sai beginning to sob. He slams the gate behind him. He wonders at himself, knowing that Christmas had never bothered him before. He realizes that Sai is defining his hatred in her attempts to be Westernized.

Gyan's realization emphasizes a point that the judge's story introduced in the previous chapter: in each of these circumstances, the men come to see the women as defining what they are reacting against—in the judge's case, it is Indian culture, and in Gyan's case, it is British culture.

Some time later, Gyan returns to Cho Oyu and apologizes to Sai. After some coaxing, she accepts his apology. He tells her that he can't resist her. She kisses him, but his apologies quickly turn from sincere to insincere. In his mind, Gyan becomes angry at himself for giving in, thinking that he will have to sacrifice silly kisses for his adulthood.

Not only does Gyan continually connect Sai with Western culture, but he also connects her with adolescence and childishness. By positing femininity against his own coming of age, he tries to grow up by being more and more masculine.

Sai also finds her anger returning. If Gyan argued against Christmas, he would have to argue against speaking English as well, which would be unthinkable. Later that evening, the cook asks where Gyan went. Sai doesn't respond but says that the cook had been right: Nepalis aren't very intelligent.

As Gyan uses Sai to define his hatred, so too does Sai use Gyan to define her own beliefs. Even though she may not have a political cause to rally around, it is difficult for her to conceive of setting aside the way she was raised, because her values constitute her sense of belonging in the world.

Gyan tells his college friends about how he is forced to tutor to earn money. He mocks Sai and the judge. His tongue, loosened by alcohol, reveals a description of their house, the guns on the wall, and the certificate from Cambridge they don't know to be ashamed of.

The things Gyan points out about Cho Oyu once again reveal that the source of many of these political issues was colonization. Gyan's belief that the judge should be ashamed of his time in England and the ICS demonstrates how the judge had been on the wrong side of history after India gained its independence.

Gyan questions why he shouldn't betray Sai. She only speaks English and pidgin Hindi. She can't eat with her hands, has never waited for a bus, has never been to a temple to pray, has never put oil in her hair, and prefers European foods. He recalls their discomfort eating together with such different manners.

Gyan's issues with Sai, unlike the judge, come not from actions she took but from a way that her entire life has been privileged. Rather than believing her lifestyle superior, however, Gyan comes to view it as a weakness, as she has never endured any hardship.

Gyan is sure, however, that Sai is proud of her lack of Indian-ness, so he tells his friends about the guns, the liquor and the lack of a phone to call for help at Cho Oyu. The next morning, Gyan realizes his mistake and feels extremely guilty. He realizes how fluid love is, and how much it had begun to frighten him.

Gyan's hatred comes to be more pointed in this masculine atmosphere, which he holds in direct contrast to the feminine ignorance he associates with Sai. Thinking that revealing the information about Cho Oyu constitutes a brave contribution to the cause, his actions truly amount to a betrayal of individuals rather than the dismantling of a system.

CHAPTER 30

The cook is putting buffalo meat into Mutt's stew, and worries that food and supplies are getting harder and harder to buy because of the strikes. He has a sudden panic, thinking that Biju might be dead.

In further displays of the disparity between privilege and poverty at Cho Oyu, Mutt is often treated better than the cook.

Years prior, when the cook's wife had died falling from a tree, his village had warned that her ghost was threatening to take Biju with her because she had died violently. The cook asked the judge to let him return to his village to make a sacrifice, but the judge had refused, saying that the priests were only trying to rob him of his money. Eventually, the cook lied and said that the roof of his village hut had blown off, and the judge allowed him to go. The cook worries that because he lied, the sacrifice hadn't really worked.

The cook's superstitions recur throughout the novel, and often appear as a way of explaining why certain events occur. As Lola and Noni discuss later in the novel, religion is used to attempt to make sense of the world and its inequality and injustices. However, it also allows society to place false blame on people who have no control over their circumstances or their poverty.

The cook first tried to send Biju abroad when a recruiting agent for a cruise ship line appeared in Kalimpong. Biju interviewed, was accepted, and signed with the company, and the cook was extremely proud. The next day, they went back to the hotel with a medical form and eight thousand rupees to cover his processing fee and the cost of the training camp.

Biju's first attempt to get a green card serves as another example of how poverty can be difficult to escape, because people are easily exploited in trying to find opportunities. The cruise ship scam takes advantage of Biju's optimism and desire to go to America.

Two weeks later, Biju traveled to Kathmandu for the training, only to find out that he had been cheated. A local butcher, in the process of wrestling a **goat** to be slaughtered, noticed him and told him that many others had come in search of this training. The butcher cursed at the goat and then slit her throat.

Again, animals come to stand in for the vulnerability of Biju and other immigrants, and the goat here is particularly evocative of how people in poverty are treated as subhuman.

Biju's second attempt to go to America involved applying for a tourist visa. Biju had gone to the U.S. embassy and stood in line with a crowd of people camping out for days on end. Sometimes every paper the applicants brought with them was fake. Some would be chosen, and others were refused with no rhyme or reason.

While Biju's second attempt to go to America may have taken less advantage of him, it is no less humiliating. He and fellow hopefuls wait for days on end, only for their fate to be decided by American embassy officials based on arbitrary reasons.

Biju observed as the people behind the glass asked rude questions: "Can you prove to us you won't stay?" "What is the purpose of your visit?" The people next to him strategized about how to respond. They planned to say that a *hubshi* (black person) broke into a shop and killed their sister-in-law, and they had to go to the funeral. A student studying in America advised against playing into this stereotype.

Time and time again, those with power in the novel are able to humiliate those without it as a means of maintaining their superiority. The embassy officials can be as rude as they want to be, because they hold the fate of the people who are so desperate to get to America in their hands.

Biju and the others had then been surprised to see an African-American woman behind the counter. The man who had come up with the break-in story was sent to her window, and the others whispered to him to say Mexican instead. He stumbled over his response, and the woman denied his visa.

As Biju discovers in America, globalization can also reinforce negative stereotypes because people are so often in competition with one another—for visas, jobs, living spaces. Thus, it is easy for people to enhance the stereotypes of others if as a result it mitigates the stereotypes against themselves.

Biju watched as those who had large homes, wore jeans, and spoke English tried to separate themselves. They could prove that they would not stay in America because their passports had already been stamped in England, Switzerland, and America.

Just as poverty creates its own problematic cycle, the reverse is shown here. People who have already been able to travel are more likely to be allowed to travel again.

Biju approached the window and answered the questions directly and politely. He lied and said he would not remain in America because he had family, a wife, and a son here, as well as a camera shop. He showed a fake bank statement to prove he had the funds for the trip. His visa was approved. A man who had been in line behind him called him "the luckiest boy in the whole world."

To Biju's surprise, his green card is approved, but his actual experience in America casts doubt on him being "the luckiest boy in the whole world." By repeating this phrase later in an ironic fashion, Desai makes the argument of how harmful this American mythology actually can be.

Biju had reveled in this title. He walked through a park, chased a cow, and did push-ups in joy. The next day, he sent a telegram to the cook. His father was overjoyed, as was Sai, who knew that with Biju in America, the cook would give his affection to her.

Sai's reaction to Biju's good news reveals some of her selfishness, but also proves in a way that she feels just as isolated and excluded as many other characters, because she is essentially without a family.

A little over three years after Biju received his visa, he slips on some rotten spinach in the Ghandi Café and his knee pops. He asks Harish-Harry to get a doctor. Harish-Harry exclaims that doctors are too expensive, and Biju responds that it's Harish-Harry's responsibility because it happened in his kitchen.

Biju's accident shows how dehumanizing the system is, because as an illegal immigrant he cannot even ask his employer for needed medical attention. His health is completely undervalued, and even though he eventually heals, his worth as a human is called into question.

Harish-Harry is outraged. He yells at Biju, saying that he has taken him in without papers, housed him, and now he is threatening to make him pay. Biju retorts that without the staff living like pigs, his business wouldn't survive, because he pays them nothing. Harish-Harry finally calms down and tells him that he should go home to India to get medical attention, and then come back if he wants to.

Biju may have been momentarily lucky in gaining a visa, but his circumstances are bent towards misfortune as he is abused time and time again, even by those who share a cultural heritage with him. The system is designed for him to fail, as a simple accident can undo all of the time and money that he has spent in America up to this point.

After two weeks, Biju is able to walk with a stick. Two more weeks, and he is no longer in pain—but he continues to be troubled by the specter of getting a green card. One night, Biju wakes up and his friend complains that he sounds like a cement mixer grinding his teeth. His friend then sets a garbage can with a **rat** inside it on fire.

Harish-Harry's advice plagues Biju, because it means that his life in America amounted to three years of cyclical hardships. He ultimately wants to return home, but not without the proof that he could go back to America if he wanted to: the coveted green card. Also, this episode provides another example of animal abuse as a representation of the cruelty towards immigrants.

Saeed Saeed runs into Biju on the street, and now he speaks much better English and owns twenty-five pairs of shoes. Biju, on the other hand, has been cultivating self-pity. He almost cries over finding a dead insect in a bag of basmati rice that had come from India, because it mirrored his own journey. Biju remembers what the cook had said: stay in America as long as possible, make money, and don't come back.

Saeed Saeed serves as a success story to contrast with Biju's disappointment. What is notable, however, is that the difference between Biju's and Saeed's stories is relatively minimal, demonstrating that the difference between success and failure is in many ways completely arbitrary, proving the mythology that anyone can rise up in America through hard work to be just that—a myth.

CHAPTER 31

In March, Father Booty, Uncle Potty, Noni, Lola, and Sai take the Swiss Dairy jeep to exchange their library books at the Gymkhana Club before the trouble on the hill worsens. Roadblocks are threatened, as well as a three-day strike, no national celebrations, and the burning of the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950. Everyone is "encouraged (required)" to contribute funds to the GNLF, and to send a male representative to every procession.

At this point in the novel, readers can start to see how wealth and privilege potentially become a means of exposure rather than protection. Lola, Noni, Sai, and company travel to the club because they want to exchange their library books, while others are struggling in the face of strikes and supply shortages.

On the road, Sai thinks of Gyan and their fight over Christmas, and how ugly it had been in contrast with the beginning of their relationship. Lola and Noni wave at Mrs. Thondup, a Tibetan aristocrat who lives nearby, out the window of the jeep. They do not wave to Mrs. Sen.

Though Sai does not yet know what had caused Gyan to become so nasty to her, she will soon discover how his political awakening led to his rudeness, an attitude sanctioned by those involved in the GNLF movement and in the society at large.

When they arrive in Darjeeling, they see the effects of a new law. The government has recently passed legislation allowing an extra story to be built on all the homes to try to accommodate for the population. This added weight has caused many landslides. Lola and Noni comment that the town has really gone downhill—both literally and metaphorically.

The cycle of poverty has even infiltrated the laws in Darjeeling: because parts of the town are so overpopulated, the law allowing more stories to be built causes homes to fall to destruction. The sisters' comment here seems particularly insensitive, given their wealth.

Uncle Potty leaves to buy liquor, having depleted the entire supply of rum in Kalimpong. Lola disapproves, particularly because Uncle Potty doesn't want to get books to read, but the ladies put up with him because he is well-educated and from a good family.

The women's begrudging approval of Uncle Potty demonstrates that wealth is not the only criteria for privilege, though it is a major factor. He is accepted into their elite society instead because of his education and English heritage.

The library contains aging books and bound copies of periodicals. The group unanimously dislikes *The Far Pavilions* and *The Raj Quartet*, because English writers writing about India turn their stomachs. Sai grows angry seeing older books like *The Indian Gentleman's Guide to Etiquette*, which advocates segregation between Indians and Europeans.

Sai's disdain for these writers does prove her anti-colonialist attitudes, but at the same time confirms some of her ignorance, as she seems not to realize that the same kinds people who wrote these books also gave her grandfather his political stances and wealth, and therefore eventually (indirectly) gave Sai her beliefs as well.

Sai overhears Noni and the librarian trying to reckon with Christian sin and forgiveness in *Crime and Punishment*. The librarian argues that Hindus have a better system because they cannot escape their misdeeds. But Sai sees that both religions lack justice: unfairness will always exist in the world without true explanation.

In the end, of course, no society is perfect, and no religion justifies every consequence in the world. However, the GNLF movement is hoping to bring some of the people who have benefitted from colonization (like Lola and Noni) to justice, grappling with generations worth of unfairness.

Father Booty, Uncle Potty, Noni, Lola, and Sai begin to hear a procession in the street, though they can't understand what is being said. They try to go to lunch in the club's dining room, but it is closed for business because the political trouble is driving tourists away.

Again, language becomes an important thing to track, as it creates a sense of belonging. Here, though, it also creates a sense of exclusion, because the wealthy cannot understand what the poor are saying. The procession is thus meant to be a show of strength in numbers, as well as a means to rile people up.

CHAPTER 32

The judge remembers his final conversation with his friend Bose, which had been thirty-three years after they had last seen each other in person. It was a month before Sai arrived in Kalimpong, and they had gone to a restaurant in Darjeeling. They exchanged memories of England. Bose recalled how he had corrected the judge's pronunciation and took him to buy an English coat. The judge was angered by these memories, thinking that Bose was trying to put him down.

The judge's final interaction with Bose again affirms just how much self-hatred the judge has internalized due to the racism inherent in colonialism. When Bose brings up events that made the judge seem less English, the judge becomes upset, because he strove to be as English as he possibly could be.

Bose had been one of the ICS men who mounted a court case to win a pension equal to that of white ICS men—but they lost. After that, his son had also tried to bring a case against his employer, Shell Oil, and also lost. People in England had laughed at him, but so, too, had people in India. They believed that Bose thought he was superior to them. The judge had criticized the case for other reasons.

The systemic issues from colonization not only cause the judge's hatred but also cause a deep imbalance and misunderstanding in Indian culture. In trying to win an equal pension to the British, many Indians believed that Bose simply thought himself superior to them, implying that it was inconceivable that Bose could think Indian people and British people were universally equal.

Bose pressed the issue, exclaiming that white people were responsible for all the crimes of the century. The judge was silent. Bose continued, trying to understand his silence, by saying that at least white people eventually left India. The judge burst out, agreeing that they were bad, but so were he and Bose.

This meeting is perhaps the closest the judge comes to realizing the faults of colonialism, but again he brings the issue to a place of self-hatred, realizing his own complicity in the system.

Bose had asked if he and the judge were still friends. The judge responded that things had changed. When Bose said that what was in the past remains unchanged, the judge contradicted him, saying that the present did change the past. The judge was upset that Bose had forced him to grapple with the past, after he had been silent for so long. They parted ways.

Though the judge is upset with Bose for bringing up the past, he for the first time acknowledges some of the damage that colonization has done to himself and to others, recognizing that he had been on the wrong side of history.

On his way home, the judge remembered an incident of boys taunting him at a bus stop, throwing stones and jeering. He then remembered another incident: an Indian boy being kicked and beaten by a group of men. One of them had unzipped his pants and pissed on him. The judge had turned and run away.

The judge provides two examples of how he personally turned his back on justice for other people like him, with the knowledge that he did so out of self-preservation.

The judge returned home to find the telegram regarding Sai's parents' deaths. He knew he would find comfort in her as a Westernized Indian. He found himself happy to have someone in his life whom he didn't hate.

Proving that people often constitute the largest aspect of what makes something feel like home, the judge finally gains some sense of belonging in having a granddaughter whose upbringing made her similar to himself.

CHAPTER 33

Six months after Sai and the neighbors' library trip, the Gymkhana Club is taken over by the GNLF. The dining room in the club is stockpiled with weapons. Later, when the insurgency is over and the men have signed a peace treaty, seven thousand men surrender more than five thousand guns—including the judge's—in that very dining room.

This bit of foreshadowing highlights how even though Sai and the others are relatively uninvested in the political demands of the Nepalis, eventually the inequality that led to the insurgency will hurt them as well, as mention is made of the episode at the beginning of the novel in which the judge's guns were stolen.

On the day of the library trip, Lola, Noni, Father Booty, Uncle Potty, and Sai try to find another restaurant to eat lunch. They go to Glenary's, which serves Indian, Continental, and Chinese food, and where the staff address Father Booty as *monsignor*. The group chooses Chinese food, and they listen to the growing noise of parading boys outside.

In the absence of the elite club's dining room, the group turns to a restaurant that serves different kinds of cuisines, but it is also evident that it is trying to be Western. Parallels can be seen with many of the restaurants in which Biju works in New York.

As they exit the restaurant, the procession is on its reverse trip. Sai is shocked when she spots Gyan in the procession. He sees her, and his expression warns her not to approach him. Noni asks if that was her math tutor. Sai tries to rescue her dignity and denies that it was him. On the way back, Sai feels sick, and vomits out the door of the car. They approach a roadblock, where checkpoint guards are inspecting vehicles. Everyone gets out to stretch their legs.

Gyan's political awakening also spurs Sai's self-awareness. Though Gyan had long been against colonialism and making subtle arguments for Nepali independence, her ignorance of the possibility of his involvement also speaks to her privilege in not needing to be aware of the concerns of the Nepalis.

Father Booty walks around and spots a butterfly. He grabs his camera and takes a picture of it. The guards run up to him and shout that photography is prohibited on the bridge. He apologizes, but the guards then begin to examine his cheeses and the group's books. The guards confiscate the books and Father Booty's camera, while Lola is outraged at their bullying.

Though the police had been bullying people in lower classes all along, Lola only becomes outraged when she is directly affected. It is interesting to note, though, that the Nepali uprising begins to promote a general atmosphere of lawlessness, and the untouchability that the wealthy once experienced starts to erode.

Sai arrives home and goes to bed without dinner, offending the cook, who thinks that she probably had a fancy dinner in a restaurant and now doesn't want his food. He bangs the dishes around loudly, causing the judge to shout at him.

Poverty and privilege even slip into the allowance of emotions. Sai can go to bed upset with relatively little consequence; when the cook expresses his displeasure, he is reprimanded by the judge.

CHAPTER 34

A week after the library trip, the books are returned, but the camera is not, as the picture appears to be focused on the bridge. Father Booty apologizes, but the police don't listen. They visit his home and turn everything upside down, eventually discovering that Father Booty is residing in India illegally. He must leave Kalimpong in two weeks, though he has been living there for forty-five years.

Even in a place where the law is slowly dissolving, the police still have the power to arbitrarily pursue certain crimes over others. Even though Father Booty committed a crime, his crime is relatively minimal compared to the robberies being made by the GNLF. Thus, the upheaval is providing opportunities for people to claim power over others, and particularly to take revenge on the wealthy.

Father Booty tries to find people to help him, particularly those who made regular trips to his dairy farm. This harms him even further, however, as foreign nationals are not allowed to own property, and Uncle Potty had actually signed the papers on behalf of his friend. Uncle Potty offers to take care of the dairy farm while the trouble is sorted out.

Father Booty's situation provides a parallel to the many illegal immigrants residing in the United States—but it also demonstrates a difference between the two situations. Whereas Father Booty is able to live in the open, owning property and eventually returning to Switzerland no worse for wear, people like Biju must always live in hiding and have a much more difficult time finding opportunity to make a living.


Father Booty isn't comforted by Uncle Potty's assurance, since Potty is undependable and an alcoholic. Sai grows angry at these circumstances, believing that this is Gyan and the GNLF's doing. Her mind returns to the day of the gun robbery, when everything started to go wrong.

As Gyan will also argue later, it is a particularly privileged perspective to think that one person's deportation back to Switzerland is not worth the political equality of thousands of people.

CHAPTER 35

Gyan had been the last one to touch the guns, admiring them. Sai had told Gyan that the judge used to go hunting, as the cook had told her. She had been trying to impress Gyan, but later wondered why the guns were something to be proud of.

Sai comes to grapple with the judge's participation in the ICS, which is definitively pro-colonialist and anti-independence. The guns also represent the judge's failed attempts to adopt or be accepted into British culture because he is not good at hunting, as Desai has revealed by this point.

The narration skips ahead, after the incident in which the boys from the GNLF steal the judge's guns. The sub divisional officer (SDO) assures the judge that they will catch the criminals. After he leaves, the judge tells the cook that they never find anyone. Sai continues to think of Gyan avoiding her.

As the violence escalates, the economic divide deepens in some ways, but the violence also levels inequality in others, as no one is able to seek justice for the crimes being committed.

A few days later, the police pick up a drunk and accuse him of the crime. He is transported to the police station. Bored, the police begin to beat him, bashing his head, knocking out his teeth, breaking his ribs. He screams and desperately apologizes. When he crawls out of the station, he has been blinded.

The injustice continues as the police become more and more reckless to match those they are fighting. Not only do they use violence to assert their power unnecessarily, but they also pick on some of the weakest members of society.


CHAPTER 36

A newsagent who knows Biju informs him of the strikes brought on by the Nepalis. Biju had attributed the break in the cook's correspondence to the weather. Over the course of the day, Biju becomes convinced that his father is dead.

As Biju grows more worried about the cook and thinks more about returning home, it is evident that though people and values can constitute home, those people and values are often inextricably tied to places, and so it can be painful to be distanced from them.

The next day, Biju tries to call his father at a place up the road from Cho Oyu, saying that he will call again for his father in two hours. The watchman comes to inform the cook that his son is calling him on the phone. The cook runs down the road, leaving Sai to watch dinner.

The importance of family to having a sense of belonging is made clear here, as the cook immediately leaves Sai in order to speak to Biju. Throughout the novel, Sai has felt somewhat isolated because of her lack of a family, and so she seeks out comfort in this area from the cook. But here she can see where his true priorities lie.

Biju calls again and the cook answers. They yell over the phone, trying to compensate for the distance and the bad connection. Each one confirms that he is all right, but their conversation falters after that. The cook asks when Biju can get leave to return home. The phone line goes dead. Biju feels completely empty. He recalls a letter in which he told the cook he was growing fat, when in reality he had to buy his shirts at the children's rack because he is so thin.

Biju's internal conflict is clear here, and it mirrors the internal conflict of many immigrants in America: he wants to return to a place where he feels a sense of belonging, but he also wants to make his family proud by surmounting his poverty. Whereas the cook lies to feel some pride in himself, Biju lies to prevent the cook from worrying about him.


Biju returns to the Ghandi Café. Harish-Harry shows the staff pictures of the condo in New Jersey for which he had just made a down payment, complete with a satellite dish. He worries that his daughter won't be able to find a husband because her personality is unpleasant. He tells her she will regret her disposition for the rest of her life.

Upon returning to the Ghandi Café, Biju sees that his major obstacle is an arbitrary document telling him that he belongs in the country, because that document has allowed Harish-Harry to thrive where Biju still feels destitute.


CHAPTER 37

A series of strikes continue, up to twenty-one days. Lola fights a battle with the Afghan princesses over the last jars in the market. Finally, the shops don't open at all. Roadblocks stop traffic and prevent goods from being transported. The GNLF boys charge money to be let through. Lola thinks of India as a concept, hope, or desire—and how it is crumbling.

It is interesting to note that Lola thinks of India as a concept, because at its core it is a nation made up by the British—a conglomeration of states, cultures, and identities. In a way, she is correct, because part of the nation that had been established by the British is crumbling, for the purpose of creating a new state for the Nepalis.


Lola and Noni finish their library books but could not return them. Tourists stop arriving. Children are taken out of boarding schools in the area. There is no water, gas, kerosene, or electricity. When the fridge turns off, the sisters are forced to cook all of the perishable food at once, because it is their maid's day off.

Opening with the fact that the women could not return their library books shows the divide between the privileged and the poor—Lola and Noni are concerned about books while people aren't even able to get water. Yet now, for the first time, Lola and Noni experience true hardship.

A group of boys from the GNLF search for shelter, and see Lola and Noni's kitchen window open. They climb through, asking the women to buy their calendars and cassettes for the movement. Lola tells Noni in English not to give them anything, thinking they won't understand. But they do understand her English, while she doesn't understand their Nepali.

Again the importance of language comes into play. The Nepalis understand Lola's English, while she doesn't understand theirs, demonstrating how society has up until this point prioritized the comfort of English speakers over the Nepali culture.

In the end, Lola and Noni buy three calendars and two cassettes. The boys then refuse to leave. They eat all the food and sleep on the floor. Lola and Noni barricade the door to their bedroom. The boys laugh at them, saying that they are too old to worry. The sisters' watchman does not arrive, which Lola takes as proof that he is working with the Nepalis.

Even in attempting to provide better conditions for their people, the Nepalis prove that poverty is still often an inescapable cycle. Even though they are the ones causing the strike, they are also the ones who are hit the hardest. They have to find other sources of food and means of living, even if it means stealing and forcing people to buy GNLF merchandise from them. All of this is in the hope of creating a fairer society for themselves.

The boys leave with the rice, the soap, the oil, and the garden's output of tomato chutney. Below the steps they notice how Lola and Noni's property stretches into a lawn. Within a month, a hut appears in the middle of their vegetable patch. They yell at the boys, saying this is their land. The boys say that it is unoccupied land. The sisters' threats to call the police are taken with shrugs.

The exchange between the sisters and the Nepalis over the hut that has sprung up on their land is a particularly ironic one, as it mirrors arguments made by the colonizers—colonizers who enabled Lola and Noni to live in comfort for so long at the expense of those who were not wealthy.

CHAPTER 38

Lola realizes the old feeling of anger that had always been there: how eyes had always watched them. The Nepalis could recognize and name her and Noni as some of the few rich people in the town, but the sisters could barely distinguish between individuals making up the crowd of the poor.

Whereas before they had thought themselves distinguished, Lola and Noni now realize how their cultural elitism has made them objects of hatred to others. Their bias against people without wealth is demonstrated by the fact that they cannot recognize anyone who does not belong to their class.

Generations worth of discontent begin to settle upon them, and the things that Lola and Noni had found so innocent and fun (Trollope, the BBC, Christmas), suddenly distinguish them and make them vulnerable. Their wealth exposes them.

Again, Lola and Noni become vulnerable because they have denigrated their own culture and people, and those who are not of the upper class want retribution for the ignorance of the wealthy.

Lola travels to a part of town that she has never been in before to pay a visit to the head of the Kalimpong wing of the GNLF, Pradhan. She complains about the illegal huts being built on the Mon Ami property, but Pradhan argues that along the roads, it's government land, and that's the land that the GNLF is taking.

Lola traveling to the GNLF demonstrates how the balance of power is teetering—even though she is still wealthy, she is losing more and more control over her property and her situation.

Pradhan tells Lola that he is the king of Kalimpong, and that a king must have many queens. He mocks her, asking if she wants to be his fifth queen, and the other men in the room laugh at her. He comments on her age and her physical appearance, saying that he would expect a large dowry. Lola walks out in a stupor. The women outside laugh at her as well.

Once again, Desai makes use of a variety of power dynamics to show how privilege can come in many forms. Pradhan's misogynistic comments are used as a tool of humiliation in order to prevent Lola from asserting her rights over her estate. Neither side is blameless in this conflict.

When Lola returns to Mon Ami, Noni asks what happened. Lola can't bring herself to recount the episode. She goes into the bathroom and sits on the toilet, screaming silently to her late husband. She feels alone and unprotected. But she had loved him: for his Wellington boots, his Burberry socks, and his knowledge of German, Russian, and Robert Frost.

Lola's thoughts communicate the injustice of a misogynistic society. She knows she should be treated with equal respect, but her fury at her late husband acknowledges her inability to be taken seriously as a woman. Her descriptions of her husband demonstrate his Westernization as well.

Noni knocks on the bathroom door and asks if Lola is all right. Lola tells her to go away. Noni tries to explain, once again, the perspective of the Gorkhas, but Lola won't have it. She says that they are mercenaries and will be loyal to whoever pays them. She says they are louts. Noni leaves Lola alone, and tries to reconcile with the life she has led—one that has been filled with "doubleness or self-consciousness." She realizes that their possessions had been equivalent to cowardice.

Noni undergoes a similar realization as Lola did, beginning to understand that their wealth was only a means for them to buy into a culture that had oppressed so many others, but they had been ignorant to think that their wealth only affected them. This realization is an affirmation of globalization's potential for harm even to the affluent.

CHAPTER 39

Sai remembers how gentle she and Gyan had been with each other, and then how ferocious his look had been warning her to stay away in Darjeeling. Gyan returns to Cho Oyu a final time after ignoring her, sitting at the table "as if in chains." He apologizes for being human, and she gets angry at his feeble excuses. He interrupts her, saying that he doesn't have to listen to her tirades, and leaves. She cries.

Whereas Gyan and Sai previously respected each other, and their relationship had been extremely caring, here Gyan continues to push away from this dynamic. The misogyny in society gives him a license to ignore her, thinking that he is a grown man with ambition and principle and she is merely a young girl without ideals.

Sai continues to hope for Gyan's return. She reads *Wuthering Heights* and waits. She visits Uncle Potty, who confesses that he had considered himself a lover of love, often finding it in "the wrong sides of town." He describes some of the men he had loved, and who loved him. But Sai is too close to the situation to appreciate his perspective.

Uncle Potty's stories again demonstrate how different forms of disadvantage and privilege intersect for very different outcomes. Uncle Potty and his lovers are marginalized for their sexuality, but Uncle Potty's education, family name, and wealth kept him in the upper-class society, inherently oppressing others as well.

Sai next goes to Mon Ami. Noni and Lola ask who is causing her distress, and whether he is tall, fair, handsome, and rich. Sai is rescued from her misery in getting a cold, which gives her an excuse for her tears, sore throat, and dismal mood. When her cold starts to wane, she goes out to find Gyan.

Noni and Lola continue to reveal their Western bias, providing Sai with a textbook description of a Western idea of what male beauty means, almost as if it is taken from a European fairy tale.

CHAPTER 40

Sai goes to the market, the music and video shop, and the classrooms in Kalimpong college, but does not find Gyan. She walks two hours downhill to the poor part of Kalimpong where Gyan lived. On her walk she looks at the huts along the ledges, with tin roofs, pumps leading from the stream to the shacks, and outhouses whose disposal system simply leads to the valley below. Sai thinks that these homes look pretty in the daylight, but knows that when night falls, the poverty will become apparent.

The neighborhood in which Gyan lives contrasts with Cho Oyu and the other homes Sai is used to. Not only does it demonstrate the poverty of the people who live there, but also the privilege of Sai's lens as she looks upon the shacks with pity and guilt.

Sai asks a woman passing by where Gyan lives. She gestures to a house ahead—a "small, slime-slicked cube" with sand coming out of the walls, a nest of electrical wiring running through the windows, and an upper story that consists simply of iron rods, presumably abandoned for lack of funds. It is "modernity proffered in its meanest form, brand-new one day, in ruin the next."

Gyan's house is in ruin, but clear attempts have been made to improve the home and make it modern (through the electrical wiring, and the effort to build a second story). The house thus reflects the way those who are just at the edge of the middle class might strive for upward mobility but still often teeter into ruin.

Sai is ashamed for Gyan. The house does not match Gyan's English, his clothes, or his schooling. She realizes that he had never spoken about his home or his family, and feels distaste for her own wealth and behavior.

Like other characters, Sai comes to a similar realization of how her Western education and her wealth have made her insensitive to those who lead far less privileged lives.

A ten-year-old girl emerges from the hut. Sai asks if Gyan lives here. The girl is suspicious, and Sai explains that he is her math tutor. At that moment, Gyan comes out. He is outraged that Sai has come to find him, and ashamed that he caught her looking at his home with such distaste.

Gyan's upset makes sense, and shows how Sai has been causing his silence about his family and his life at home. But Gyan here is determined that even though she is humiliating him by showing her distaste for his home, he refuses to allow her to take the power in this situation and becomes angry.

Gyan asks Sai what she wants, and in that moment Sai remembers that she is angry with him. She begins to think he has been pretending the whole time, perhaps planning to "wheedle his way into Cho Oyu," followed by the rest of his family. She refuses to admit the real reason why she came, and so instead she brings up Father Booty.

Though Sai had actually come about Gyan's dismissal of their relationship, Sai's tactic in bringing up his other transgressions makes it clear how easy it is for her to humiliate him, and how vulnerable the poor are to be criticized simply for being poor.

Sai accuses Gyan of what the Nepalis are doing, saying that it is their fault Father Booty was thrown out of India. Gyan asks if Nepalis should continue to sit miserably so that the police don't have an excuse to throw him out. He continues, saying that India doesn't need foreigners to come in and make cheese, and it definitely doesn't need chocolate cigars.

Desai makes her argument through Gyan here: it is a particularly privileged perspective to think that one person's deportation back to Switzerland is not worth the political equality of thousands of people—a deportation very different from the one that Biju fears, largely because of economic status.

Sai criticizes Gyan for being a hypocrite, saying that he enjoyed cheese and chocolate at her house, but attacks it when he is not with her. She calls him a fat pig. As the conversation disintegrates, Gyan begins to giggle, and Sai sees a glimmer of their old relationship. They both realize that people are made up of contradictions, and that they are arguing about things they half believe in.

Sai's argument contains flaws in logic, because even though Gyan might enjoy things like cheese and chocolate, this represents something entirely different than doing so in a way that perpetuates an oppressive culture. Sai does, however, hit upon the difficulty of why people with privilege and power have a difficult time changing the status quo.

Sai begins to laugh as well, but then Gyan flashes back to anger. He wants to be a man and to be strong, not tender and sickly-sweet. Yet at the same time, he is afraid of the growing fervor of the political protests, as there is talk of arson and robbery within the movement. He is frustrated that his family hasn't thought to keep him home, but wonders how he can have any self-respect without believing in anything.

Again, Gyan's association with masculinity and political action becomes quite dangerous as he finds himself not only putting Sai down but also involved in more and more violent illegal activity, which then connects masculinity, crime, and abuse.

Gyan realizes that he owes a lot to Sai, because she has defined what he was working against. Sai reads his thoughts, saying that he hates her for big reasons that have nothing to do with her. She calls him a coward and low-class. He in turn calls her a fool. She begins to scratch at him, yelling as she accuses him of telling the GNLF about the judge's guns. She pounces at his guilty look, but he catches her, throws her into the bushes, and beats her with a stick.

The end of Sai and Gyan's fight makes clear that each of them is coming with a different bias: Sai with classism, and Gyan with sexism. As Sai challenges Gyan's authority, he takes it out on her with violence. Unfortunately, this misogyny is condoned by society, and Sai is helpless to react against it or do anything about it after the fact.

Gyan's little sister reappears, and Gyan turns to take her back inside. Sai yells at her to tell Gyan's parents what her brother has been up to, and says that she will call the police about the gun robbery. Gyan drags his sister by the braids to pull her inside. He thinks that he cannot wait for his marriage to be arranged so he can have a charming girl who won't allow her mind to wander into gray areas.

Gyan's misogyny-laden violence continues as he drags his sister by her hair to their hut. His thoughts on his hypothetical arranged marriage also reveal his sexism, as he would prefer to have a nice, mindless girl than a girl who would be able to challenge him intellectually like Sai, reinforcing the stereotype that women should not be strong-minded.

Sai worries about how she will be laughed at and thought of as a lunatic, while Gyan will be cheered on for his conquest. She walks home very slowly, feeling none of the pity she'd felt earlier. She sees that even peasants can have love and happiness, but not her.

Even Sai understands how a sexist society would interpret the events that occurred between her and Gyan, as she would be criticized for chasing after him and becoming the victim of his violence.

When Sai arrives home, a woman is talking to the judge and the cook. She is the wife of the drunk who had been tortured by the police. She and her father-in-law beg for mercy and help. The judge tells her to go to the police, but the cook contradicts him, saying that they would probably just assault her. She already looks so downtrodden that foreigners have photographed her.

With the appearance of the wife of the drunk who had been tortured by the police, readers can see how the misogyny in society can be amplified by other systemic issues, like the poverty that the wife experiences and the power that the police have over her to do whatever they want, even more than they did with her husband.

The judge goes back to his game of chess, having nothing to offer her and having been recently humiliated himself. He thinks to himself that India is "too messy for justice." He went to the police and reported a problem; after that, it was out of his hands. If he gave these people a bit, he thinks, he could find himself supporting the whole family forever.

It is clearer here more than anywhere else that the judge does not consider India his home, and that he has given up on reintegrating himself into the culture. The irony of the judge saying that India is too messy for justice indicates that he feels he is not someone who can carry out that justice, because he played a major role in perpetuating its oppression.

The woman turns to Sai, but Sai turns away, in no mood to be kind. The cook shoos the woman and her father-in-law through the gate, but they only retreat behind the bushes to wait. Sai cries over Gyan for a while, but the image of the woman returns to her. She goes downstairs, and she and the cook go out with a bag of rice. By this time, however, the pair have vanished.

The way in which Sai, the judge, and the cook deal with this poor woman in a sense boils down the two cycles of poverty and privilege, because one is not willing to give up what they have for fear that others will take advantage of them. What they don't realize is that their lack of charity will cause them to lose something far more valuable.

CHAPTER 41

Biju grows more and more concerned about the cook in Kalimpong. He looks out over the Hudson. A man comes up next to him and tells him that the real name of the river is Muhheakunnuk, "the river that flows both ways." He spouts disjointed sentences about whaling, oil, and underwear. Biju responds, "No speak English," and walks away.

The somewhat deluded man serves as a good reminder that America too was a colonist nation in its beginnings, and has racism built into its roots. Thus, its ability to be a globalized nation, built from immigrants, is an extension of the fact that European colonizers initially took the land from Native Americans.

Biju walks back to the Gandhi Café, thinking about how his life isn't amounting to anything. Biju delivers lunch to the proprietor of the new Shangri-La Travel agency and tells him that he wants to go back. The man tells him not to be crazy; nevertheless, he sells Biju a ticket on Gulf Air.

Biju feels more and more that he doesn't belong in America, and not even the Indian part of America, because its idea of India is far different from what he knows it to be (as seen in both the Gandhi Café and the Shangri-La Travel Agency here).

Biju buys various appliances and souvenirs to bring back to India. As he shops, he remembers when, as a child, he'd been part of a pack of boys who played so hard they'd come home exhausted. He remembers bathing in the river and playing cricket. He doesn't remember the corrupt schoolteachers, the monsoons, or his dead relatives. He doesn't think of the things that made him want to leave.

Though Biju doesn't think of the reasons why he left India, the pull of home is exceptionally strong because he wants to be in a place where people value his cultural heritage and where he is loved by someone. Even the bad parts of one's home, the novel seems to argue, are better than the bad parts of a foreign land, because they inherently carry more familiarity.

CHAPTER 42

Gyan's sister informs their family of Gyan's activities, despite the fact that he bribed her. His parents and grandmother warn him to stay away from Sai, as they could be at the mercy of her family. His grandmother also forbids Gyan from going with his friends to the march the next day. She tells his friends that he is sick.

Even though Sai is a young girl and Sai herself had expected to be laughed at, the family is cautious about insulting her because of her family's wealth and power. This shows how the respect demanded of people can be passed down from generation to generation, as Sai acquired this respect from her grandfather.

Gyan is secretly relieved by this reprieve of responsibility. He had tried to be part of politics and history, but realizes that happiness is more readily available when one is unconcerned by those things. He starts to become guilty about the gun robbery, wondering if he can ever be happy after that betrayal.

Again, Gyan confirms how masculinity, adulthood, and political activity have become inextricably entwined. With the reprieve from having to attend the rally, he is also relieved of the brunt of an adult responsibility, and starts to feel sorry for Sai again.

Meanwhile, Sai lies in her room, and she and Gyan both miss the defining protest of the conflict: the burning of the Indo-Nepal Treaty. Boys arrive at Cho Oyu from the GNLF, demanding that someone attend. The judge tells the cook to go.

The novel again demonstrates the repeated misfortune of the lower-class. Because he is wealthy, the judge is able to send the cook in his place, into what becomes a very dangerous protest where the cook could very well have lost his life.

CHAPTER 43

The date is July 27, 1986. The cook and a watchman from the neighborhood arrive at the Mela Ground, where the protesters are meant to gather. They will then march to the police station and burn the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950. The watchman hopes the protest will be done within the hour.

The culmination of the Nepali protests centers on burning a treaty that Nepalis criticized as a breach of Nepal's sovereignty, which is apt as the movement centers on the idea that the Nepali people in Kalimpong should be granted political sovereignty in a state of their own.

All is going according to plan, until a volley of stones and rocks come down from behind the post office. It is unclear who is throwing them. In response to this attack, the crowd begins to throw stones at the police. The police pick up the rocks and return them. A rumor spreads that there are men among the protesters with guns. The police begin to open fire. The marchers scatter and some are quickly gunned down. Thirteen local boys are killed.

Regardless of who is throwing the stones and for what reasons, it is clear that it causes a severe power imbalance as many innocent people—particularly young boys—are killed when the police open fire. What is particularly heartbreaking is that (like with the beating of the drunken man earlier) they seem to commit these acts simply because they can, rather than to carry out justice or because they fear for their lives.

Some marchers turn back and pull the guns from the policemen's hands. The police quickly become outnumbered. One policeman is stabbed to death; another's arms are chopped off. Their heads begin to be mounted on stakes. A beheaded body runs briefly down the street, defecating on itself.

This image of the beheaded body defecating on itself puts power and humiliation at opposite ends of a spectrum of agency: that in the most powerless of positions, a body also undergoes one final act of humiliation.

Other policemen run back to the station, but their colleagues have locked the doors. Chased by the mob, the police run to private homes for shelter. The police begin to bang on Lola and Noni's door. They are desperate to get in, but the sisters refuse them.

When the policemen lose their guns, the tables are turned. Lola and Noni still have power in having a home, and the police are humiliated in being forced to beg for protection from women they had previously ignored.

Everyone is running, including the cook. He gets some distance up the road before feeling his legs collapse under him. The cook can see fires burning below him, men scattering, and pools of blood collecting in the street. He cries, feeling a complete loss of safety in his home town, where only days before he had believed completely that the town had room for everyone. He feels as though he no longer belongs, and questions whether Biju really exists.

What is perhaps most tragic about the incident was that it sprang from the Nepalis' desire to make Kalimpong feel more welcoming and more equal for them. But in protesting, they prevent the town from feeling like a home for anybody, as violence and anarchy seep into the town's atmosphere.

CHAPTER 44

The incidents of horror grow. No one leaves the hillsides, and no one leaves their homes if they can help it. Nepalis who are reluctant to join the cause are beaten and made to swear loyalty. Those who aren't Nepali are treated worse. Bengalis, like Lola and Noni, are completely unacknowledged by friends they have known for years.

Here, readers can see that in situations like this, the harmful effects of globalization and colonization can also be turned on the wealthy, as Lola and Noni become completely isolated from a home that they have lived in for years.

Below Mon Ami, the illegal hut has become a row of huts. They tap phones, water pipes, and electric lines. Lola and Noni's vegetable patches are stripped overnight, and the area near their gate is used as a bathroom. Little children line up in rows to spit at them as they walk by.

As things deteriorate in Kalimpong, the situation proves that with enough political discontent, the distinction between the poor and the privileged can be shaken very quickly.

GNLF boys are burning government buildings, and detonators set off landslides as negotiations go nowhere. People tremble at the thought of being tortured on any kind of flimsy excuse. Vehicles are being stolen left and right, an issue that becomes moot as the fuel runs out.

The violence seems to spur the GNLF farther from their goal, as the region that they wish to make their political home devolves with a lack of resources and man-made disasters.

The cook tries to calm himself, but he can't manage to go to the market, and so Sai usually does. She searches for shops with a backdoor half open, or someone on the road selling a handful of peanuts or a few eggs. The garden feeds them almost entirely.

Like Noni and Lola, Sai, the judge, and the cook begin to see how their social distinction grows razor-thin from those without wealth as Sai must search for any small amount of food.

One day, the wife of the tortured drunk man returns with her father-in-law. The cook is horrified to see them. They beg for food, but the judge tells them to go away. They wait up the hill and watch the house, spotting Mutt. The woman turns to the man and says that one could get a lot of money selling that dog.

Of course, those who are hit the hardest by political and particularly economic unrest are those who are already poor, because as the judge shows here, those with wealth become even less willing to share when they feel their own economic security falter.

A few days later, the pair returns, but instead of going to the gate, they hide and wait for Mutt to appear. She is absorbed in a smell when they pounce on her. The judge is sitting in a bath, the cook is churning butter, and Sai is sitting in her room thinking of Gyan. They do not see or hear a thing. The trespassers bind Mutt with rope and put her in a sack. They carry her through town and walk around the mountainside. They know that they won't be caught—no one at the house has bothered to find out their names.

Even the wealthy cannot completely escape misfortune, as the judge's unwillingness to help the woman and her father-in-law causes him to lose something far more valuable to him. Just like his gain of wealth and power in the ICS had cost him his connection to his wife and family, his refusal to provide charity costs him perhaps what is most important to him.

CHAPTER 45

The Gulf Air plane labors through the sky, stopping at Heathrow, Frankfurt, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Karachi, Delhi, and finally Calcutta. The air in the plane becomes thick from food and cigarettes. Biju begins to imagine returning to the U.S. and beginning again, buying a taxi.

Biju's journey home reveals how he has not been able to improve his status in America despite its promise of opportunity. Yet he is already hoping to return and start over new.

Biju plays a scene of meeting his father again and again in his head, and weeps a bit with emotion. He imagines how they would sit out in the evenings and tell jokes like the ones told on airplanes by drunk men. One involves two Indian men who are forced to parachute out of an airplane. When their parachutes won't open, they comment how typical it is of a government parachute, saying to wait and see—when they get to the bottom, the jeep won't be there either.

The airplane joke demonstrates a paradox for immigrants like Biju: he is caught between a government that functions but doesn't want him there and one that wants him but doesn't function. In the end, at least at this moment, he chooses the one that wants him, where he feels that he fits in, and where he can find family to come back to.

CHAPTER 46

Sai looks out her window and sees the judge calling for Mutt. His voice becomes increasingly anxious. The afternoon turns into evening, but Mutt doesn't appear. The judge asks everyone he can find if they have seen her: the milkman, the baker, the plumber, the electrician. He knocks on Lola and Noni's door, and Mrs. Thondup's.

The judge's loss of Mutt completes his slide into powerlessness, as he loses what is perhaps the one thing he loves. He even becomes desperate enough to break his isolation from his neighbors, asking if they have seen his dog.

Mrs. Thondup asks if Mutt was expensive. The judge had never thought of her in this way, but he remembers that she had been expensive. Mrs. Thondup says she must have been stolen. Uncle Potty and the Afghan princesses support this theory, as they have all had **animals** stolen from them. Lola comments on how Indians have no love for animals—that they find animals very easy to beat and kill.

Lola reinforces an idea that has been seen several times throughout the novel, particularly in America: it is easy to be cruel to animals because they are already extremely vulnerable, serving as a stand-in for the most powerless members of society.

The judge worries that he had brought Mutt to a place where she could never survive, though he tried to give her the best possible care. He recalls how he had taken her for a vaccine two years ago that most people could not afford. Stray **dogs** had been slaughtered by the truckful and whole families had died, but the judge spent three thousand rupees for Mutt.

The judge's tender treatment of Mutt, which has been catalogued as the seasons progressed in the novel, once again speaks to his privilege. While other animals and even people had died, Mutt was given extremely expensive preventative care.

The judge once again goes to the home of the SDO who had come to their house after the robbery. The SDO says that people are being killed—chasing after a dog is a luxury that society cannot afford. The judge continues on to the police station. They laugh at him, but he persists and asks who they picked up after the gun robbery. The police deny finding any such person.

Unlike in the judge's earlier care for Mutt, this time he sees how distanced he is from the world around him. The police humiliate him and refuse to investigate her disappearance because they believe the judge is foolish enough to think that this crime is equal to the murders, robberies, and arsons that are taking place.

The judge almost weeps, thinking of how men are unequal to **animals**. Humans are corrupt, while animals live with delicacy on earth and don't do anyone harm. He remembers why he had gone to the ICS, but now his position of power has dissipated. He shouts all of his nicknames for Mutt to the Himalayas until an army soldier comes around to enforce curfew.

The judge's loss of Mutt causes him to remember why he had wanted to become a judge: to protect those who are powerless and to bring criminals to justice. Now more than ever, he sees how he has become powerless in the face of a world in revolt against the political system in which he had taken part.

CHAPTER 47

In the aftermath of the parade, the police had been hunting down the GNLF boys. Wanted men dodge the police by sleeping in the homes of the wealthier people in town like Lola and Noni, whose houses they know will not be searched.

As the police hunt down the boys from the GNLF, the affluence of many of the judge's neighbors continues to show its downside: though they are not searched by the police, the homes become targets for the boys to sleep in.

The town begins to fall into anarchy. Screams can be heard in the police station, and the trees are hung with limbs of enemies. Many people take up the opportunity to make anyone they didn't like disappear, or to avenge family vendettas. Residents are shocked by the violence, but also by how mundane the events have become—how commonplace extraordinary hatred is.

Meanwhile, the police continue their violence and humiliation as tools of power. Like with the drunk, it is never clear whether the people they torture have actually committed crimes, or whether they are simply using these tactics to assert dominance over the society.

CHAPTER 48

The Gulf Air flight lands in Calcutta's airport. Biju looks out over the unruly crowd, filled with a variety of people returning to India: rich people, poor people, those who lived abroad or traveled abroad. One student returns bringing back a blonde woman, trying to shake off the looks of others judging him for falling into a stereotype.

Even when he arrives back in India, Biju sees how globalization is seeping into the culture. The student with the blonde woman is particularly noticeable because he is judged for succumbing to Western ideals of beauty.

Many bags don't arrive, and Biju hears that the airline is only giving compensation to nonresident Indians and foreigners, not to Indian nationals. The official tries to argue that foreigners need money for hotels and toiletries. One woman complains that they are treating people from rich countries well and people from a poor country badly.

The way the airline deals with the missing bags is another small example of how poverty and privilege can both be experienced in a cycle, as those who can afford to travel or live outside India are given money for missing bags rather than those who live in India and do not travel as often.

The nonresident Indians, holding their green cards, wait patiently in line, as if to prove that their manners make them more deserving. They try to make sure their passports are turned up so that airline officials can see the name of the country and "know right away whom to treat with respect."

This next piece of the airport episode then demonstrates how difficult it is to break this cycle, because people innately want to take any advantage they can get. At the same time, it is clear here that they are not only playing into bias towards the wealthy, but a cultural bias towards foreigners that is borne of colonization.

Biju's luggage finally arrives, and it arrives intact. He steps out of the airport in Calcutta. He sees thousands of people outside, some laughing, some eating, some praying. He feels his anxiety ebbing, happy to be able to disappear into a crowd. He feels he can see clearly for the first time in a long time.

The description of Biju's return captures perfectly what constitutes "home": sharing similar values, beliefs, and even appearance as others, and with that shared culture finding a sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 49

The judge decides to pray, telling God that he will never deny Him again if Mutt is returned to him. He realizes that he has turned into a superstitious man making bargains. He begins to worry that Mutt's disappearance is faith's way of paying him back. But he quickly remembers that he simply doesn't believe in angered divinity, and knows that the universe isn't in the business of justice.

As Lola, Noni, and Sai established at the library, one of religion's primary purposes is to provide an explanation for the world's injustices—a goal that they often fail to accomplish. Here, the judge turns to Christianity, but even finds that to be insufficient, as he knows he does not truly believe in it. It is one of the only times in which he truly turns away from a Western cultural institution.

The judge begins to think back to the family, the culture, and the wife he had abandoned. His mind returns to why he exactly he sent Nimi home. One morning in Bonda, a Congresswoman named Mrs. Mohan came by in her car and asked Nimi to join her and some other women to have fun. The Congresswoman refused to take no for an answer.

What may be particularly tragic about the episode is that not only did Nimi not intentionally go to a political function, but she had also not wanted to leave the house at all—revealing just how broken she had become from the war between her and the judge.

The women had driven to the train station and parked far away, for thousands of people had gathered to demonstrate, screaming, "British raj *murdabad*!" They had stopped and then followed a procession of cars to a house. Inside, Nimi was given a plate with scrambled eggs and toast, which she did not eat. Then a voice announced that the train was about to leave, and most of the crowd poured out of the house. Mrs. Mohan had then dropped Nimi home and said that today she saw one of the greatest men in India. Nimi had no idea who.

Another ironic part of Nimi's accidental attendance at the Congress Party's event is that for her, cultural independence was not nearly as important to her on a grand scale as it was on an individual one. She is completely ignorant of who Nehru is and doesn't fully understand what is happening around her. The only thing she knows she does not want is to eat scrambled eggs and toast—a distinctly British dish.

The judge returned from his tour. He was then summoned by the district commissioner, who informed him that Nimi had been part of the Nehru welcoming committee, and had eaten scrambled eggs and toast with top members of the Congress Party. The commissioner was concerned by the embarrassment that the entire civil service would suffer from this incident, and blocked Jemubhai's promotion.

For the judge, Nimi's attendance at the rally represents a final embarrassment for him. He does not know that she went there unintentionally, but regardless, her symbolic support of an anti-British party served as a humiliation from which he cannot recover.

The judge fixed himself a drink at home. When Nimi entered the room, he offered a series of explanations for what had happened—primarily that she was stupid, a liar, or deliberately trying to make him angry. He asked which explanation was true. She responded that he was the one who was stupid.

The judge's misogyny and disgust toward his wife have reached a peak here, as he doesn't even allow her to speak in order to explain what happened and instead provides his own explanations that she is either unintelligent, deceptive, or manipulative.

The judge hit Nimi. He emptied his glass on her head, swung a jug of water into her face, and hammered his fists onto her and kicked her. He cursed at her. The next morning, large bruises bloomed on her skin. He then decided to send her back to her family, worrying that if he did not, he would kill her.

When Nimi tries to stand up for herself, this only leads to more abuse, because the judge refuses to have any more challenges to his authority. This hatred runs so deep that he cannot even have her in his presence, because any little thing might provoke him.

Six months after the judge sent Nimi away, he received a telegram that his daughter had been born. Jemubhai had gotten drunk in distaste. Nimi, on the other hand, found peace in being a mother.

Whether the judge's assumptions about his daughter are based on his own nature or Nimi's nature is unknown, but he gets rid of his problems in the only way he has ever been able to: by providing money for his child, and then ignoring her. The judge never meets his daughter.

Nimi's uncle wrote to the judge, saying that Nimi was ready to return. He had misunderstood the reason for Nimi's arrival, because it was customary for a daughter to return to her family for the birth of a first child. The judge sent money but told the uncle he did not want Nimi to return. The uncle told her to go back and ask for her husband's forgiveness.

Even though the judge was the one abusing Nimi, and who had sent her away for fear he would kill her, her uncle blames her for the fact that the judge has sent her home. This society believes that any marital disputes are the fault of the woman, with women having very little rights when it comes to their husbands.

Nimi instead lived the rest of her life with a sister whose husband was resentful of Nimi's presence, frustrated that she was eating their food. The judge's father arrived at his home to plead for Nimi, but the judge refused to take her back. His father said that it was a mistake to send Jemubhai away, because he had become a stranger to them. The judge sees how he had been sent to bring his family into the modern age and was now being reproached.

Unlike Nimi's uncle, the judge's father realizes that there is more going on than simply Nimi angering her husband. He understands that the judge's alienation from the family and from his culture is what is causing their dispute. Even as India is progressing further toward independence, the judge refuses to return to the culture that he had worked so diligently to abandon.

Meanwhile, war broke out in Europe and India, and the country was disintegrating. The judge worked harder than ever for the ICS. Sometime during those years, a telegram arrived, saying that a woman had caught fire over a stove. There had been no witnesses to the simple accident—just a single movement of the hand, and another movement of the hand for Nimi's brother-in-law to pay off the police. The judge had chosen to believe it was an accident.

Separately, the story of Nimi's death also demonstrates that cultural bias was not the only reason for Nimi's abuse, as her brother-in-law had caused this "accident" simply because he did not want her to eat their food or live in their home, questioning her right to live and take up space.

Now the judge wonders if he killed Nimi (indirectly) for false ideals, in order to shame his own culture. After her death, he condemned his daughter to convent boarding schools, and had never seen her. His mind in disarray, he remembers his one fond moment with his wife: their glorious bicycle ride together. He realizes that in bringing Sai to Cho Oyu, he had been hoping to begin to erase his debts.

The judge slowly starts to admit that his harsh adherence to British culture only led to the loss of his family but also to Nimi's death. The memory of the bike ride posits a what-if situation, had the judge not been both oppressed by and become complicit in colonialism.


The judge continues to search for Mutt with Sai and the cook's help. Sai is glad to have another disguise for her distress over Gyan. The cook, likewise, is calling not for Mutt, but really out of worry for Biju.

As each of these characters searches for Mutt, it is clear that each one is in reality searching for a way to return to "home" through the love of another individual. The cook searches for his son, and Sai looks to regain a sense of belonging in having someone who understood and valued her.

CHAPTER 50

Biju is told that there are no buses to Kalimpong, as the political situation has worsened. He is told to go to Panitunk and beg the GNLF men to take him. Biju waits there for four days until a GNLF jeep finally leaves. Biju pays five American dollars (rather than an "extortionary amount") because the men have never seen American money.

Biju takes advantage of the global bias towards Western countries and money, as he is able to get a seat on the bus by tricking the men into accepting a smaller amount of American dollars rather than a larger amount of rupees.

Biju gets a seat and straps his luggage to the top of the car. They twist up the mountains in the jeep. Biju remembers how the road tilts and hangs on to the jeep's frame. He had forgotten how close death is here. Yet Biju also sees how good it will be for him and the cook not to have their hearts in two places.

Biju provides a poetic explanation of why he doesn't feel like he belonged in America—his heart was divided between America and his care for his father back in Kalimpong, arguing that family is often what constitutes home.

CHAPTER 51

The judge dreams that Mutt is dying. The next day, he tells the cook that if he does not find her, he will kill him. The judge reprimands the cook, saying it had been his responsibility to watch her. The cook is distraught, because he had been fond of Mutt and didn't think he had been negligent. He begins to weep and disappears into the forest. Sai sets out after him.

Even though the cook has been working for the judge for almost his entire life, the judge still treats him worse than he treats his dog. Sai, however, provides a little more hope for the future, because even though the cook has been her servant as well, she treats him far more like family, having never really had one of her own.


The cook, for his own part, goes to the canteen, where people laugh at him for being upset over a dog. Gyan is sitting in the corner, and when the cook leaves, Gyan follows. He asks the cook how Sai is doing. The cook responds that she is upset over Mutt. Gyan promises to find the dog.

Humiliation continues to befall the cook, partly because he is already so vulnerable. Additionally, Gyan's attempt at chivalry here is ironic because Sai is actually upset about him, not Mutt. Thus, Gyan's last appearance in the novel sets him on a mission that seems doomed to fail, while he might have been more successful in simply going to Sai and apologizing.


CHAPTER 52

Biju sees the mountainside approach and grows more and more excited to see his father. As nightfall looms, they reach a few small huts, and take down all of their belongings, including Biju's boxes and cases.

Again, Biju's return home is characterized mostly by a desire to be with his father again, after years of being undervalued and dehumanized in many ways. This is also communicated by Biju's traveling to Kalimpong (where his father works) rather than the village in which he lived.

Biju asks how long they are staying, and the men reply that he will have to walk the rest of the way. He asks how he will take his luggage, and too late Biju sees that he is being robbed. They point a gun at him and tell him to hand over his wallet and shoes (which contained his savings), followed by his belt, jacket, jeans, and t-shirt. One of the men gives him a woman's nightgown to put on over his underpants.

The final leg of Biju's journey ends in another humiliation (the nightgown is also driven by the misogynistic idea that femininity is inherently insulting) and another loss of his entire savings. Biju's storyline is perhaps Desai's most cynical, as it argues that poverty and destitution are almost inescapable, because society is constantly trying to take advantage of people, and often those who are most susceptible to this exploitation are those who are the most defenseless in the first place.

Biju runs into the forest, without his luggage, savings, and without his pride. He has returned from America with far less than he'd ever had. He questions why he left. He remembers the last time he saw Saeed Saeed, who planned to divorce his first wife after acquiring his green card and get married for real. Biju's knee starts to hurt once more.

As Biju feels the old throb of his knee, the injury he experienced at the Gandhi Café symbolizes the disproportionate injustice done to those who are underprivileged, which only those with exceptional luck or charisma, like Saeed, are able to escape.

CHAPTER 53

The cook returns to Cho Oyu in a haze of alcohol. He asks the judge, who has also been drinking, to beat him. The judge smacks the cook with a slipper, beating him harder as the cook asks for more. The cook admits to various wrongs he has done: eating the judge's food, not taking Mutt on walks, and cheating the judge out of money. Sai rushes out of her room and sees the judge beating the cook. She screams for him to stop, but the cook tells her to let him continue. She begins to weep and rushes outside, unable to watch. She wonders if this could really be for Mutt's sake.

The final chapter of the novel is arguably its bleakest, as it seems to show how every character is negatively affected by the accumulation of various forms of oppression. The judge's beating of the cook expresses an anger at the circumstances of his life, and perhaps represents his last attempt at maintaining power and control over his life while the political situation continues to humiliate him and take the only thing he loves away from him.

Meanwhile, Mutt has been sold to a family that won't care for her. They liked the idea of having a fancy dog, but don't actually care for her. "She disappointed them just as modern life did," and so they tie her to a tree and kick her.

Even Mutt's fate communicates the tyranny of globalization and poverty, as the family to which she is sold tries to be modern and put on the appearance of having a wealthy dog, but had been blind to the responsibility of taking care of her.

Sai thinks of escaping to Uncle Potty's house. The narrator says that one day soon, when Uncle Potty wakes from a stupor, he will realize he's signed away his property and Father Booty's to new owners. Lola and Noni's lives would continue unimpeded, and Lola's daughter will marry an Englishman. Meanwhile Sai wonders where Gyan is.

Though Father Booty and his dairy farm were a casualty of the GNLF movement, the judge's upper-class neighbors are generally unaffected—in contrast to those from lower classes who are starving and fighting for political equality.

Sai stands in the dark as it rains, drowning out the sound of the judge hitting the cook. She can't formulate thoughts, her heart lies in pieces, and she begins to cry—for herself, and her self-importance.

As she cries, Sai for the first time recognizes the true extent of her privilege—not only in wealth, but also in inheriting a history she had no part in. While the judge appears broken from everything that he has had to endure and enact, Sai's life is relatively unburdened.

Sai wonders what will happen at Cho Oyu, but she already knows. The cook will back to his quarters; the judge to his room. The next day, the judge will sit at his chessboard and out of habit will say, "Panna Lal, bring the tea."

It is notable that the cook only gains a name on the second-to-last page of the novel. This occurs chronologically after his son returns, demonstrating how Biju's appearance makes him more of an individual with dignity, not just a servant.

Sai thinks of her father, the *National Geographics*, the judge's journey, the cook's journey, and Biju's. She resolves to leave. Sai turns to go inside, but as she does, someone catches her eye in the distance. At first, she thinks it is Gyan; then, someone who has found Mutt. The figure gets closer, until it looks like a bent-over woman dragging one leg. Sai goes inside the kitchen and makes the cook tea.

Sai contemplates leaving Cho Oyu just as Biju returns in his destitute state. The difference between these two characters is one of experience, but also one of wealth. Because of Sai's privilege, it is unlikely she would face the same obstacles and outcomes that Biju would.

Sai and the cook hear the gate rattle. The cook offers to get it. Morning begins to break over Kanchenjunga, and the cook goes outside. He sees Biju standing at the gate, and, swinging it open, the two men leap toward each other.

In a contrast from the bleakness of the rest of the chapter, Desai provides a glimmer of hope for her characters. Even though the novel has been working with weighty and systemic issues, the final sentence argues that they can be at least somewhat alleviated by finding "home" and regaining a sense of belonging, even in an unjust world.

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