

A Fine Balance Study Guide

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Plot Summary

After her father died when she was young, Dina Shroff was raised by her strict brother Nusswan. One night at the cinema, she met Rustom Dalal, and after a couple weeks, the two fell in love and got married. On their third anniversary, however, Rustom has a bicycle accident and is killed, leaving Dina alone. After Rustom's aunt teaches Dina sewing, Dina pays her rent by being a tailor. However, her eyes begin to deteriorate, so she is forced to find another means of income. Her friend, Zenobia, finds a border to rent out one of the rooms in Dina's flat and also introduces Dina to Mrs. Gupta, who offers her tailoring piece work if she can employ two tailors.

Originally from a family of cobblers, Ishvar and his brother, Narayan, are sent by their father to Ashraf Chacha to become apprentice tailors. Once they had finished their apprenticeship, Narayan returns to his village, marries and starts up a successful tailoring business. His wife gives birth to a son, Omprakesh, and when he is of age, he is sent to Ashraf to also learn to be a tailor. During an election, Narayan, being of a lower caste, decides that he would like to have his own vote rather than having the upper caste members vote for him. For holding this opinion, he is tortured and killed, and his family burnt alive in their hut. Only Ishvar and Om survived because they were with Ashraf. The pair remained at the tailor shop until business started to slow down, and then they headed into the city to look for work. After six months of living on Nawaz's balcony, they finally found work with Dina Dalal, who needed two tailors. On the way to her flat, they met Maneck Kolah, who was going to be her border, and they all three immediately became friends. Now employed, they rented a small hut from a slumlord. Unfamiliar with the conditions, they were shown the ropes by Rajaram, who also became a good friend.

Originally from the picturesque mountains, Maneck was sent to college to study refrigeration and air conditioning by his father. After experiencing abuse at the hands of some rowdy students at the college hostel, he told his father that he could not return to the school, so his mother found someone who needed a boarder, and so it was arranged that Maneck would live with Dina Dalal and attend college in the city.

Meanwhile, the political landscape was changing. After winning the election, the Prime Minister was accused, and found guilty of, electoral fraud. To avoid being thrown out of Parliament, she declared a state of emergency and threw her accusers in jail. The press was censored and laws were passed that gave uncontrollable power to the authorities. Compulsory sterilisation was put in place and beautification laws saw slums flattened and beggars taken off the streets.

The tailors began working with Dina Dalal, who was initially a strict employer. They had their tea down at the Vishram Vegetarian Restaurant, where they quickly became regulars. Once Maneck moved in, he also joined the tailors for their tea at the Vishram and the three quickly became good friends. One day before they had left for work, a fleet of buses assembled outside their colony. They were all forced onto the buses and taken to a big meeting where the Prime Minister was speaking. While Dina was angry



that they hadn't shown up for work that day, she was glad they got back safely after the meeting.

After finishing up another day at work, the tailors returned home to find their colony being demolished--under the laws of the Emergency order, slums such as theirs were illegal. They gathered what belongings they could and slept on the railway station for the night. The next day, they made an arrangement with the nightwatchman at an all-night chemist to sleep in the doorway, leaving their trunk with their belongings at Dina's house. However, while they were sleeping, policemen and trucks raided the street, packed all the beggars, including the tailors, into the truck and drove them to an irrigation project, where they were told they would work for food and board. On the way there, the tailors became friendly with a beggar named Shankar, who had lived on the street his whole life. While at the project, the tailors had a hard time adjusting to the nature of the work and would often fall ill and injure themselves. Shankar, with no legs, was unable to work in the fields so would wait on the patients, particularly the tailors. Their rescue came in the form of Beggarmaster, Shankar's boss, who bought the crippled and injured back from the project manager, and as a favour to Shankar, and also for a price, the manager also bought back the tailors,. He returned them to Dina's flat, where he would pick up his monthly fee for having saved them.

While the tailors were gone, Dina had been at a loss as to what to do, so Maneck had helped her finish the last order that they had started. When they returned, she was so determined she would not lose them again that she offered to allow them to stay on her veranda. As the weeks passed, they developed a comfortable routine and even ate their daily meals together; it was almost as if they were a family. That is until one night when there was a knock on the door, and Ibrahim, the rent collector, gave them a final notice because Dina was not supposed to be running a business out of her home. Dina ignored this notice, and a few weeks later, Ibrahim again knocked on the door, this time with two goondas, who destroyed most of her belongings in the flat. They had forty-eight hours to vacate. They told this story to Beggarmaster, who came to collect his fee the next day, and who assured them that as long as he was paying them, there would no trouble from the landlord.

By this time, Ishvar was beginning to think about finding a wife for Om, and Maneck's final exams were approaching. After making some inquiries, Ishvar discovered that there were four potential families and organised a trip back to his village for the wedding. Dina agreed to let Om's new wife sleep on the veranda also. A few days after the tailors had left, Beggarmaster arrived with the bad news that Shankar, who he had recently discovered was his brother, had been killed. Dina and Maneck went to the funeral in place of the tailors. A few days later, Maneck returned home to the mountains for the holidays, and Dina was again alone in the flat.

Back in Ishvar's village, they reunited with Ashraf, their teacher and were saddened to hear that his wife had died. While they were shopping in the market place, they came across Thakur Dharamsi, who was responsible for the death of their family, and unable to contain himself, Om spat at him. Later that day, while shopping, garbage trucks and policemen swarmed the square, taking people at random. In the scuffle, a policeman hit



Ashraf in the head and left him to die while the policeman forced Ishvar and Om onto the trucks. They were taken to a sterilisation camp just outside the city, and were forced to have the operation. While resting in the recovery tent, the Thakur came around to inspect the premises, and seeing Om, ordered that he be castrated. The doctors had no choice but to oblige.

It took a few weeks for Om to recover from this, but once he did, his uncle began to get ill, his legs swelling up and turning black. Sick with blood poisoning, his legs had to be amputated, and he, like Shankar had to learn to get around on a rolling platform made for him by Ashraf's relatives. The tailors decided to return to the city.

Meanwhile, Dina had received a letter from Maneck saying that he had been offered a job in the Gulf and would not be returning to the city. When the tailors did not return, she was forced return the sewing machines. One day a badly injured man knocked on her door and asked for the tailors because he was a previous acquaintance of theirs. When she said that they were not there, he asked if she knew Beggarmaster, and she told the injured man when was the day and time that she next expected a visit from him. When Beggarmaster did not show up, she became suspicious and received a visit from Ibrahim, who was no longer working for the landlord. Ibrahim told her that the injured man had murdered Beggarmaster and that Dina was no longer safe from the landlord. Ibrahim advised Dina to seek legal help. She went to the courthouse to arrange this, but eventually was forced from her apartment by the same goondas, who moved her furniture onto the street. Dina had no choice but to go back and live with her brother.

Eight years later, Maneck returned from the Gulf for his father's funeral, arriving in the middle of riots where Sikh's were being slaughtered. The riots had been provoked by the murder of the Prime Minister by her Sikh guards. After cremating his father, Maneck became very depressed about what had been happening in his country since he had left. He returned to the city to visit Dina and the tailors, and after tracking her down at her brother's place, learned what had happened since he had left. As he left Dina's brother's house, he passed the tailors, now beggars, in the street, but could not bring himself to talk to them. It all became too much for him, and he ended his life by jumping in front of a train. Meanwhile, the tailors made their regular visit to Dina's kitchen, and she fed them, hurrying them along because her sister-in-law would be home early.



Prologue, 1975

Prologue, 1975 Summary

Ishvar Darji and his nephew, Omprakash, or Om to his uncle, are traveling by train from their village to the city when the train jerks to a stop sending Om hurtling into the arms of his uncle, and the textbooks of Maneck Kohlah, another passenger on the train, crash onto Om's bony back. Maneck winces as the books hit the frail-looking seventeen-year-old, who laughs with his uncle about his size after picking himself up. None of the three know where they have stopped, but while they are waiting, a comb seller passes through the thick crowd of passengers, and Om stops his to buy a comb, as he had sat on his old one.

The passengers are informed that they have been delayed because the train has hit someone on the tracks. The passengers on the train wonder out loud whether or not this has anything to do with the Emergency, as some of them had heard it announced on the radio that the Prime Minister said something about the country being threatened from the inside. Others grumble that people should commit suicide elsewhere. The train gets moving, and the passengers crane their necks to see the cause of their delay, which had been carefully covered up by three policemen.

Once they arrive at the city, Maneck asks Ishvar and Om for directions, only to discover that they are going to the same place as he. Om immediately becomes defensive, thinking that Maneck is applying for the same tailor positions that they are. It turns out that their potential employer is actually an old school friend of Maneck's mother, and he will be staying there for a while. The three make the trip to Dina Dalal's house together.

Once there, Ishvar and Maneck introduce themselves as the men applying for the position, and Dina makes the mistake of thinking that Maneck is also there to apply. After she is corrected, she asks Maneck to wait inside and then goes over the terms of the employment with Ishvar and Om, and they come to an arrangement. The men leave to return to their village to retrieve their sewing machines. Dina returns inside to show Maneck to his small, dingy room, which actually happened to be the best room in the house. Maneck confirms that he will be moving his things in the following month, which is fine with Dina, who he now calls Dina Aunty. Once Maneck leaves her flat, Dina paces, but is thankful. Now she would not need to beg her brother for next month's rent.

Prologue, 1975 Analysis

The prologue starts the novel by not only introducing us to some of the main characters in the novel, but also to its context and setting. We first meet these characters, Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck, on an overcrowded train headed for the city. The train is forced to stop near a village rank with raw sewage because someone has committed suicide by throwing himself in front of the train. Through the murmurings of the



passengers, we learn about the Emergency and are shown the poverty through the characters themselves, as well as through the setting, as beggars with no limbs line the streets.

This prologue also begins to establish a hierarchy among the four, but at the same time shows that they are in the same boat. Ishvar and Omprakash are poor and desperately seeking employment, while Dina, as the employer, is thankful that she does not have to beg for next month's rent. And while Maneck, a student, is assumed to be from a wealthier family, he, too, is running away from something at his college boarding house.



Chapter 1, City by the Sea

Chapter 1, City by the Sea Summary

Although Dina Dalal avoided reminiscing about her past, she does indulge herself occasionally and thinks back to the times that she was Dina Shroff. She was the younger of two children, and her older brother, Nusswan, who was nine years her elder, took care of her and her mother after her father had died treating villagers. Her father, Dr. Shroff, had been well known for his ambition and dedication to his career as a general practitioner, and Dina, very much a daddy's little girl, had admired and respected him and modeled herself after him. Now responsible for both her and their mother, Nusswan ruled with a heavy hand, gradually assigning more and more chores to Dina. Meanwhile, their mother's mental health deteriorated, and Dina found herself having to remind her mother to carry out everyday activities, such as eating and sleeping.

Three years after the death of their father, Nusswan married a woman named Ruby. It is around this time that their mother began to lose all of her faculties, to the point where it became necessary to hire a full-time nurse. Yet this arrangement did not last long, as Mrs. Shroff died later that year. Not long after their mother's death, Nusswan decided that Dina needn't finish college because she was earning poor grades. Despite both Dina's protestations that all the cooking and cleaning that she did left little time for studying, and her efforts to have her grandfather intervene on her behalf, Nusswan withdrew her from the school, and she spent most of the time at the house with Ruby, who took on Nusswan's role of giving her orders. Regardless of their many heated arguments, Ruby and Dina became friends, with Dina helping Ruby raise their firstborn, Xerxes, fussing over him and knitting him clothes. In the meantime, Nusswan had determined that he was going to marry Dina off, and began inviting his eligible friends to the house to meet Dina.

Dina would often use her savings to take the bus around the city, visiting parks, museums and markets, even venturing into the public libraries to read books and magazines and listen to music. Her love of the music led her to become one of the regulars at a local music hall, where she attended live recitals. Another of the regulars was Rustom, a man who usually kept to himself and was known for riding his bicycle to and from the hall. After glancing shyly at each other for weeks, Rustom finally approached Dina, and the two became friends and became known around the music hall as a couple. Sooner than later, Rustom started catching the bus to recitals, so that he could accompany Dina home, and their relationship quickly became romantic.

A year and a half later, Dina announced to Nusswan and Ruby that she and Rustom were to get married. Unaware of their relationship, Nusswan was displeased, especially since she had not chosen one of his friends. However, after meeting with Rustom, Nusswan began to get excited about the wedding plans, envisaging a grand affair. However, Dina and Rustom's plans were for a smaller wedding, so they had a quiet,



morning service, followed by a reception at the Shroff household. On this day, Nusswan was unusually affectionate toward Dina, much to her surprise. They spent their wedding night at Rustom's disheveled flat, and, during the weeks that followed, Dina went about turning it into a home, where she and her husband would live happily.

After celebrating two previous wedding anniversaries on their own, Dina and Rustom decided to celebrate their third by having Nusswan, Ruby and their two children over for dinner. Despite problems in the past, the two couples had become close and were now good friends. After dinner, Rustom went out on his bicycle to buy some ice cream for desert. After forty-five minutes he hadn't returned, and Dina became very worried. Nusswan accompanied her up the road to where Rustom had been going. It was then that they saw Rustom's twisted bicycle by the side of the road, surrounded by police cars. A hit and run, a policeman reported to her, doubtful that the rider would have lived. When Nusswan and Dina arrived at the hospital, their worst fears were realized. Rustom had been killed.

Unable to bear the thought of returning to the apartment, Dina stayed with Nusswan and Ruby until after the funeral and the four days of prayer were over. Although she began to prepare to go back to the little flat, Nusswan and Ruby insisted that she stay a little longer, until she felt strong enough to return. A little longer turned into a year, despite their landlord demanding that they vacate because there was no one living there. Dina continued to mourn the loss of her husband.

A few days after the first anniversary of Rustom's death, Nusswan decided that the mourning period was over, and it was time for Dina to consider her future and possibly marry again. He began to invite over friends that he had offered to Dina before she met Rustom - friends that were still eligible. After four months of being subtle, Nusswan confronted Dina, insisting that she remarry sooner rather than later. Dina refused and decided that it was time for her to move out of Nusswan's house and back into her flat to fend for herself. Despite Nusswan's protests, she returned to the apartment.

Unable to find work, Dina paid a visit to Rustom's Darab Uncle and Shirin Aunty, who were delighted to see her. She explained her situation, and Shirin Aunty immediately came to the rescue, offering Dina sewing work that she did, a job in which she had regular customers, as she was going to give it up soon anyway. She lent Dina an old sewing machine, and she picked up the business quickly. Three years later, Shirin Aunty died, and was quickly followed by Darab Uncle, and, although she felt as if she had lost a second set of parents, Dina was managing by herself just fine.

Now that Dina was earning her own money and getting by with just a little help every now and again from Nusswan, it seemed that all her relatives rallied behind her and came up with different ideas and ways to make extra money, such as starting a criche or selling butter biscuits. And although she did have a go at selling children's haircuts door to door, she got by on her earnings from sewing. During this time, she had become quite close with one of her bachelor clients, Fredoon. The two were comfortable together, yet their sexual relationship was hindered by Dina's memory of Rustom. After all these years, Dina still mourned for him.



On the twelfth anniversary of Rustom's death, Dina decided that it was time to sell his most prized possession - his violin. Over time it had deteriorated, and she received money only for the case, with the promise that she would receive more if the violin sold. Six months later, someone came to her door claiming to have a delivery for Mrs. Dalal. Dina assumed that it was the violin, and that the music store she sold it to had not been able to offload it. Instead, it was the Rustom's twisted bicycle, completely rusted because it had been sitting in a damp evidence room at the police station. Dina fainted at the sight of it. She decided that there was a message in the fate of the violin and the return of the bicycle. She completed Fredoon's last order and broke off her relationship with him, no longer working for anyone who lived in Fredoon's building, just to avoid seeing him.

There was enough work among Dina's remaining customers to support her, but five years later, her eyesight began to fail, and the doctor told her that if she continued to strain her eyes, she would go blind. Faced with not being able to sew for a living, her friend, Zenobia, came to her rescue. First, she suggested that Dina take in a paying boarder, and lined her up with Maneck Kohlah, the son of another friend of theirs, with whom they had gone to school. Second, Zenobia introduced Dina to Mrs. Gupta, who was a hairdressing client of hers and the export manager of a large textile company, which contracted out sewing and tailoring locally. Mrs. Gupta agreed to employ Dina, but Dina would have to find her own tailors, and they would have to work in her home and be supervised by Dina. After what seemed like endless searching for tailors, she finally found two that would be suitable, an uncle and his nephew--Ishvar and Omprakesh Darji.

The boarder and two tailors turned up on her doorstep at the same time.

Chapter 1, City by the Sea Analysis

In this chapter we are given an in-depth look into Dina's childhood and background. We see the impact of her father's death on both her and her family, and the struggles that this spirited girl had growing up under her heavy-handed brother. We see a softer side of her in her love affair and marriage to Rustom, and then her pain at his death. But most of all, what this chapter shows is the strong will of Dina, and how life's little mishaps have shaped her into a tough woman, who is able to fend for herself no matter the circumstance.



Chapter 2, For Dreams to Grow

Chapter 2, For Dreams to Grow Summary

With two tailors now in her employ, Dina makes her way to the offices of Au Revoir Exports to meet with Mrs. Gupta and pick up her first contract. While discussing its details with her, Mrs. Gupta continues to refer to the current political situation and the Prime Minister's declaration of an Internal Emergency, which had incarcerated many of the opposition along with thousands of others. This had made Mrs. Gupta very happy because there would be no more strikes or disturbances. Dina's first job would be on a trial basis, with only thirty-six dresses to be made. After nodding sympathetically with Mrs. Gupta's political ramblings, Dina made her way back to her flat and prayed that the riots cause by the Emergency would not delay her tailors the next day.

It did not, and Ishvar and Omprakesh arrived promptly the next morning, carrying their rented sewing machines. They set up in the back room and began to sew. The dresses were completed before the due date, and Mrs. Gupta was so impressed that she increased the second order to six dozen dresses. Now that they had been accepted by the export company, the two men began to relax and taking regular lunch breaks and even asking if they could smoke while they worked. Dina found herself prompting, and even nagging, the two men to work harder to meet her deadlines and received cheeky comments from young Omprakesh, who was quickly corrected by his uncle Ishvar. In the meantime, Dina has become wary that Omprakesh is very curious about the name of the supplier of this work, realizing that he would prefer to go directly through the company, rather than have her as a middle man and claiming some of their earnings. Dina goes to great lengths to protect the name of the company, even going so far as to padlock the door behind her when she went to drop off the dresses that had been completed.

One day while Dina was at Au Revoir, the two men were enjoying a deebie on Dina's lounge when there was a loud bang on the door, and a man yelling he knew there was a business going on inside. A note was slipped under the door demanding that the business be stopped. The author of the letter was Ibrahim, who had been the rent collector for this and five other buildings for the past twenty-four years. After he received no response from the letter, he again paid a visit to Dina Dalal, who had not yet read the letter and denied running a business there Dina explained the coming and going of Ishvar and Omprakesh as their being employed by her to cook and clean. This insulted Omprakesh, who considered quitting. But Ishvar again soothed his nephew - they had been through worse before.

Chapter 2, For Dreams to Grow Analysis

Chapter 2 introduces the Internal Emergency that has been declared by the Prime Minister as seen through the eyes of an upper class, well-off citizen, Mrs. Gupta, who is

very opinionated when it comes to the subject. This exchange also shows Dina Dalal's lack of both knowledge and concern for politics and the situation at hand, showing that she is only concerned with her own welfare rather than the bigger picture.

As the tailors Omprakesh and Ishvar begin working for Dina, we see the beginnings of the relationship among the three, which starts out with very little trust, a lot of suspicion, and in some case spite. At this time, Dina is very much the boss and the tailors her employees.

Finally, the chapter also introduces another level of authority with the character Ibrahim, the landlord. In the same way that the tailors are "afraid" of Dina, she in turn is "afraid" of the wrath of her landlord.



Chapter 3, In A Village by a River

Chapter 3, In A Village by a River Summary

Ishvar's father, Dukhi Mochi, was once a cobbler and their family came from the Chamaar caste of tanner and leather-workers. When they were given or purchased a dead buffalo or cow, they would skin the carcass, eat the meat and tan the hide, then turn it into goods such as sandals and whips. Soon after Dukhi turned eighteen, his parents married him to fourteen-year-old Roopa, and after bearing three girls, each of which did not survive longer than a few months, they were blessed with a boy, Ishvar. Roopa watched over Ishvar closely, even to the point of stealing food during the night ensure that he was fed. Roopa was risking her life, and even allowed herself to be raped so that she would not be discovered stealing the food. Two years later, she gave birth to another son, Narayan, and the couple was the envy of the village.

The village traditionally worked on a class system, or caste system. Every family belonged to a caste, and was to obey their place on the social hierarchy. Actions such as venturing too close to the well could mean severe physical punishment for those in lower-level castes, and they often lived in fear of offending those in the upper castes. When rumors went around that the reason the Chamaars had been blessed with two boys could only be because they had kidnapped an upper caste Brahmin's newborns, Dukhi made an extra effort to keep his place in the hierarchy to avoid having harm inflicted on his family.

Being born into a caste also meant being born into a profession, so at the appropriate age, Dukhi began to teach his sons the skills of his trade. At seven years old, Ishvar went with his father into the field to retrieve a dead buffalo, which was not yet quite dead. While trying to move the beast, it gave one last buck of its head, catching Ishvar in the cheek with its horn, disfiguring his face.

Three years later, they had excellent rain, which in turn meant that the fields were lush and the cattle grew healthy - which meant little work for Dukhi and other cobblers. After several days of nothing, Dukhi was grateful to be offered work by Thakur Premji, who needed him to grind chilies to make chili powder. Later that afternoon, there was an accident, and, due to a flaw in the stone, the mortar split down the middle. Alarmed by his wife, the Thakur blamed Dukhi, hit him a few times with his stick and sent him home without pay.

After this incident, Dukhi decided to get work in town, mending the footwear of town-dwellers. After a few days of this, he came across his friend, Ashraf, a Muslim tailor in town. Seeing that Dukhi wanted any work, he introduced him to his uncle, who managed a lumberyard.

One morning on his way to the lumberyard, Dukhi came across a large crowd with big banners. The people were fighting for equality and to put a stop to the caste prejudices.



Dukhi got Ashraf, and they stayed until the end of the rally, pledging to rid themselves of caste prejudices. After the rally was over, Ashraf suggested to Dukhi that maybe he and his family should move to the town, where his children could learn the tailoring trade under him. Dukhi replied that it was probably best to remain in his native village.

His vow to shun the landlords was weakening, so Dukhi stopped going to work at the lumberyard when the harvest was ready and, instead, went into the fields to bring in the harvest. However, he was very aware that there was no work for his sons, although Roopa would keep them busy by sending them out for firewood. Occasionally they would get into mischief, at one time getting caught at a school for upper-caste children, for which they were caned by the teacher. Although Dukhi sought retribution for this punishment from Pandit Lalluram, who commanded respect for his age, the punishment was deemed to fit the crime, much to Dukhi's anger. It was this decision that made his mind up - he would send the boys to become apprentices of Ashraf.

Ashraf was married with one young child, and his wife, Mumtaz, was none too pleased that he had taken on the boys. Their living quarters were already cramped, and the boys had to sleep downstairs in the workshop. Ishvar and Narayan slowly learned the skills of a tailor and were also taught by Ashraf to read and write. Yet despite all this, the two boys were still homesick.

Back in the village, it was well known that Dukhi had sent his boys to become tailors, and, although this didn't cost him his life, the villagers did make things a lot more difficult for him. At last the day came when Ishvar and Narayan returned for a visit, and Roopa made sure that only the best dinner was served. When they returned three months later, they brought with them a vest that they had made for their father and a choli for their mother, which, after they had been displayed, were put away for safe keeping.

Ishvar and Narayan finished their apprenticeships at the respective ages of 18 and 16. While Ishvar wanted to stay in town and continue to sew, it was Narayan's wish to return to the village and set up business there. But at that time, there was unrest in the towns - the talk of independence was spreading, so Narayan agreed to stay with Ashraf until the violence ended. All around them soldiers began appearing who belonged to a Hindu organization, and who spread rumors of Muslims attacking Hindu's in many parts of the country. Word began to spread of killings of Muslims and businesses being burnt to the ground. In order to avoid any violence, Ashraf planned to leave the town with his children but was deterred by the neighboring businessmen, who told him that his fate would be worse if he left, and that they would stand by him if trouble came. To avoid looking suspicious, Ashraf removed everything in the shop that showed him to be a Muslim, even changing the sign out front, so that the shop was now called Krishna Tailors.

Halfway through the next day, the brothers' boredom was interrupted by a hammering on the door. A group of twenty or thirty men stood out on the pavement, demanding they be allowed in - they had been told that the store was owned by a Muslim. Going downstairs, Ishvar and Narayan told the armed and angry men that the store was owned by their father, and that their information was wrong. The men demanded that



they remove their clothes, and, satisfied that the boys' foreskins were still in place, let them be. Ashraf would be forever grateful.

After things had calmed down, Ashraf offered both of the boys paying jobs in his shop, and while Ishvar accepted, Narayan decided to return home, to the relief of his mother. Narayan's tailoring business started slowly, but as word spread to neighboring villages, it began to pick up. His mother tried to help him, reminding him of customers whose accounts were overdue. One day, when a man of a lower caste came to Narayan as a customer, she shooed him away, despite Narayan's protests. He approached his father about the situation when he returned home, and his father eventually conceded, that Narayan should sew for men and women of any caste.

A couple of years later, Narayan was wealthy enough to build his own hut and was encouraged to marry. He was now looked upon as a leader amongst his caste and was becoming more prosperous than many of the upper-caste members of the village. He had a well dug in the untouchable section of the village and replaced his hut and his parents hut with a larger one that would accommodate them all. When it was time for him to find a bride, nearly the entire community felt it their duty to help, and a bus had to be rented when he went to meet her. Radha met with his approval, and the wedding was a grand affair, with the celebrations lasting three days. Not long after their marriage, she gave birth to a son, who they named Omprakesh. Three daughters followed, with two surviving. As Omprakesh grew older, Narayan taught him to read and write and even to sew, and by the age of five he could even sew buttons. Despite teaching him the ways of a tailor, Narayan did not forget his roots and took him to the tannery, despite Omprakesh and his mother, protesting. These weekly trips to the tannery continued for the next three years, until Om was sent to Uncle Ishvar at age eight to further develop his tailoring skills.

Even though it was easier for Om to return home to see his parents than it had been for Narayan and Ishvar, Radha still felt deprived of her son, commenting on how thin he had become when visited. He was always treated to a huge feast on these visits, sharing bits with his unhappy sisters. Meanwhile, Narayan was growing tired of the strict systems surrounding their lives. His comments to his father that things have to change, that in the same way his father had had a victory by changing his son's professions, he, too, would like that same satisfaction.

That week, parliamentary elections were being held. On Election Day, eligible voters lined up outside the polling station, which was being run by Thakur Dharamsi, using a corrupt system that only existed because of the support of the other landlords. Voters placed their thumbprints to say they had voted, and the landlords would cast their votes for them. After placing his "vote" Narayan sat with Omprakesh and Dukhi, and decided that in the next election, he wanted to mark his own ballot. Despite an argument from his father, he was determined that he would fulfill his right to vote.

Two years later, Narayan had still not forgotten his promise, and on election day, he left early, alone, to the polling booth. When it was his turn, he asked for his ballot. The men behind the desk told him just to register with his thumbprint, but Narayan stood firm and



asked to be given his ballot. Thakur Dharamsi was called and ordered him to register as if he had voted. Again Narayan, and two others behind him, demanded to be given their ballot. All three men were seized and forced to make their thumbprint in registration.

The three were then taken to Dharamsi's farm where they were flogged as they hung naked by their ankles from a tree. His employees urinated on their upturned faces and they lapped at it out of sheer thirst. That evening, burning coals were held to the three men's genitals and then stuffed in their mouths. The ropes that bound their ankles were then transferred to their neck, and the three were hanged. Their bodies were then displayed in the village square. Then after fuelling them with liquor, Dharamsi sent his goonda's into the untouchable quarter, where they beat up people at random, stripping and raping women and burning huts, to make sure the whole caste was taught a lesson. Narayan's broken body was taken to his house, and his family rounded up, with the exception of Omprakesh and Ishvar, who were away, and Narayan's body set before them. The hut was set on fire, and the family left to die in its flames.

It took a while for the news of the massacre to reach Ishvar and Omprakesh, and they immediately filed a First Information Report at the police station. After some reluctant investigation, the police found no evidence supporting murder and arson, and scolded Ishvar for wasting their time. Frustrated with the result, Ashraf kept the shop closed for the next two days, and on the third day, Ishvar asked to open again, and they began sewing.

Six months later, Omprakesh was still plotting his revenge. He and Ishvar were living in one half of the room above the shop, and Ishvar was concerned that Omprakesh might act on his plans. Another six months later the shop began to struggle as a ready-made clothing shop opened in town. Soon the tailors found themselves with little or nothing to do, so Ishvar decided it might be better for him and Omprakesh to find work elsewhere. Despite his initial protests, Ashraf set them up with a friend of his, Nawaz, another tailor, who would help them find work. The night before their departure, Ashraf presented them with gifts of dressmaking and pinking shears. After finishing the tea that Mumtaz had prepared for them, they left the next morning.

After getting directions from a beggar to Nawaz's house, they began to feel relieved that there were getting close to a friendly face. However, Nawaz pretended to know nothing of their coming and finally, grudgingly, agreed to let them sleep under the awning behind the kitchen. He did not feed them and did not help them find work, telling them there was not much around and that there was not enough for them in the shop. Instead he gave them a list of addresses of tailoring shops that they should try. After exhausting the list of addresses, they returned to Nawaz's house, where once again they were not fed. After four weeks of searching, they had only secured three days worth of work. After six months had passed, they finally got their break. Nawaz had given their details to a woman named Dina Dalal, who was looking for two tailors to sew for a big export company. He was glad to have them out of his house and helped them find somewhere to live - a shack among the slums. The landlord waived the hundred rupees required for bond, and one of the shacks was theirs. On the last night before their leaving, Nawaz treated them to dinner and even allowed them to sleep indoors.



Chapter 3, In A Village by a River Analysis

Chapter 3 sets the foundation for the story that has already begun by giving the reader the background information of Om and Ishvar, and why an uncle and nephew, both tailors, are out searching for work together. It takes us back to the village where both were born, giving the reader insight into village life as opposed to city life. We are introduced to the caste system, where the upper caste members rule over lower castes, and everyone is born into a caste. At the same time, we see rebellion against this system, with Dukhi sending his boys to be tailors rather than cobblers, and Narayan standing up to upper caste members when it came to voting. However we do see the ultimate power of the upper caste, or the rich, which leads to a horrifying end for Narayan and the family members who were there.

Other minor themes that this chapter introduces are women in society, particularly their place in village life as opposed to the city and also the idea of religion-- the divide between the Hindus and the Muslims. The idea of poverty is also introduced as the tailors leave the shop to go and find work in the city and end up having to live in the slums, which was a reality for most of the poor, despite being employed.



Chapter 4, Small Obstacles

Chapter 4, Small Obstacles Summary

Ishvar and Omprakesh are gradually getting used to their new little hut in the slums, soon learning that the tap only runs early in the morning, and if they do not collect their water then, they will go thirsty throughout the day. When it was running, they lined up in a long queue with their toothbrushes and soap. They met a man named Namaskaar, who advised them that they must collect their water and leave rather than stand at the tap and bathe. He lent them one of his buckets until they could get one of their own. He also showed them where to go to the toilet, showing them which side was for the men and which was for the women. The three crouched to do their business and were treated to a commentary of the man next to them, Rajaram, who shows his disgust at the people staring at others doing their business while sitting on the passing train. When they returned to the slum, Omprakesh returned to the tap for another bucketful of water, lustfully noticing a young women filling up her own bucket.

Rajaram proves to be quite charitable and shares his dinner with the two men, advising them to get a ration card so that they can buy food of their own. He even offers to lend use of his own stove to help them make their own food. They discuss living in the slums, and Rajaram tells them that he is a barber, turned hair-collector because it brought in more money. The three joke about the job when Omprakesh hears someone calling out to a woman named Shanti. It was the woman he had been admiring earlier. He lost interest in their discussion about the hair. Meanwhile, Rajaram warned Ishvar to be careful when walking around the slums, because some parts were very dangerous. The three men finished the night with singing, smoking and company.

Ishvar and Omprakesh went to get their rations card, but the officer was not available for a couple of hours. Thirty minutes later, he returned to his desk and the men were told to fill out an application form and that there were experts who could fill it out for them if they could not. He felt slightly snubbed when he discovered that they could read and write. They filled in the form, and upon returning it to the officer were told that where they were living was not an actual address for the purpose of the form, and so they were denied the card. The officer told the men that the only other way to get a card was to get a vasectomy, which Ishvar quickly and falsely claimed to have already done. He claimed that the certificate had been burned in the fire with his family. It didn't matter to the officer - he would have to get it done again. Frustrated and angry, they left the office and ran into a man who said that he could help with the situation. He told them that since the Emergency started, every officer was to encourage men to be sterilized and were rewarded if they filled their quota. He offered to make up a ration card for them, for a price. Since they had no money, he told them to come back when they did.

After their first day of work with Dina Dalal, they made their way home, disembarking from the train and flooding through a small gap that Rajaram had told them about far from the ticket collectors, even though they had purchased tickets. Despite his promise



that they would not get caught, a group of policeman rounded up the swelling crowd and loaded them into a police truck, drove them to a vacant lot and then let them go after a stern ear bashing. On their way home, they noticed new billboards showing the sour face of the female Prime Minister had been posted, which preached messages of hard work to sustain the country.

Rajaram scolded them for arriving late for dinner but still reheated their food, pointing out how he had bought some more vegetables and also fed the next-door drunkard's children. He apologized when he heard about the raid and the incident was laughed off by all of the men. All of a sudden, the tap that only ran once in the morning started gushing out water, and the men stayed back to let the children play.

A couple weeks later, Ishvar and Omprakesh were paid by Dina Dalal and decided to celebrate by making a purchase. While Ishvar was excited and suggested many items they could buy, Omprakesh was not as keen and avoided his uncle's probing as to the matter. On the way home from their shopping expedition, they came across Monkey-man, whose monkeys constantly teased their canine companion. They playfully jumped into the buckets that Om and Ishvar had bought, which brightened Om's mood, but he sank back to a dark face when they parted. That evening, Rajaram dined with Om and Ishvar rather than the other way around, and, over dinner, Rajaram asks if he could borrow ten rupees off them. They hesitate, but Rajaram promises that he will return it.

That night as they sleep, Om is woken by the sounds of Rajaram's sexual interludes and the noise of a woman in labor. The next morning they are informed that a little girl had been born that night, and Ishvar goes to wish the family well. Om sits in the doorway, watching the drunkard's children and wondering how they could be happy in this slum. He wandered over to Monkey-man's shack to play with the monkeys.

Omprakesh rented a bike on the road to Dina Dalal's, explaining to Ishvar that he was going to use it to follow Dina Dalal to the export company, so that they could work directly for them, rather than have Mrs. Dalal take money off their earnings. But he kept it secret how he would follow Dina Dalal. He hid the bicycle in a dirty stairwell, far enough away from Dina Dalal's apartment so that it would not be detected.

The two tailors sewed away as Dina prepared the garments that she was to take to Mrs. Gupta at Au Revoir Exports. Just as she was almost ready to leave, Omprakesh stabbed his finger with the scissors, crying out in pain and bleeding all over the fabric. He had not expected it to hurt or bleed as much as it did. Calling out orders to have the dress soaked in water, she tended to Om's wound, but he protested that it hurt too much and demanded to be allowed to go and see a doctor. After a bit of argument, Dina finally relinquished and Om left the flat.

Om watched from a distance as Dina got into the taxi to go the export company. As it pulled away from the curb, he tried to follow it on his bicycle while staying out of view of Dina. In his efforts to keep up with the vehicle, he was knocked off his bike while trying to squeeze through two cars. He got up immediately, and after some scuffle with the drivers of the cars and a police officer, he was handed fifty rupees and left the scene.



Knowing that the door to the apartment would be padlocked, he straightened up his bicycle and headed toward the beach, picking himself up some cotton candy on the way. At the beach, he bought a length of sugar cane, chewing it up and spitting it out, attracting a curious seagull. He threw the last, unchewed piece to the gull, which rejected it, and it was snapped up by a street urchin.

It had been hours since Dina had returned to the apartment, but there was still no sign of Om, and she complained that he was wasting time. Ishvar was sure that he had gotten the address of the export company and smiled quietly to himself. Finally he returned, his finger better and the afternoon had a cheery mood about it. Dina began preparing for her houseguest.

After they had left, Om told his uncle of his adventures that day, and neither seemed too disappointed that they had not found out the address. Om joked about getting sterilised so that he could get the transistor radio from the Family Planning Clinic, claiming that he would never marry, to which his uncle insisted that Om would marry when his uncle tells him to marry.

Dina was preparing for Maneck, her boarder, who would arrive the next day. She re-read the letter from his mother and took all of her clothes out of the bedroom, conceding that while her new bedroom was horrible, she had to do what she had to do.

Chapter 4, Small Obstacles Analysis

Chapter 4 takes the reader deep into the poverty of the city, showing us life in the slums with one tap that runs once a day and men and women going to the bathroom in a field and on a train track. However, despite the filth of the whole situation, we do see charity amongst the poverty through Rajaram, who helps the two men find their feet in this unknown territory. We also see the development of Om as a man as he lusts after Shanti.

The chapter also includes another example of the corruption of power as Ishvar tries to get a rations card. The power of literacy is evident, as people make a living off others' ignorance. We are introduced to the idea of the Family Planning Clinic, as it is tied to the Emergency and how men are encouraged to be sterilised in order to keep the population under control.

Finally, the relationship between the tailors and Dina is further developed as Om's resentment for Dina grows, and he hires a bicycle in an attempt not to have to work for her. Additionally, we explore some of the city life and culture with Om on his little adventure.



Chapter 5, Mountains

Chapter 5, Mountains Summary

After finishing moving his belongings into Dina Dalal's flat, Maneck Kolah unpacks, changes his clothes and sits down to dinner with his Dina Aunty. He asks about the tailors he had met on his first trip here, and Dina replies edgily that they will be there in the morning. On cue from Dina, he retires to bed, and, after puttering around in the kitchen, so does Dina. Neither sleeps well, pondering on how the arrangement will work out. Maneck is glad to have escaped the college hostel. The next morning, he is roused by the sound of the running tap and rises before Dina, who watches his young, muscular frame lustfully through a crack in the door and chides herself for being so foolish. He notices her after she has turned away, and after exchanging pleasantries, she shows him the bathroom, and he goes to bathe. The steam in the room reminds him of home, and he wistfully wishes he was there, but the worms crawling out of the drain in the floor quickly bring him back to the reality of his surroundings.

Weeks before, when Zenobia had told Dina of Maneck needing a place to stay, Zenobia had been unable to remember Aban, Maneck's mother. The two friends reminisced about their high school years and some of the foolish things that they had done. Dina remembered her brother, Nusswan's, treatment of her after their father had died and cringes at the memory. They speculate over Aban's decision to live in the mountains, particularly after having lived in the city, and decide that she mustn't be any better off than they.

Before the Partition, Maneck's family had been wealthy, but ten years later when Maneck was born, all that his father, Farokh Kohlah, had managed to hold onto was the General Store in town, which his wife Aban ran. When Maneck was young, Aban kept a cradle behind the counter, and as he grew, regular customers would entertain him. His presence was so regular in the store that he began to be of more assistance to his mother than a burden. The shop was a favorite with the locals, but its backbone was ultimately Farokh's secret soft-drink formula that had been handed down to him from his father. Farokh was careful to keep the recipe safe, and, despite having assistants, he only made the brew himself, which cost him an eye when a carbonated bottle exploded. Despite encouragement from friends to modernize the business and make the drink even more famous, Farokh chose traditional methods and stuck to word of mouth.

By the time Maneck started school, the business was thriving and the family quite comfortable. Neighbors would often gather in the evening and discuss times gone by, but they could not replace his dreams for his family. Maneck's family kept good company, and were at times even envied by their well-off friends. They were happy they had not moved to the city as their families had encouraged, and agreed that the mountains were the best place for Maneck, who loved his life and routine in the place. His favorite day was Sunday, when he would play with the granddaughter of the grounds men up to no good when out of sight of the adults. But despite his happiness,



his parents decided that the boy must receive a good education, so decided to send him away to boarding school.

However, being a younger boy at boarding school, Maneck was subjected to sexual abuse from the older boys but was at an age where he was too young to understand its significance. When he returned home for the holidays, he begged not to be sent back, but his parents would hear nothing of it and insisted he return.

Time passed and Maneck, now 14, returned home for his May vacation. Having to attend a wedding, his parents left him home alone for two days and let him run the shop. While in charge, Maneck moved a glass case thinking that it would look better in the window. Returning home, his father was displeased, because Maneck did not follow his orders. For the rest of the vacation, Maneck refused to enter the shop, until peace was restored when Farokh asked Maneck's opinion on the position of the case.

While Maneck was away at boarding school, the mountains began to change. Roads began to appear and new developments were launched and celebrated by government officials. The developments both saddened and angered Farokh, and on his return during vacation, Maneck found his father quite irritated. Farokh's shift in personality had an effect on Maneck, and his mother noticed that he no longer continued his tradition of a morning hug. The weather slowed the development down, to Farokh's pleasure, but there was no denying that it was taking place: the sounds and smells had even replaced the fresh mountain air. Farokh continued to take daily walks every day, surveying the extent of the damage until people began to assume he was crazy because of the way he talked to the trees and rocks. His behaviour embarrassed Maneck. Five years later, when the town celebrated the anniversary of the new developments and the new business threatened the General Store and his soft drink, Farokh considered Maneck's options and decided that he should go to college.

Maneck rejected the idea of college outright on his return during the next vacation. By this time, newer, better-marketed brands of soft drink had overtaken Kohlah's Cola due to Farokh's refusal to market the brand. Despite his protests, arrangements were put in place for Maneck to attend college, where he would study refrigeration and air-conditioning. Aban packed for him, obsessing over what he should take and what he would need. The day to leave for college came, and Maneck boarded the train that would take him to the city.

The last time Maneck had caught a train was when he was very young, and he fondly recalled the memories. On this day, his travelling companion was a man with pens clipped into his front pocket, and a father and daughter who constantly commented on the manners of Maneck and the other passenger. Maneck struck up a conversation with the man, who tells Maneck a long-winded story of how, despite starting out as a lawyer, he had spent most of his years as a proof-reader until his eyes began to fail him. Unable to continue in that profession, he began to organise political rallies, and the yelling had now cost him his voice.



Chapter 5, Mountains Analysis

Chapter 5 builds the foundation for Maneck's character, giving us his background and introducing the people, places and situations that have led him to Dina's apartment. It takes us back in time as far as The Partition, which robbed his family of most of their wealth. We see the beauty of the mountains and how this is destroyed by the introduction of roads and developments, driven by greedy politicians with too much power. With the development of the roads, also comes the development of business and Kohlah's Cola has to compete with the bigger brands that come with the modernisation of society. Also in this chapter is the realisation of a need for an education, if it is within reach, so Maneck is sent to college against his will because his father realises that the General Store may eventually not be enough to sustain him.

This chapter raises a lot of issues related to the idea of the use of power, whether proactive or the abuse of it. We see the power of an organised crowd as the students win battles with the caterers on campus, but also we see the power of the Emergency, as respected teachers and professors are forced to sign allegiance to the movement, with those who don't jailed under new laws. We see the violence that power can provoke and the emotion it can stir up.



Chapter 6, Day at the Circus, Night in the Slum

Chapter 6, Day at the Circus, Night in the Slum Summary

It is the morning that Maneck arrives at Dina Dalal's, and the two tailors were contemplating going in early to see him. But as they left their hut to go and do their business, they saw a gathering of double-decker buses outside the slum. As they squatted, they were joined by Rajaram, and they speculated as to why the buses were there, suggesting that maybe there was going to be a new terminal there. On the way back, Rajaram asked one of the bus drivers the meaning of their gathering, to which he got no definite answer. The last bus soon arrived, this one full of policeman and businessmen with briefcases and pamphlets.

The bus emptied and the slum dwellers gathered to see what was going on. They were told that the Prime Minister was inviting them to a meeting and that they would be paid five rupees and given tea if they were to attend. Despite sarcastic remarks from the crowd, the party-workers spread amongst them, repeating the message and gathering attendees. They were unsuccessful, as most did not want to go, so Sergeant Kesar, who was in charge of the policeman ordered that two people from each hut attend the meeting. The policeman began rounding up the busloads. Monkey-man was not allowed to bring his monkeys, so he locked them up with his dog in his hut, and the two tailors wondered just what they were going to say to Dina.

The bus took them to the outskirts of the city and then out farther than the villages to a vast open field where they disembarked and were told that they would get their money and their tea once the meeting was over. Two hours later the makeshift arena was full, and, after an introduction from one of the eighteen dignitaries, the Prime Minister made her way to the stage. A helicopter that was meant to drop rose petals over the stage missed its mark twice before finally succeeding. As the Prime Minister went on with her speech, Rajaram, Ishvar and Om began playing heads and tails with a coin and later poker. The crowd cheered on cue, as the Prime Minister droned on about the necessity of the Emergency to fight off the forces of evil and how she would catch the conspirators. When at last the speeches were over, a hot air balloon that had drifted over the crowd began throwing leaflets to the captives, bearing the Prime Minister's face and her program for the country. A grand finale of rose petals was then showered from a more accurate helicopter, which flew so low that it toppled an eighty-foot cut-out of the Prime Minister with arms wide open. Those in its vicinity ran for their lives.

They lined up for their tea, which was delayed due to a shortage of cups and snacks, and ended up boarding the bus emptied-handed. They were only given four rupees for their trouble and were told that it cost one rupee for the bus. Ishvar contemplated visiting Dina to explain why they were not at work that day, but instead of being taken



back to the slum, the bus dropped them in a strange place far away from their hut. Rajaram led them home, and Ishvar planned to visit Dina after they had eaten dinner. There was a commotion outside, and the three ran out to find Monkey-man trying to strangle his dog, which had killed his monkeys while he was away. Ishvar and Rajaram pulled him away, and the man wept for the animals, which had been like children to him. An old woman read the entrails of the partially-eaten animals, and predicted that Monkey-man would indeed murder the dog, and that this would not be the worst murder that he would commit. It was now too late for Ishvar to visit Dina, so they stayed with Monkey-man until well after midnight.

Dina was annoyed because Maneck had returned home late on his first day of college. She was already annoyed that the tailors had not shown up for work, and when she explained this to Maneck, he understood her annoyance at him. He was starting to despise his little room, but was glad to be free of the college hostel. He began to think of the hardships his friend, Avinash, had suffered, and that led him to reflect upon the Dina's life. He felt so much sorrow for the pair that he began to cry. Life seemed so hopeless. Eventually Dina called him for dinner, and he explained his wet eyes as a symptom of a cold. He ate his dinner - with a knife and fork rather than his hands as Dina was accustomed to - and, after throwing his scraps in the bin rather than out the window to the incorrigible cats, they both retired to the lounge room. They made small talk until Maneck asked about the pieces of cloth that were spread out on the sofa. Dina explained that it was her cloth collection and that one day she would make it into a quilt - at present she was just trying to make the pieces fit together correctly.

The next day, the tailors turned up, and Dina asked Maneck not to divulge how upset she had been the day before when they didn't arrive. The two men greeted Maneck cheerfully, like old friends meeting after years apart rather than the acquaintances that had only met each other for a short time a month earlier. Dina watched the display disapprovingly, later warning the tailors sarcastically that they should tell the Prime Minister that their jobs are in danger next time the Prime Minister needs them for a meeting. Dina added that there were two other tailors that were begging her for work.

After the tailors left, Dina returned to the front room for her time with Maneck and also to talk to him about her behaviour with the tailors. She tried to explain her tactics to him and warned him against becoming too familiar with them. The next afternoon Omprakesh invited Maneck to have tea with them, and, to her disgust, he accepted.

The three men had their tea at the Vishram Vegetarian Hotel and after ordering their meals, uncle and nephew lit up a beedi, to which Maneck declined. They spoke about the conditions at Dina Dalal's flat, with Maneck admitting that he liked it there much more than he did the hostel. Om tells Maneck about their place and invites him to come to dinner one day, and Maneck casually accepts. They talk about college, which Maneck saying that he will have to finish to please his parents, and then he will be on his way home. Ishvar agrees, saying that as soon as he and Om collect some money, they, too, will be returning home to their village, and that Ishvar intends to find Om a wife. The groom-to-be pulls a long face indicating his disapproval. As they walk back to the flat, they pass the beggar on the rolling platform, remembering him from the day that they



had met. He had since become Om and Ishvar's friend, and they wave to him as they passed every day.

Dina interrogates Maneck when they arrive home, sniffing him and accusing him of smoking, asking him what they were talking about and warning him that Om had lice - he was always scratching. Maneck resented the cross-examination. Dina's warning went unnoticed, and, as the weeks went on, the lunchtime outing became a regular event, and Dina made no effort to try and hide her annoyance. Ishvar wondered why Om and Maneck's friendship bothered Dina so much, so the next time Maneck arrived, and Om readied himself to leave, Ishvar announced that he was going to finish the skirt he was working on and stayed behind to have his tea with Dina. From that day on, Ishvar began to stay behind more and more until the tea that was made in Maneck's name was regularly poured into Ishvar's cup. Eventually he noticed that the tea breaks no longer upset Dina and concluded what he had suspected, that Dina was longing for company.

Without Ishvar around to monitor their conversation, Om and Maneck began exchanging stories about girls and their sexual escapades. They even agreed to see a movie together, with Maneck promising that he would pay using the pocket money he got from his parents. A week later they made good on their promise, despite the opinion of Ishvar and Dina, who scolded them for considering such a waste of money. On the train on the way to the theatre, Om relayed the story of Monkey-man and the dead monkeys, and how he did eventually kill his dog, slitting its throat upon an altar made to his little pets. The movie ended later than they had expected, but as they and the rest of the audience hurried for the exits, a squad of Shiv Sena volunteers blocked them, waving sticks and banners in support of the Prime Minister and the Emergency. The pair laughed at the group, ridiculing their ideas and their ability to spell. On the station platform they tried the Weight and Fortune Machine - Maneck weighed in at 61kg, and was told that a happy reunion waits in the near future. For Om, a mere 46kg, he was told that he would soon be visiting many new and exciting places. Once they had boarded the train, Maneck pulled off his shoes, flexing his toes. Om told the story of how he used to massage his father's feet and was suddenly silent, despite Maneck's attempts to try and distract him.

Back at the flat, the boys told Dina and Ishvar about their outing, and Ishvar repeated his invitation that Maneck come and have dinner at their house. In order not to upset Dina, Maneck did not make a commitment, but promised that he would. After the tailors had left, Dina made snide remarks about the growing friendship between Maneck and Om, commenting that she hoped that Om would be able to sew the next day with all that fighting on his mind. And her concerns came to fruition, with Om making several mistakes the next day, causing arguments between Dina and Om. They were still arguing when Maneck returned home, so the two did not go to tea. After the tailors had left, Dina knocked on his door, and Maneck left his room and talked with her. They talked of the argument, and while Maneck defended Om, Dina confided in him that without the tailors, she would be finished.



The next time she had to make the trip to Au Revior Exports, instead of padlocking the door, Dina left Maneck in charge in an attempt to fuse a bond between Maneck and Dina. After she had left, while Ishvar continued sewing, Om and Maneck went into the front room and flipped through Dina's old sewing books, musing over the supposed colour of the model's pubic hair and whether it matched the hair on their heads. They looked at the cloth that Dina had laid out for her quilt, and Om complained that she wasn't paying them enough. They raided the trunk in the corner and discovered her supply of homemade sanitary pads. Not knowing what they were, they began to make sexual jokes and innuendoes with them, dancing around the room. They were so involved with their joking that they did not even notice Dina enter the room, as she stood there, speechless. They tried to hide the pads behind their backs, as she reproached them, and called to Ishvar to come and see what they had been doing. He went to Om and slapped him across the face, and took him into the back room, reprimanding him.

Later that night, dinner between Maneck and Dina was silent, and Maneck was feeling incredibly guilty. He waited in the front room, hoping that she would come out and give him a chance to apologise. When the light under her door went dark, he felt even worse. The next morning, Dina slammed down his plate of bacon and eggs in front of him. That night after dinner, she again retreated to the back room while he waited in the front. At bedtime, he said good night to her, and also took the opportunity to say he was sorry. Dina admitted that the main reason she was angry was because Maneck had broken her trust. He apologised again and retired to bed.

Chapter 6, Day at the Circus, Night in the Slum Analysis

This chapter is pivotal in establishing and developing the relationships between the main characters in the plot so far. We see the relationship between the tailors and Dina becoming friendlier, as well as the friendship formed between the tailors and Maneck, and finally the almost lustful relationship between Maneck and Dina. The chapter also reveals a little more about the characters, as we begin to see Maneck and Om for the young, immature adults that they are, just discovering the world, and the mature adults that Dina and Ishvar are, despite their different positions.

Again in this chapter we see the power of the government in the Emergency, as a whole colony of slum-dwellers are forced to a meeting put on by the Prime Minister. The transparency of the whole exercise is made clear, and the reader is well aware that the reason for the meeting is not to talk to the poor, but rather to put on a show to the voters - the well-off.



Chapter 7, On the Move

Chapter 7, On the Move Summary

A few days after the incident with the sanitary pads, Ishvar's invitation to Maneck to join them for dinner was again raised, and after debating it with Dina, Maneck accepted, so they agreed he would come the next day. They spent the rest of the afternoon discussing the menu.

They finished for the day and were making small talk on the way home when they heard a large rumbling noise that suddenly boomed, followed by screaming. They came upon the colony with the hut dwellers massed on the roads, with the police beating them away from their shacks. Men had posed as safety inspectors to lull the slum dwellers out of their shacks and then sent in bulldozers to demolish them all, citing a new Emergency law that outlawed slums. Their landlord, who had collected a month's rent only days before, was now the Controller of Slums and was one of the men in charge of the operation. Work stopped for a minute, and it was announced that the residents would have thirty minutes to find any of their belongings before the demolishing started up again. All that Ishvar and Om could retrieve was their trunk plus a shaving mirror and some other useful items, but their stove was now useless. All of Rajaram's collected hair was lost, and they left what used to be their home. The tailors decided they would return to Nawaz's house to see if they could spend another night on his veranda.

Strangers were now living at Nawaz's house, as he had angered the wrong person and was now in jail for smuggling gold, a crime of which he was not guilty. Ishvar and Omprakesh decide sleep at the railway station, but when they arrive, they find it full with beggars bedding down for the night. They managed to find a corner and clean it up a little before heading down to the railway snack shop for something to eat. After they had eaten and urinated, they bedded down for the night, only to be awakened at midnight by a railway policeman, who said that sleeping on the station was prohibited, making it clear that the others had paid him for this privilege.

The two tailors refused to pay the policeman and sat on the station instead of lying down and sleeping. When they had not seen the policeman again half an hour later, they deemed it safe and lay back down again to sleep. Just after they had dozed off, the policeman returned with a large bucket of cold water and poured it over them. Another beggar laughed at them as Om cursed the policeman, who was walking away, swinging his pail. Sopping wet, they picked up everything and moved to the only remaining spot on the platform, and sat, guarding their belongings and swaying with sleep, occasionally getting up to urinate off the platform.

When the snack shop opened at 4 a.m., Om and Ishvar bought themselves some tea and bread and planned out their day. They hoped to leave the trunk with Dinabai, but also agreed not to say that their house had been destroyed - people were scared of the homeless. They were at Dina's flat by seven, and Dina was not yet ready to start the



day. They blamed their earliness on the punctuality of the train. They told Maneck that something had come up and that they could not do dinner that day. That day, Ishvar was not himself and kept making mistakes with his sewing. They left at four, quickly leaving before Dina even noticed that they had left their trunk at the front door.

They returned to the land where their hut had once stood in search of Rajaram, but he was nowhere to be seen. A constable warned them that if they tried to put up new jhopdis, he would have to put them in jail under new laws brought in by the Prime Minister - slum prevention and city beautification. Large board bearing the Prime Minister's face and messages telling residents to keep the city beautiful were erected in place of the huts.

The two men returned to Dina's flat and told her the truth about their home being destroyed. While Dina sympathised, she did not allow them to sleep on her veranda, fearing that her landlord would see them and kick her out of her home. She also did not let them leave the trunk there, claiming there was no room. Disgusted with her, the two men left, and Dina tried to convince Maneck of the rationale for her actions. While the possible trouble with the landlord was the truth, she was afraid that if she let the men leave the trunk there, they would slowly find their way in, and she wanted to avoid that at all cost. She felt safe in the knowledge that they had some relatives in town with whom they stay, but when she was told that they didn't, and that they had come from a village faraway, she was a little worried. She tried to change the subject by asking Maneck how her quilt looked, but he would not forgive her.

Om and Ishvar scoured the town, trying to find a hotel that they could afford, but ended up heading for the train station, checking every doorway to see if they could find shelter. While there were some empty spots, they were afraid that taking someone else's spot could get them killed. They decided to wait outside the twenty-four hour chemist, where there was a nightwatchman. They waited until he had gotten comfortable before offering him a beedi. He refused, producing his own packet of cigarettes. Ishvar started up a conversation with the watchman and told him how their home had been destroyed days before. They bargained with him, and ended up agreeing to pay him three rupees a night, and they would move if someone needed to enter the store.

They awoke the next morning and smoked a beedi in the doorway, surveying the street. Later they rolled up their bedding, paid their three rupees, and Om picked up the trunk, despite his aching shoulder and arm. Later that night they returned to the doorway to sleep and, as the nightwatchman promised, were disturbed by customers coming and going. They later learned that it was an outbreak of dysentery that kept the customers coming. The next day they were exhausted and fell behind as they continued to make mistakes while sewing. That evening, seeing Om strain to lift the heavy trunk, Maneck offered to take it for him and walked with the tailors to their new sleeping place. Om introduced him to the nightwatchman - their new "landlord" - and talked of going back to their village rather than having to live the way they did. Ishvar tells his nephew to have patience - the time will come when they will return. The three men exchanged small stories about their lives. Ishvar had a cough, and the nightwatchman suggested buying cough medicine by the spoonful from the compounder, which he did.



Three days later, Om was still lugging the trunk around on his tired and weary arm, which was so sore that it was difficult for him to sew. Later that morning, the tailors were visited at the flat by Rajaram, who told the men that he felt bad about not being around when the tailors were looking for him. He told them that he had a new job, but asked to borrow ten rupees before he got paid. Despite the fact that he had not repaid an earlier loan, Ishvar gave him the only five rupees that he had on him. As for Om, he didn't care about Rajaram, but did care about his aching arm, which he could barely use. Dina finally relented and brought out a bottle of balm and rubbed it onto his arm. Om's arm began to feel better, and Dina went into the kitchen to wash her hands. She reached up to a dusty shelf and standing on tiptoes, she felt around, dislodging a pivotal box bringing a rolling pin and other items crashing down. Ishvar and Om came running in, but Dina brushed off the accident taking the wax paper that had fallen and wrapping a blob of the balm in it for Om to take with him. She then agreed to let the men leave the trunk there. The tailors were overcome by her kindness.

Later on, Rajaram came around to the chemists to visit the tailors on a bicycle that was lent to him by his employer. He was working for the Family Planning Clinic as a Motivator, encouraging men and women to be sterilized. He said that the office was hiring more Motivators and they should apply, but they said that they were happy with the tailoring. They also declined the offer of a vasectomy.

Back at the flat, Dina found herself missing the chatter the tailors brought to her home. She spoke of them with Maneck, and soon the subject turned to Rustom, and she shared her memories of him late into the night.

Chapter 7, On the Move Analysis

This chapter shows the first of the major catastrophic incidents that was to come with the Emergency - the flattening of the tailors' house. Through this act, we also see the corruption of the police and the government ministers, as well as the complete disregard for humanity. The corruption is further demonstrated by the wrongful jailing of Nazwan, and the policeman demanding money for the right to sleep at the railway station. Here, we also see level of poverty as the men find it hard to find a spot to sleep.

However, in this chapter, we are given a glimmer of hope through the kindness of the nightwatchmen, despite his monetary motivation, and through see the kindness Dina shows the tailors, as she allows them to leave their trunk at her house and rubs ointment into Om's arm.



Chapter 8, Beautification

Chapter 8, Beautification Summary

About a week later, Ishvar and Om were used to the sounds of the street when they slept. Their sleep grew more pleasant, and, in turn, the quality of their work improved. They had developed a routine that around the chemist's shop and Dina's apartment.

One night street noises changed - policemen stormed the street, and Sergeant Kesar barked instructions to his men to round up beggars along the street. Ishvar and Om hid behind the nightwatchman as the Sergeant and the Facilitator (who happened to be the man who tried to sell them the ration card) argued over the condition of one of the beggars, and whether or not they are fit enough to work. Once the streets were cleared, the Facilitator seemed happy with the numbers, but the Sergeant wanted to fill his quota, and he needed just two more. They searched the streets and came across the tailors and the nightwatchman, who tried to explain their presence in the doorstep. They threatened the nightwatchman with jail and forced the tailors into the truck, despite their protests.

They sat in the back of the moving truck for most of the night and were thrown around every time the truck hit a pothole or a bump. To pass the time, they chatted with the beggar on castors, who they used to wave to daily. He gave them a little insight into his life--how as a child his Beggarmaster rented him out to other beggars, who looked after him; his Beggarmaster had also given him the platform he rolled around on. The discussion began to make Om feel uncomfortable, but the casualness with which he spoke put Om at ease a little. One man on the truck told him to be quiet, but this only worked for a couple of minutes before he started telling his stories again. The man grew angrier, telling him to shut up. To calm him down, Ishvar asked what he did for a living and the man replied that he and his wife were metal collectors. He complained how the beggars made trouble on the streets, and a row began between the two. The commotion eventually made the truck driver pull over and order silence, and a policeman threatened to beat them if there were any more disturbances. The truck started again on its journey.

It was dawn when the truck left the highway and turned onto a dirt road outside a village. The doors swung open and the passengers were allowed to attend to calls of nature. Tea was organized through the villagers, and curious residents began to ask questions as to who they were and where they were going. The Facilitator told them to mind their business and the crowd left. After they had finished their tea, they were loaded back onto the truck and were off again.

Late that day, the truck arrived at its destination - an irrigation project. They got off the truck and were ordered to empty their pockets and parcels and place everything on the ground. Everything that might be used as a weapon was seized, and when Om complained that he and his uncle should not be here, he was told that he would have to



talk to the foreman. They were shown a row of tin huts and were allocated residences randomly. They were told that they could have the rest of the day off and would start work the next day. At dusk the whistle blew, and they made their way to the eating area, where they were served watery vegetables and chapattis. Om and his uncle vowed to talk to the top man about the mistake the next day.

That morning, when the tailors were an hour late, Dina began to worry. Although Maneck tried to calm her down, all she could think about were the dresses that were due the following afternoon. Maneck offered to go and visit them, if they did not return the next morning, and Dina asked him to check on them right at that minute rather than wait another day.

After hearing the news from the night watchman, Maneck ran back to Dina's flat and told her about the tailors being taken by the police. He was angered by her response, as she was more concerned about the dresses rather than the welfare of Om and Ishvar. They fought about it for a while, until Maneck went into his room and slammed the door. From the next room he could hear her pacing the floor and could sense her distress. It saddened him that only a week ago the relationships had been improving and now this had to happen. He decided that everything ended badly. The more he thought about it, the more he felt ashamed of his earlier tantrum, so he went to see if he could help.

After ascertaining her deadline, Maneck offered to help and decided that between the two of them they could have the dresses done on time. The tailors had already done most of the work; the only parts left were the buttons and the hems. Dina gave Maneck a quick lesson in sewing, and he helped her thread the needles that were too small for her eyes to see. For the next couple days, Maneck became quite the boss, buying lunch and dinner from his pocket money, so that time would not be wasted preparing it; he also made Dina eat carrots for her eyesight. As they worked, they talked, and Maneck divulged the tailor's past, and the horrors that had affected their lives. Dina was shocked, thinking that in comparison, her life was no so hard after all. They continued to talk about the tailors and Dina admitted that she was more afraid of them than they were of her, because without them she would not be able to make a living. Maneck continued to pick at her for not letting them sleep on the verandah, and she chides him for making her feel guilty. She told him how she was made to feel guilty for not stopping her father from going out to the villages where he was killed, and he understood her point. At ten o'clock she rose as if going to bed, but complaining that they had not made the day's quota, Maneck convinced her to stay up. They finished a few more dresses and both retired to bed.

The next day, an hour before sunrise, a whistle blew to wake the laborers up and they spilled into the food area to eat and drink tea before starting work. The newcomers were assigned chores by the foreman - Ishvar was to join a group of men starting a new ditch, while Om was to carry gravel to where concrete was being mixed. Ishvar and Om approached the foreman about the mistake, only to be told that they will work and to speak to the project manager about it, who was not around. He escorted them to their allotted jobs, and told the supervisors to keep an eye on them.



All around them were people working. Unaccustomed to the hard labor, Ishvar and Om struggled to keep up. Ishvar spoke to the old woman he was working with and discovered that she had been doing this since she was a child - it was easy once you learned to balance. After a few trips with the gravel, he began to sweat, and the ground spun. He asked for a drink of water, but was told that the bhistee will come around when it was time. It seemed forever before he finally came and poured the water into Ishvar's mouth. Once he had finished, he was ordered back to work. The day seemed to drag by, and at lunch both Ishvar and Om felt so sick that they struggled to eat their watery vegetables. When they returned to work they started retching, but the overseer just shook them by the shoulders. It was not until they began to vomit that they were reprieved for the day. They returned to their hut to sleep.

Later that day, the beggar on castors came by with food for the men. Ishvar asked him his name, and he replied that everyone called him Worm. Ishvar asked his real name. It was Shankar.

Chapter 8, Beautification Analysis

In this chapter, we are once again shown the corruption of the police and witness how the Emergency has infected many with a glimpse of power. We are also given some insight into the life of a beggar, as Shankar becomes friends with the tailors and tells them a little of his story.

With no tailors to work for her, Dina becomes very distressed at the situation, and we see Maneck coming through for her and their relationship developing and strengthening.



Chapter 9, What Law There Is

Chapter 9, What Law There Is Summary

Dina was finding it as hard to find tailors to replace Ishvar and Om as it had been to find them in the first place. On delivering the dresses to Mrs. Gupta, she explained that the tailors were on a two-week vacation, but as the end of the fortnight grew near, she had to explain to Mrs. Gupta that the pair was delayed as they had fallen sick in their village. Mrs. Gupta gave her another two weeks grace, but not before subjecting her to her opinions, that could have made perfect slogans for the Emergency.

At the beginning of the second fortnight, the rent collector turned up at the doorstep. Dina told him that she would get the money and closed the door. While he waited, he decided to get her receipt ready, and fumbling with old hands, dropped the contents of his folder. When Dina opened the door he was bending over on the ground, trying to pick up his papers. Once he had collected them, he asked Dina for a seat so that he could reorganise the clutter and give her her receipt. Once inside, he cheekily took advantage of the situation, asking if there was anything that needed doing in the house, hoping to get a look at the back room where he suspected she was running a business. With no tailors around, Dina was more than happy for him to go into the back room, and he was disappointed when he found no tailors there. Dina explained the two machines as having different functions, rather than that someone else was using them as Ibrahim implied. He then went into Maneck's room and casually mentioned that this was the room of the paying guest, hoping to catch her out. Dina exploded into a rage and Ibrahim was taken aback, apologising and saying that he was only repeating rumours. Later when Maneck returned home, she replayed the drama, and they both had a laugh.

The fortnight flew by, and the hire-purchase man came to inquire about the sewing machines, because there had been no instalment paid that month. Dina promised that the men would pay him three times over when they returned, but they had been delayed in their village. She was still unable to find a tailor, even with Maneck tagging along for the search occasionally. And in their spare time, they worked on the quilt.

The Facilitator continued to deliver fresh batches of pavement dwellers to the foreman, and since he was making a tidy profit from the practice, would also deliver gifts to ensure that the arrangement continued. But the arrangement also suited the project manager, who no longer had to hire as many paid workers, which threatened the day laborers. They started to harass the newcomers, starting off with subtle abuse such as pushing and shoving, spitting from above and deliberately turning over their plates at mealtime.

By the end of the first week, Ishvar and Om felt like they were in hell. Their shoes had been stolen while they slept, and they tiptoed into the work site, trying to avoid the sharp rocks. At the start of the second week, Ishvar's dizziness got the better of him, and he fell into a ditch, injuring his ankle. He was taken to Doctor Sahab, who applied the



ointment that he applied to all injuries and sent Ishavar to rest for the remainder of the day. Shankar spent time with him in his hut, fetching him food and water - a job, which became more regular as the discontent among the paid workers saw more and more injuries among the newcomers. By the end of the week there were scores of newcomers classified as useless, and Shankar played nurse to all of them.

To curb the violence, the project manager took a different tact, with security being installed throughout the work site, to the point where it resembled an armed camp. When the next load of free labor arrived, the foreman complained that he was being stuck with feeding and housing cripples, and the Facilitator blamed the police for just shoving anyone into the truck. He promised to sort some out, so that the foreman would not suffer any loss. Meanwhile, the latest truckload included various performers from jugglers to musicians. They were given a choice - go and join the laborers, or entertain the camp in return for food and lodging. After dinner they put on a show, which turned out to be a great success. Om and Ishvar recognized Monkey-man, who was performing with his niece and nephew, but was not received well by the crowd.

A week later the Facilitator returned with the man who would solve their problems with the cripples - it was Shankar's Beggarmaster. The two were delighted to see one another, with Shankar, who he called Worm, sobbing with joy, begging him to take him home. Beggarmaster made a deal with the foreman to take with him all the crippled, which he would put to work on the streets. Shankar raced to tell his friends Ishvar and Om the good news, and they congratulated him, saying that they wished they could go to. Shankar had an idea, and they all approached Beggarmaster, asking if he could take them, too. They came to an arrangement - the tailors would pay him fifty rupees each a week for the rest of the year to be set free and then continue in their profession as tailors. It was not cheap, but it was better than being kept there. They left the next morning.

Dina's situation became so desperate, that she had to concede and go and see her brother, Nusswan. Maneck agreed to go with her and suggested that they dress up for the occasion - he would have more respect for them that way. When she emerged, he was taken aback by how young and beautiful she looked. Once they had arrived at Nusswan's office, they were told by a clerk that Nusswan was busy and that they would have to wait. Dina was used to this - Nusswan liked to imply that he was a very busy and important person. Meanwhile, in his office, Nusswan was excited about the visit - Dina had brought with her a young man, so maybe she had finally agreed to remarry. When he called the two in and saw just how young Maneck was, he panicked. Was Dina going to marry a man so young? His mind was quickly put to rest as she explained that he was her boarder, not her lover. Nusswan made small talk with Maneck, asking him about his studies and making political comments. He talked of the Emergency and what a great thing it was, with poverty being tackled and the jhapodis being torn down. He talked of compulsory sterilization and what a good thing it was, arguing with Maneck that it was not mutilation and not undemocratic. Dina mentioned that she thought the government should let people sleep on the pavement, to which Nusswan replied that they should all be eliminated - or poisoned. Once he had finished with his outrageous opinions, she asked him for 250 rupees to get her through, and the pair rose to leave.



She was lucky - she had been spared the speech about the need to get married. But she was not sure that the one that replaced it was much better at all.

Chapter 9, What Law There Is Analysis

In this chapter we meet the infamous Beggarmaster, who, although he had been portrayed as a bit of a monster, actually turned out to be their savior. We see the importance of money in political circles and how it can buy anything - even people. We also see the close relationship between Beggarmaster and Shankar.

Further, Dina's need for the tailors is demonstrated when things around her begin to fall apart due to their absence. She is forced to go and see Nusswan - accompanied by Maneck - and we are treated to Nusswan's commentary on the social situation and see that he, too, like Mrs. Gupta, is upper class and therefore pro-Emergency, even going to the point to say that he would like to see all the beggars killed.



Chapter 10, Sailing Under One Flag

Chapter 10, Sailing Under One Flag Summary

On the way back in the truck, Ishvar spotted some slums, and asked Beggarmaster why these had not been pulled down. Beggarmaster explained that it was up to the police which ones were destroyed, and the decision usually came down to an agreement between the police and the slumlord. Once they entered the city, instead of just dropping them off, Beggarmaster insisted that he see their place of work and meet their employer to verify that they worked there. Due to the late hour, Ishvar protested, but led the truck to the flats and Dina's door. He begged him not to wake her, but he rang the bell anyway. Hearing the bell, Dina woke Maneck to come and answer the door with her. When they opened the door, they were overjoyed to see Om and Ishvar. Dina immediately invited them in, and Beggarmaster verified that Dina was their boss. Beggarmaster would come and collect the weekly payment and was glad that everyone was happy.

They explained the whole story to Dina and Maneck, and Dina insisted that they stay on her verandah that night. Overcome with her kindness, Ishvar dropped to his knees in thanks. Embarrassed, Dina ordered him to get up and told him to never drop to his knees for any human being. Out of earshot, Maneck whispered to Dina how proud he was of her.

Dina struggled with the decision of what to do with the tailors. On one hand she could not bare to lose them again, on the other, she would be risking eviction if she was ever found out that they were living on her verandah. She made the decision to let them stay. In the morning, the two tailors, after being paid for the last work they had completed, went and had tea before returning to the flat to restart work. As usual, they had their tea at the Vishram Vegetarian Hotel, which was also Shankar's new home. They stopped and said hello to their old friend, who was very happy to be on the streets again. Meanwhile, Dina had gone to Au Revior to pick up the orders for more dresses.

Once back at the flat, Ishvar apologized to Dina for falling at her feet the night before. He told her that he had been in her situation once and told her of the time that he had helped out Ashraf when the Muslim/Hindu riots were going on, and how Ashraf's wife had fallen at his feet. Throughout the day, Dina debated with herself about how to approach the subject of having the tailors sleep on the verandah. In the end, the discussion came about naturally, and it was agreed that they could stay there until they found something else. They offered to pay rent but she refused - if they did it would mean that she would have a tenant on the verandah.

The next morning the four tried to go about their morning toiletries without disturbing each other too much. Over time the routine sorted itself out, until they operated like a well-oiled machine. Dina disliked Ishvar's ritual of plunging his fingers down his throat to bring up excess bile every morning, and when the other boys also complained about



this habit, Ishvar tamed down the habit. Om began to copy Maneck in his cleaning rituals, purchasing the same powder and soap so that he could smell the same. Despite the smoothness of their routine, Ishvar was still disturbed that Dina would not accept rent from them.

After answering the door, Dina announced to the tailors that once again Rajaram was outside waiting for them. When they came to the door, he apologised for disturbing them again and asked if there was anywhere that they could go to talk. The three headed down to the Vishram, and Ishvar handed over the hair he was holding for Rajaram. They ordered him some food, and he began to talk. His job as a Family Planning Motivator was not going well. He had been having little success with his current prospects and moved outside the city where he was told he would have better luck. While out there, Rajaram was talking to an old man and was telling him of his troubles, and the old man offered to have the operation done, despite the fact that his age probably meant that he was sterile anyway. So the man had the operation done. A week later, Rajaram returned to the neighbourhood, only to be set upon by the man's family. As a result of the operation, the old man had died, and the family wanted revenge. They gave Rajaram a severe beating. When he went back to his supervisor, he was told it was not the Family Planning Centre's fault and that the man was just old. The supervisor also told him of a policy change-- that from now on he would not be trying to convince people to be sterilised, but would offer them a free medical examination, and once in the doctor's office, it would be easier to convince them to become sterilised. However people quickly picked up on this deception, and everywhere he went, he was persecuted. After telling his bosses that he would not work like this, he was thrown out, losing his income, his home and his transportation. So Rajaram was going back to his original trade, barbering, and wanted a loan so that he could buy the utilities that he would need. Ishvar said that he would think it over and to meet with him next week.

Back at Dina's flat, Ishvar told Dina about Rajaram's predicament, and Dina offered her own barbering kit instead of the loan of money - she would not be barbering anymore so it seemed only fair. Later that week, Rajaram was grateful to receive the kit, but still had one problem - he did not have anywhere to store the hair that he cut, so that he could sell it. They decided that Rajaram would leave the hair with Shankar outside the Vishram, so that he did not keep coming to Dina's house. The tailors would pick up the hair and store it.

In the same way that Ishvar's bile wretching annoyed Dina, so, too, did Om's itching. She mentioned it to Ishvar, who said the only reason that he hadn't done anything about it was lack of money. Dina replied that they didn't need money - all they needed was kerosene. Despite Om's complaints, Ishvar worked some kerosene into his hair, and Dina gave him a broken spoon for itching so that he would not get it on the dresses. For the rest of the day, Ishvar, Dina and Maneck teased him, with remarks like they were going to cook dinner on the top of his head.

The remark about cooking dinner on Om's head prompted Dina to invite the tailors to stay and have tea with her and Maneck. Until now, they had been dining at the Vishram, while Dina and Maneck ate by themselves. She mentioned the idea to Maneck,



suggesting that they eat their tea out on the veranda. While Maneck thought it was a great suggestion, he was insulted at the idea of their eating on the veranda rather than at the table with them. He threatened to also eat on the veranda, and Dina knew he had won.

That night, they all ate dinner at the table. The conversation varied from the raw carrots she was eating to the kerosene in Om's hair, and they all got along marvellously. The tailors complimented the food and suggested that they help with the preparation of the meals because they were very skilled at making chapattis. This would save Dina money when buying bread. They even offered to come to the marketplace to help her get the right ingredients.

The next day at the ration shop, Dina, Om and Ishvar waited as the government truck unloaded the stock. As they waited, Dina asked Ishvar why Om was so thin, suggesting that he could have worms. Ishvar said that he didn't, and that he would be married soon anyway, and that his wife's cooking would fatten him up. Dina said that he was too young to get married and Om agreed heartily. The line began to get long, and people grew impatient, calling out offensive remarks. When the unloading had finished, the trio picked up their supplies and went back to the apartment. That night, everyone complimented Om's chapattis.

The longer the tailors stayed, the more accustomed to their habits and smells Dina became. They began taking turns making the evening meal, and Dina praised Maneck for his idea of having them all eat together. They were four happy people, living comfortably under one roof. In their many conversations, they began trusting her with pieces of their past, which she added to her growing story of the tailors.

While Maneck taught Om how to use a knife and fork, Dina's quilt began to grow again, and she also offered the tailors the cloth in the cupboard if they ever wanted to make something. Ishvar thought of Shankar and how he could rarely find clothes that would not fall off him because of his unusual shape. Dina had an idea, and brought out her old bathing suit as a suggestion for a pattern. It was perfect, and the tailors rushed out to get Shankar's measurements and then sewed the garment for him. When they presented it to him, he was very excited, but said that he would have to check with Beggarmaster if he could wear it because no one would give him money if he was wearing anything too new.

Chapter 10, Sailing Under One Flag Analysis

In this chapter we see Dina's character soften as she allows the tailors to come and live with her. At first, her motivation is questionable, and we can't help asking if she is doing this out of kindness or out of her need for the tailors not to disappear again. However, as the chapter progresses, we see her soften further in letting the tailors eat dinner with them, giving Rajaram the haircutting kit and removing the lice from Om's hair. The four develop a routine in the flat and by the end of the chapter are like family.

The chapter also gives some insight into the Family Planning Centre through Rajaram's experiences as a Motivator. We see the lies and deception and also the government's urgency to have anyone sterilised, even if they are already sterile.



Chapter 11, The Bright Future Clouded

Chapter 11, The Bright Future Clouded Summary

Now that the tailors were comfortable on Dina's veranda, their hunt for accommodation became half-hearted. This made Ishvar feel a little guilty, so he took to telling Dina every minute detail of their searches. But by this time Dina was not worried about her landlord, despite warnings from her friends. Every time they left to go house hunting, she watched the clock until they returned and urged them not to rush into anything.

One house hunting expedition led them into the northern suburbs, where they passed the Advanced Tailoring Company, where they had worked a little before being employed by Dina. They stopped in to say hello to Jeevan, the owner. They had tea with him, and waited while he tended to some customers, noting that when one of the customers brought plenty of fabric for the garments they required, Jeevan said that it would not be enough and that he would have to shorten the skirts - the tailors knew that he was just going to swipe some of the fabric. When they confronted him about it, he brushed it off, saying that a tailor also has to make a living. The next customer was a woman, and Om and Maneck made eyes at her as she was being fitted, with Om expressing his regret that since he now worked with paper patterns, he no longer got to measure women. Maneck suggested that maybe he should give up college and take up tailoring, making them both laugh. The subject turned to college, and Maneck revealed that he was considering doing the three-year degree rather than the one-year diploma, which he would finish shortly. Om suggested that if he was going to stay, he should change to tailoring because he would never have to measure a woman for a refrigerator.

In the week prior to Maneck's exams, Dina had an unexpected visit from Ibrahim, her landlord. He had been asked to deliver a final notice to vacate within thirty days - they had proof that she was using the flat for commercial purposes, despite being given a previous warning. Angry, Dina demanded that Ibrahim check out the back room, and, as he did, she explained Ishvar as her husband and the two boys as their sons. Ibrahim suggested that she produce marriage and birth certificates. She yelled at him to stop insulting her, and he backed down, saying that he was only doing his job. In the back room, Om teased Ishvar about his unexpected nuptials.

While Maneck had a three-week holiday from college, Dina encouraged him to leave the flat and tour the city, but he declined and stayed in the flat. She even wrote down directions for him, but he did not budge. His being there began to distract Om, and by the end of the week, they decided to let Om have a vacation, too, and reduced his sewing hours by half. Now there was no keeping them at home, and the two would tell of their daily escapades over dinner. Halfway through their vacation, heavy rain kept them indoors and their boredom led them to the chess set. Maneck began to teach Om how to play, bringing the memories of Avinash flooding back, and he stopped the lesson. Om became angry and swept the pieces off the board, so Maneck returned and



started the lesson again. Om could not make sense of the game - the rules did not always allow someone to win. A stupid game, he concluded.

When the rain didn't let up after five days, the boys became stir crazy in the flat. When Dina and Ishvar tired of having them watch her work, they sent them out in the rain with an umbrella. They headed back to Advanced Tailoring to see if Jeevar would let them measure the ladies. Jeevar refused, but did tell them about a small peephole in the back of the changing area that he would let them look through if they liked - for a fee of course. After waiting around for most of the day, Maneck went first, spying on a woman who removed her blouse but not her bra. Next it was Om's turn, who was lucky enough to have a woman remove her pants and her panties in the process. While Maneck was able to keep himself quiet, Om did not, and the woman questioned the noise, but Jeevar just said it was rats. After the woman left, Jeevar scolded the boys, and they paid their money and left, a little more subdued. After making a joke about a passing rat, they were themselves again and shared their experiences behind the curtain.

With six days of vacation left, Om suggested that he and Maneck spy on Dina while she bathed. Maneck was repulsed by the idea and refused, and also refused to let Om go ahead with it. This caused a scuffle and Maneck tore Om's shirt. The commotion was loud enough for Ishvar to hear in the next room, and he rushed out at the same time as Dina, demanding to know what the fight was about. Each blamed the other, but did not reveal the motive.

Maneck stayed in his room for the rest of the day and Om sat on the veranda. The next day Om announced that he wanted to start working full days again, but his sewing suffered due to his anger. He refused to fix the pocket on his shirt and wore it as a sign of his discontent. While the performances were laughable, Dina wished the happiness would come back into her home.

About a fortnight later, Maneck got his marks back from his exams, and they were less than desirable. Dina ordered that he study for at least two hours every night from now on. The talk of education led her to talk of her own lack of education, and she let the men know the story of her past.

One night as the household was preparing to go bed, the doorbell rang. It was Ibrahim the rent collector, but once she opened the door to him, two men behind him charged inside. Ibrahim apologised, saying that he was there to deliver the final notice, and that she must vacate within 48 hours. Dina threatened to call the police, and the men replied that they were just employees of the landlord. Dina ignored them and ordered Ishvar to get the police. When he tried, one of the men sent him flying across the room. He continued to guard the door while the other goonda sauntered into the back room and began destroying everything he could get his hands on. Ibrahim begged them to stop, but it was pointless. When one threw Ashraf's shears out of the window, Om lunged at him, only to be slapped twice and then punched in the stomach. Maneck grabbed the umbrella and went after him, whacking him on the shoulder, which the gooda returned with a heavy punch to Maneck's face. The other man took out a knife and began slashing pillows and mattresses, while the other spat all over their beds and fabric.



When they were done, they repeated the final notice, so that they would not have to return with another notice. Kicking Maneck's shins on the way out, the two left, but Ibrahim stayed. The final sound was of the glass shattering on the veranda.

While Om went to get Maneck some ice for his bleeding lip, Ibrahim began to cry. He begged Dina for forgiveness, telling how his job had wore him down over the years, and that he did not know what the goondas were there to do. He asked Dina where she would go, saying that the police would come if she did not open the door to them. But she was adamant that she would not leave. If she needed to, she would swallow her pride and ask her brother for help.

Chapter 11, The Bright Future Clouded Analysis

In this chapter we see the relationship between Om and Maneck grow closer and also are shown their immaturity due to their age, which may have been forgotten as their circumstances sometimes appear to be that of an adult rather than of a child. Meanwhile Dina also opens up further to the men, telling them the story of her past, letting them in a little further.

Primarily, this chapter sees the landlord's attempt to break up their happy home as he delivers a final notice and then sends around the goondas to warn her and destroy property. What should be noted in this scene is its irony - the soft spoken goondas who trash the apartment.



Chapter 12, Trace of Destiny

Chapter 12, Trace of Destiny Summary

The morning after the visit from Ibrahim and his goons, the four went about their business as normal. They checked on Maneck, who was still sleeping, but his lip had healed from the night before and they left him to rest. Dina was getting ready to leave for her brother's office when Beggarmaster arrived at the door. Ishvar got the money out for him and explained what had happened and that it may affect their next instalment. He came in to survey the damage and asked them to estimate how much it would cost to fix the damage. He told them that the goondas had made a big mistake, and that he was going to correct it for them. Because the tailors had made their payments regularly, they had nothing to worry about. He promised to be back that evening.

Dina still had doubts despite Beggarmaster's promises and dropped by Nusswan's office just to inform him of what was happening, but he was away on business, so she had no choice but to wait for Beggarmaster. For the rest of the day Maneck stayed in bed with a headache and the other three tried to fix what the goondas had destroyed the night before. They waited all night, but Beggarmaster did not show up. Dina began to give up hope and suggested to the tailors that it might be time to move on. They agreed and began getting their things together, planning to leave the next morning. Maneck also planned to go the student hostel.

The next morning all three prepared to leave, and Dina hurried Maneck along. Ishvar and Om left to find the nightwatchman and see if they could sleep in his doorway again, but he had been replaced, and the new one did not want to renew the contract. They returned to the flat with the bad news, and Maneck offered for them to sneak into his hostel room at night to sleep. They were considering this when the doorbell rang. To their relief, it was Beggarmaster. Dina rushed to him, thankful that he was there. He apologised for being late - he had been held up by an emergency. Two of his best beggars had been murdered, and their well-kept hair cut off and stolen. Ishvar and Om froze, immediately suspecting Rajaram. The unusual circumstances surrounding the case had the police intrigued, continued Beggarmaster, but back to business. He gave Dina the money to cover the damages and told them that there would be no more problems with the landlord, as long as they kept on paying their instalments. The tailors asked about Monkey-man and how he was doing. Beggarmaster did not know, but replied that Monkeyman's niece and nephew were doing well as beggars. He then asked them to be on the lookout for two new beggars, particularly anyone lame or blind to complete a new begging sequence Beggarmaster had thought up. He also mentioned that the goondas who had visited their home sent their regards; apparently they had had an 'accident' and had broken all their fingers. He excused himself, saying that he had to tend to the issue of the murdered beggars. As he left, Dina warned the men to be careful of that man, and offered to pay part of his instalment, but Ishvar refused. They were, after all, living there rent free.



As Ishvar and Om laid out their bedding for the night, they discussed Rajaram and the murders. They were sure that he had done it, and worried whether they could be seen as accessories for helping him store his cut hair and for giving him his barbering kit. They agreed never to talk about it with anyone. Instead of picking up the package from Shankar, they let him keep it.

Two months later, still safe in their flat, Dina awoke to noises in the kitchen, only to find a car had crashed through the chicken wire and a chicken was inside. She chased it out of the window, and Maneck woke up and came out to see what the commotion was. Dina explained and he turned to investigate the other noise, and found a litter of kittens in the fireplace. Dina was going to put them outside the window, so that the mother could come and pick them up, but Maneck protested, and Dina gave in, allowing him to give them a saucer of milk. Sooner rather than later, she became fond of them, each morning waking and hoping that they had not been taken during the night. Ishvar attributed their coming to the good fortune of the house, and that this would also mean that Om would have healthy children. He had been thinking hard about finding Om a wife, but Dina thought that he was being silly - Om was still so young, and they did not have money or a permanent roof over their heads. Dina called out to Om on the veranda telling him of his uncle's plans. Om replied that his uncle had some screws loose.

The kittens began to come and go at their leisure, and their absences continued to grow longer until they failed to come back at all. Everyone was upset by their disappearance, causing Beggarmaster to ask what was wrong when he came by to collect his instalment. They told him the story of the kittens, and he said he had some news that would cheer them up.

A few weeks back, one of his beggars had died, and just before she died, she told him that he was Shankar's mother. He had always suspected this, as he had always seen her with a child, until Shankar was taken for professional modifications and then circulated among other beggar woman. However, as she lay dying on the pavement, she claimed that Beggarmaster's father was also Shankar's father. At first he was angered at the allegation, but she said she had proof - his father had a large bump at the nape of his neck. She knew this because Beggarmaster's father had visited her often, enjoying her body. And Shankar had the same bump at the nape of his neck. Despite taking her to the hospital, she died soon after. Beggarmaster went to see Shankar, and sure enough, there was the same bump at the nape of his neck. Despite the emotion welling up inside of him, he contained himself and did not tell Shankar of their relationship. He considered taking Shankar in and getting him off the streets, but he worried how he would adjust, and if he would detest him for the change in his lifestyle. Beggarmaster asked the tailors to ask him some questions, to see what he wanted and what he needed, and also to see what memories he had of when he was young. He had already arranged for his personal barber to see to Shankar. On his way out, he asked if the tailors wanted to renew their contracts with him, and they readily agreed. The tailors agreed among themselves to keep the story secret.



Chapter 12, Trace of Destiny Analysis

In this chapter we see the influence of Beggarmaster in social and political circles as he guarantees Dina that she will not have to leave her flat. What we also see, though, that violence is the reason for this influence, which is as effective as money in getting results. As well as this, we also learn a lot more about Beggarmaster--his devotion to his beggars through his concern when two of his beggars are murdered, as well as the softer side of him as he learns that Shankar is his half-brother. The family connection between the two affects Beggarmaster so much that despite the fact that they only share a father, Beggarmaster wants to take Shankar off the streets and give him everything. We also see that the tailor's friendship with Shankar puts them in good stead with Beggarmaster, which is advantageous considering Beggarmaster's influence.

In this chapter, we also see Ishvar beginning to think seriously about finding a wife for Om, and we also learn the rest of the household's thoughts on the matter.



Chapter 13, Weddings, Worms and Sanyas

Chapter 13, Weddings, Worms and Sanyas Summary

A month later, Ishvar still had Om's marriage on his mind. Dina and Maneck continually argued that he was still too young to marry, but nothing would deter Ishvar. He explained that in the absence of a father, it was his duty to find Om someone to marry. Maneck changed the subject by announcing that he will be staying on for another three years, to Dina's delight.

Ishvar simply could not get thoughts of Om's marriage out of his mind. He became quite obsessed with it, until it was the only thing he could talk about. Dina tried to discourage Ishvar, suggesting he wait until their circumstances improved. He decided to write a letter to Ashraf Chacha, so that he could spread the word in the community. Omprakesh argued with him, but he could not be swayed; it was his duty, and he was going to fulfil it. His fixation caused errors in his sewing, and Dina scolded him.

Ashraf replied to Ishvar's letter. He had spoken to people in the community, and four Chamaar families were interested; however, they were in a hurry and wanted to settle within eight weeks. Too soon, Dina exclaimed. This reaction caused the usually-quiet Ishvar to get angry, accusing her of not knowing what she was talking about. She retaliated, saying that he was making plans that he was not able to fulfil. The rift lasted the entire afternoon, until Om broke the ice when he began to make the evening's chapattis. After speaking to Dina and Maneck in the front room, he went out to the veranda where his uncle was sitting cross legged on his sleeping mat. He told his uncle to go and apologise, and Ishvar let him help him up. He started to bend at her feet until she stopped him. They would speak of the incident no more.

The agreement only lasted until the following evening as he contemplated his reply to the correspondence. Maneck made some smart remarks about the matter, causing another outburst from Ishvar, saying that Maneck should stop mocking such a serious matter. Om began to argue with Ishvar about it, and asked where they would sleep. Ishvar said there was enough room on the veranda - most accommodations these days housed eight or nine in a smaller space. However, the decision was up to Dina; if she did not want them there, then he would go back to the village. The important thing was that Om was married.

A week after receiving the letter, Ishvar wrote back that Om would arrive for the viewings in a month. He kept emphasising to Dina how having a daughter-in-law in the house would be such a blessing. Three days later, she conceded, saying that Om could bring his wife to live on the veranda. Ishvar was overjoyed and shared the news with a begrudging Om. She reinforced that it was only a trial, and only to thank her if it worked out.



For the past couple of months, Dina had noticed that Om had been reinventing himself in Maneck's image, slowly taking on Maneck's attributes from his sparse moustache to the way that he dressed. The main difference between the two was their build; while Maneck was more heavysset and chubby, Om was as thin as a rake. Dina stood by her theory that he had worms, and she again raised the subject with Ishvar. The next day she bought a bottle of vermifuge from the chemist, and Ishvar made sure that Om took a dose that night. After missing his dinner so as to not feed the worm, Om began to ridicule the idea of having worms, and he and Maneck laughed about stabbing them with little umbrellas. Regardless, after seven trips to the toilet the next morning, the culprit emerged. Om came out of the toilet shouting that it looked like a small snake, and Dina assumed that he had passed the worm. Now they had three weeks to fatten him up before his wedding.

Once again, Rajaram came to the flat to visit the tailors, but at this visit, Ishvar struggled to recognise him. He had shaved off all his hair and stood with his shoulders drooping and head bowed. Ishvar thought to himself that if he needed another loan he would be happy to give it to him if it meant Rajaram leaving so Ishvar and Om would not get involved in police business. Ishvar asked what was wrong, and Rajaram announced that he was ready to renounce the world. Dina retorted that she thought that suicide was wrong. Rajaram stared at her hair before responding and explained that Dina misunderstood him. Instead he meant to escape to the Himalayas, where he would spend the rest of his life meditating. Dina suggested that this would be the same thing and enquired about her haircutting kit. He said that it was just fine, and then asked the tailors if he could take them to the Vishram and buy them tea. They accepted, but Ishvar assumed that Ishvar would be the one buying the tea. Once there, they asked Rajaram what the nonsense about the meditation was about. He said that he was serious. Barbering had become useless since his hair-collecting days - anyone that would ask for a simple trim would usually find themselves bald, and so the customers dwindled. So he had to start full-time hair-collecting again, but did not have the storage space to keep his collections - the tailor's trunk would not be big enough for such a collection. He started offering free haircuts to beggars, tempting some with a small coin. But he was not very successful and was hungry and homeless. So he began training himself on a home-made head of hair to take it swiftly and without detection and began cutting off ponytails from men and women at the marketplace unawares. One day, he noticed two beggars with especially luxuriant hair. He tried to ignore them, but found that he couldn't. One night, while they were sound asleep, he approached them and chopped off their locks. But halfway through, one woke and started to scream to attract attention. Not knowing what to do, Rajaram stabbed the two with his scissors. The tailors told him that they knew of the murders and had suspected him immediately but had not said anything of their suspicions. Rajaram continued; he threw away the scissors and the bloodstained clothes and the hair. He shaved his head and his moustache so that he would not be recognised. And for this, he wanted to renounce the world. He asked the tailors for money to pay for the train ticket to the Himalayas. They returned to the flat, and Ishvar retrieved the money and gave it to Rajaram.



Chapter 13, Weddings, Worms and Sanyas Analysis

In this chapter we see Ishvar's growing obsession with finding Om a wife. We are shown the process of finding a wife and how it is like finding a job - several prospects are found and then interviews are attended. Despite fighting over the idea of Om being married, Dina softens even further and says yes to Om bringing his new wife to live with them and sleep with him on the veranda. Meanwhile, we see the influence that Maneck is having over Om - like an older brother - as Om begins to mould himself in Maneck's image. Dina even convinces Om that she is right about the worm, which she is indeed. They are more like a family than ever before.

This chapter also brings about the downfall of Rajaram as he admits that he did kill the beggars for their hair. Seeing their true character, we see the destruction of that friendship, as Ishvar basically pays Rajaram off, so that Ishvar won't have to see Rajaram anymore.



Chapter 14, Return of Solitude

Chapter 14, Return of Solitude Summary

It had been a long time since Dina had been in the flat alone, but for the next six weeks, alone she would be. Ishvar and Om had returned to their village for the wedding, and Maneck had returned home for his vacation. Two days earlier, the house had been full and their routine regular. However, with nothing to do, the slowly passing hours felt strange and unusual. Dina continued to work on the quilt, which the tailors, had picked out different fabrics for and recalled the memories attached to them. They had picked out the good memories and remembered the bad. Dina offered to cut out those pieces associated with bad memories, but Ishvar refused. All those times were necessary to lead them to where they were. They had begun a game, picking a piece and trying to remember where it came from. They moved along chronologically until they had shared a dozen stories and then reached the unfinished corner before they recalled that corner they first lived in.

After Ishvar and Om had left, Dina sat and watched Maneck eat breakfast. He suggested that she could have gone with them. She hoped Ishvar knew what he was doing, and that the new wife would fit in with all of them. She changed the subject to Maneck's exams, which he would sit for during the next five days before he returned to the mountains. He chided her, telling her not to give his room away while he was gone. The mail arrived and in it was a letter from his parents, which contained all the usual information: they missed him and were looking forward to his return. Dina encouraged him to go and visit his mother's family, the Sodawalla's, and he shrugged in reply. That day he was returning to college to give back the chess set to his friend. On the way to the bus stop, he made a detour to say hello to Shankar. They spoke about the imminent wedding. Shankar also had exciting news - that day he was getting a visit from Beggarmaster's barber to give him a shave and a haircut. Maneck promised to come and see him with his new face.

What Shankar didn't know was that earlier that morning Beggarmaster's personal barber had refused to do pavement work, so had passed the job on to someone who would - Rajaram. As his hair was shaved off, Shankar did not recognise Rajaram, who was happy to keep it that way to avoid the hair connection. Rajaram shaved his face and throat and gave him a face massage, but when it came to cutting his hair, Shankar refused: he liked his locks. Instead, he pulled out some of the plaits that had been left with him and asked Rajaram to fix them to his head, permanently. Rajaram replied that he couldn't, but Shankar screamed to him that he must. His screaming attracted attention, and soon there was a crowd surrounding him, curious about the plaits he held in his hand. The plaits reminded the crowd of the murdered beggars who had lost their hair. As the crowd drew in closer to Shankar, he became claustrophobic. As the crowd accused him of the murder, he pushed off on his platform and shot through the opening. The pavement began to slope steeply, and the corner up ahead was difficult to negotiate. Unable to stop, the platform took flight flinging him into the busy intersection.



Meanwhile at the college hostel, Maneck surveyed his old room, which had remained unoccupied since his departure. To return the chess set, he went to the next room, and to his surprise a middle-aged couple answered the door. He rightly assumed that they were Avinash's parents, and asked if they were waiting for him. They told him the bad news - they had cremated Avinash that morning. They had been looking for him for four months, until his body had been found on the train tracks, and they were told that he had died falling from the train. This, however, did not explain the burn marks on his genitals and his missing fingernails. They asked how this could have happened, but nobody would help them. They made a complaint to the police, who only wrote it all down in a book. They continued gathering Avinash's belongings and told Maneck of his three sisters and how they had played with him. When they were ready to leave, Maneck insisted on carrying their trunk down for them. He said goodbye and walked back toward the building, remembering that he had forgotten to give them the chess board. But he was too late; they had already left. Frantically, he tried to think of ways he could get their address, but decided he would treasure the chessboard forever instead.

When he returned to the flat, Maneck was devastated, and Dina tried to keep him calm. There was a knock on the door, and Beggarmaster was on the other side. He enquired after the tailors, and Dina replied that they had left for the wedding. He told them of Shankar's death, lamenting over not having told him that they were brothers. Maneck offered to attend his funeral in place of the tailors, and after some private discussion, so did Dina. Beggarmaster was so grateful.

The afternoon of the funeral, Beggarmaster gave all his beggars time off to attend the affair. The gathering of crippled, limbless and diseased people attracted a crowd - it had turned into a freak show. Shankar's body lay on a fresh bamboo bier near the Vishram. His face was covered because the sight was unbearable. Maneck thought about Avinash, and wondered what his funeral had been like. Beggarmaster had spared no expense for the funeral, using the finest incense and sandalwood. The procession moved very slowly, as the crippled crowd struggled to keep up. Many of the beggars chatted and laughed among themselves, and Dina commented on the lack of mourning throughout the crowd. She asked Beggarmaster what they should expect at a Hindu funeral because she had never attended one and also if there was anything expected of them once they reached their destination. He explained how Shankar would be cremated and how they would see the body burning, but that it was a beautiful thing. Halfway to the cremation grounds, they were swarmed upon by riot police, who had been told that this was a mock funeral to make a political statement. In all the commotion, Shankar's body flew off its perch. Just as quickly as they had attacked, the police withdrew, with the commanding officer seeking out Beggarmaster to make an apology. He expressed his deepest regrets for the intrusion, promising that heads would roll for the incorrect information.

As the crowd moved on, a car stopped by the curb and honked; it was Nusswan, Dina's brother. He laughed when she told him that she was at a beggar's funeral and demanded that she get in the car. Beggarmaster came over to see what the problem was, and Dina said that he had just stopped to give his condolences. When asked to



join them, he snapped that he was busy and drove off. As they rejoined the procession, Maneck had another cremation on his mind, Avinash's.

The days of Maneck's exams passed slowly, and Dina kept herself busy with the quilt. She confided with Maneck that it was going to be a wedding present for Om, promising to make him one as well when he got married. Maneck's exams finally finished, but he was not sure that he had done well enough to be able to continue the degree. On his last night before leaving for home, he finally surrendered and went to visit his mother's family, who showered him with food, drinks and snacks. He declined saying that he had already eaten. When he returned to the flat, he declared he was never going again; they had talked non-stop and behaved like silly children. Dina helped him pack and peppered him with instructions about what to take and what to leave. He reminded her that she needed to feed the cats, and early the next morning, after a hug, he was gone.

Now that Dina was truly alone in her flat, the days passed slowly. She used the time to give the flat a good cleaning. Looking at the veranda, she thought of Om and his new wife and how they may like some privacy, so she erected a curtain barrier, separating the area into two halves. She hoped the tailors would be pleased with her efforts.

Chapter 14, Return of Solitude Analysis

In this chapter Ishvar and Om leave for their village to meet with their prospective brides, but before they leave, we see the significance of the quilt that Dina is making and how it represents much of their time together. The gap in the quilt symbolises time to come in the future. Dina's love for the tailors is also evident as she confides in Maneck that it will be a wedding present for Om.

The effects of the Emergency are also again felt through the death of Avinash. It can be seen that this is the first time that the Emergency has had a direct affect on Maneck and it devastates him.

Additionally, Dina and Maneck are thrown into the beggar world as the effects of Rajaram's downfall result in the death of Shankar, and in place of Ishvar and Om, Dina and Maneck attend the funeral. We again see the softer side of Beggarmaster through his reaction to Shankar's death and the cruelty of the beggar world, as the non-mournful procession takes Shankar to his cremation.



Chapter 15, Family Planning

Chapter 15, Family Planning Summary

The tailors pulled their trunk of the train and onto the station, and Ashraf Chacha ran up to them, surprising them because they were supposed to have met at the shop, but Ashraf said the shop was not that busy. Ashraf commented that it looked as if the city had been good to them, and how Om looked so healthy. Om answered that it was because he no longer had the worm in him; Ashraf agreed; health was the most important thing. The tailors slowed down at the rooming house, but Ashraf steered them towards his shop saying that they should stay with him - he had been so lonely since Mumtaz had died. This was the first that the tailors had heard of her death and were shocked at the news. Ashraf had written them a letter in care of Nawaz, but they had never received it. Ashraf told them about the illness that had led to her death. A mixture of feelings filled Ishvar - sorrow, guilt and the foreboding of old age. He told Ashraf that they would like to visit the grave while they were in town. The other news was that a Family Planning Centre had opened, but otherwise everything else had remained the same.

The tailors enjoyed being back at the shop. The following afternoon, Ashraf wanted to present new shirts to Ishvar and Om. They tried to resist, but Ashraf insisted, so they said that the least that they could do was to help sew the shirts. But Ashraf had other plans in mind. They would buy them from the ready-made store that had put them out of business. Om found another reason to go into the city. He asked Ashraf if Thakur Dharamsi was still alive. Ashraf replied that he was, and that he was in charge of Family Planning. Om's plans for revenge upon him were still alive, and Ishvar and Ashraf tried to quell his anger. So they set out to buy the shirts.

In the store, Om could not help noticing how badly the shirts had been made. He mentioned it to one of the sales assistants, who agreed. He held up a variety of shirts before Om finally chose one that he liked, and they decided to wander the bazaar for the rest of the day. Ishvar treated Om to his first paan, as it was a special day. As they passed the Family Planning Centre, they noticed that Thakur's car was out the front. Ishvar steered them to the opposite side of the road to avoid trouble. When Thakur appeared outside the building, Ishvar had to hold Om back, so instead, Om spat paan at Thakur, and it landed with a defiant splat on the pavement. Instead of retaliating, Thakur's only threat was to let them know that he knew who they were. Ishvar went to slam Om but was stopped by Ashraf, who said that from now on they would have to stay out of Thakur's way.

The Family Planning Centre was promoting its sterilisation program that they held in tents erected just outside the city. As the three men strolled through the bazaar, they stopped outside the chammaar booths. Om suggested that they not say anything, just stand quietly until they were noticed. When they were recognised, there was a euphoric welcome and celebration. The tailors caught up on the news from their village, and told



their friends of the plans for Om's wedding. Two of the men lifted Om onto their shoulders and paraded him around like a conquering hero. Despite all the celebrations, Ishvar could not get the fear of Thakur out of his mind. After much conversation, they moved on, purchasing vegetables for dinner and a string of prayer beads for a very thankful Ashraf. It was after they had bought some fairy floss for Om that the garbage trucks began to appear around the square. Suddenly police vans began to appear everywhere and began rounding people up and putting them into the garbage trucks. The tailors hid in a doorway and watched as the trucks started to fill up. Before long, the police's focus was on the tailors, and the police ordered them into the truck. As the three men questioned a policeman, he raised his baton, causing Ashraf to raise his hands in front of his face. The constable grabbed the prayer beads, breaking the string, and sending the beads rolling about on the pavement. Two police slipped on them and the other lashed out at Ashraf in response, sending him crumpling to the ground. Ishvar and Om immediately went to his aid but were forced into the truck.

The ride took them a short way out of town where the sterilisation camps were. They were sorted into men and women. They were sent four at a time, kicking and screaming into the tents, and were told that the more they kicked and screamed the more it would hurt. Slowed down by malfunctioning equipment, the doctors worked slowly throughout the afternoon. When they stopped to wait for the water to boil so they could sterilise their equipment, they were told just to keep moving - the equipment was clean enough. The sun was setting when it was the tailor's turn. They tried to reason with the police, who told them to talk to the doctor, but he, too, blocked out the appeals. It was night by the time they were helped off the tables and limped to the recovery tent. As they lay there, Thakur Dharamsi arrived to check the progress. Ishvar told Om to turn his face so that he did not recognise him. The Thakur stopped at the foot of Om's mattress and stared, then whispered something to one of his men, who left and returned with one of the doctors. The Thakur whispered again, and the doctor went pale. A little later two nurses came and took Om back to the operating tent. The doctor felt obliged to tell them it was a testicular tumour, before Om was put to sleep and his testicles removed. When he returned to the recovery tent, Ishvar screamed for an explanation, but was told that the doctor did him a favour. Ishvar went to see for himself, and wept when he saw the damage that had been done.

After being knocked down in the square, Ashraf had been taken to the hospital, where he died a few hours later. His death was put down to being accidental and no report was made. He was buried the following day beside Mumtaz. Meanwhile, while Ishvar's pain had subsided, Om was in agony. He could not walk, so Ishvar tried to carry him on his back, but had to put him down after every few yards. Luckily a man with a handcart stopped and helped them back to the shop, where Ashraf's nephew was waiting inside with the bad news. The tailor's were distraught at the news and went to sleep without having eaten. Hearing Om thrashing about in his sleep, Ishvar sat up the rest of the night watching him, fearful that his thrashing may tear his stitches. In the morning he took him to a private doctor in town. The doctor was disgusted by the castration but was not surprised. He instructed Om not to walk for a week so that the wound could heal, but also said that the operation was not reversible. Ishvar staggered home with his nephew and put him to bed. A week later they returned to the doctor, who said the



healing was almost complete. From the doctor, they went to the police station to report the crime, but were told that all complaints were to go through the Family Planning Centre. When they went there, the attendants wanted nothing to do with the complaint. Ishvar began to take his anger out on Om for aggravating the Thakur. The pain became too much for Ishvar, and when they got home, Ishvar collapsed into bed. Om fell asleep massaging his uncle's legs.

A week later Ishvar's legs had swollen significantly and had turned black up to the knee. Om took him to the Family Planning Centre where the doctor on duty said that it was not the operation that was causing the illness, but that they should go to the hospital. Ishvar thought that he should mention Om's castration to the doctor, but once he did, they were immediately thrown out. Once at the hospital, Ishvar was put on a course of antibiotics, but after a fortnight, his legs had not improved. He called on the man with the handcart, who took Ishvar back to the hospital. At the hospital they were told that his legs would have to be removed. Ishvar stayed in the hospital for two months, with Om by his side every waking minute. One evening, Ashraf's nephew came to visit them, saying they had a buyer for Ashraf's house, and that they would have to leave. Om asked for one last favour, if the nephew would have someone from the lumberyard make a rolling platform for Ishvar to get around on. This was no problem, and the job was done quickly. He also offered to find a shack or a shed for them, but they decided that the best thing to do would be to return to the city and start sewing again.

After four months of coming to make wedding arrangements, the tailors made their way to the train station, with Om pulling Ishvar on his platform. They stopped at Ashraf's grave on the way.

Chapter 15, Family Planning Analysis

Ishvar and Om return to Mumtaz Tailoring and meet up with their long-time friend, Ashraf Chacha. We see the difficulty of communicating over long distances as Ishvar and Om did not receive the news about Mumtaz's death nearly a year earlier. Once again, they are devastated to hear the news. It seems that everywhere they go, they are followed by tragedy.

The chapter also sees the final blows of Thakur Dharamsi on Ishvar's family. Under the banner of the Emergency and the Family Planning Centre, he uses his power to castrate Om and stop the family line. We see that he is so powerful that despite this despicable act, there is no one that will help them to right the wrong.

The effect of the sterilisation laws is evident in this chapter, with the police rounding up people at random and taking them to specialised sterilisation camps outside the city, and doctors are told not to sterilise their tools, so they can work at a faster pace. People are treated as animals, and all respect for human life has been swallowed up by the drive for power. Police brutality is simply accepted and causes the death of the tailor's friend, Ashraf, again devastating the tailors.



This chapter also shows the tailor's dedication toward each other. After Om's castration, Ishvar carries and cares for him, and Om, likewise, when Ishvar falls ill and has his legs amputated. Their dedication toward each other is stronger than ever.



Chapter 16, The Circle Is Complete

Chapter 16, The Circle Is Complete Summary

When visiting Dina, the first thing Zenobia saw was the curtain separating the two sides of the veranda. When she learned the reason for it, she was mortified. She admonished Dina, and spent half an hour trying to change her friend's mind about letting the tailors stay there. When she realised that she was getting nowhere, she left in a huff.

Dina's hands shook as she opened a letter from Maneck. It read that his marks had not been good enough for him to continue with his degree and that he had accepted a job fixing air-conditioners in the Gulf. He asked her to tell Om and Ishvar that he was sorry he was not coming back to meet Om's new wife, and added how thankful he was to Dina for letting him stay there in the happy home she had provided. With the letter, he sent her a cheque for the next three months rent. While she should be happy that Maneck had found such a good job, she could not help but feel sad.

Two days after receiving the letter, Dina dropped into the beauty parlour to see Zenobia. While there, she ran into Mrs. Gupta, who was not happy with what she had just been charged for her haircut. Dina complimented it despite not thinking that it suited her very much. On her way out, Mrs. Gupta asked when she would be starting work again, and Dina replied that they would probably be starting the following week. When alone with Zenobia, she told her about the letter from Maneck, shooting down her accusation that he must have been fed up of living with the tailors. Dina needed a replacement and asked if Zenobia knew anyone, but she said that she did not, but that she would keep it in mind, adding that it may be difficult to get someone with that curtain on the veranda. Dina assured her that she would remove the curtain, and thought that her friend would get over her anger in a couple of days and hopefully come through for her. In the meantime, she made sure that Maneck's room was spotless just in case there were any potential tenants.

The six weeks had passed, but there was still no sign of Om and Ishvar. The hire-purchase man came for the overdue amount on the sewing machines, but Dina assured them that they would be returning the next week. Later that morning, Beggarmaster arrived with a small wedding present for Om and was disappointed to discover that they were not back. He promised to bring the gift back the next Thursday. When Dina asked about the instalment, Beggarmaster said he was not concerned with the temporary arrears and not to worry about the landlord. Late in the afternoon, the doorbell rang for a third time, and Dina got a shock when she answered it. A badly scarred man calling himself Monkey man stood at the door and asked for the tailors. When she said that they were not there, he asked if she knew Beggarmaster and where he lived - he had business with him. Dina told him that he had been there earlier and that he would return the following Thursday. Monkey man thanked Dina for helping a man like him.



The hire-purchase man returned, and this time Dina told him to take the machines. Then she waited for Beggarmaster to turn up, so that she could tell him that the tailors had disappeared. Surely the lost instalments would inspire him to find them. Beggarmaster did not turn up, but the next day, Ibrahim knocked on the door. He begged Dina to let him in as he was not supposed to be there because he had been dismissed by the landlord the prior week for breaking too many folders, but the real reason was because he had lost his passion for his duties. The reason for his visit was to warn Dina that she was in danger from the landlord. Beggarmaster had been murdered the day before, stabbed by a sick looking man on his way to visit Dina. He was a feeble attacker, but the heavy bag of coins that Beggarmaster carried stopped him from fighting back. After asking him about the appearance of the man, Dina could only assume that it was Monkey man, and that he had waited for Beggarmaster because Dina had told him that he would be coming on Thursday. Dina began to blame herself for his death, but Ibrahim consoled her, saying the Monkey man would have found him anyway because Monkey man sought revenge against Beggarmaster for turning his niece and nephew into beggars. He again warned her that the landlord would now send someone to throw her out and advised her to go to the courthouse and seek legal advice.

The courthouse was swarming with people, so Dina allowed herself to go with the flow and was carried inside. She wondered how anyone could understand the way these systems worked. She inspected the lawyers for hire, but once it was clear that she was looking, she was bombarded by them, shouting their offers at her. In the crush one hand squeezed her bottom while another brushed her breast causing her to lash out with her elbows to remove herself from the men. She went to a less-crowded part of the compound, where a man advertising himself as a lawyer sat staring up at the children playing in the tree. He apologised for the behaviour of his profession, and they spoke about the beauty of the area in which they were sitting. The man, whose name was Mr. Valmik, continued to talk to her, telling her of how he came to be a lawyer, which was his first qualification, and how he had also been a proof-reader and a slogan maker, where he had lost his voice. Eventually Mr. Valmik's prophetic speech began to annoy Dina, and she contradicted some of his statements. He looked hurt, but recovered quickly. He packed up his signboard and told her that he would be happy to help her case, and to return to this spot the day after next.

Dina recognised the two men arguing outside her doorway as the two goondas who had trashed her house, but their hands were twisted from having their fingers broken. They were arguing with Sergeant Kesar about whether or not to break the lock. She spoke to them through the door, and the sergeant apologised for the trouble, but there was an eviction order for the flat. Although she argued that she was appealing through the courts, the sergeant had no choice but to break the locks if she didn't open the door. She was told that regardless of the appeal, her flat would be emptied out. Sergeant Kesar promised that he would supervise this, and that nothing of hers would be broken or ruined. She called her brother, Nusswan, who sent around a truck to collect her belongings. The goondas asked what they should do with the tailor's boxes, and she told them that they were rubbish, and that they should keep them. The goondas rummaged through the boxes and pulled out some of the hair that Rajaram was storing



in the trunk. Sergeant Kesar, tired of having to do the goondas dirt work saw the opportunity and arrested them for the murders of the two beggars. They may not have actually committed the murder, he explained to Dina, but they had committed plenty of other crimes and gotten away with them.

Nusswan was happy that Dina was back with them after all this time. After dinner he examined what they had brought from the flat and wondered where she had collected all that junk and made a note to have it disposed in the next couple of days; Dina did not argue. Dina had become meek and quiet, which made him feel a little uneasy. In her old room, Dina removed the cover off the mattress and replaced it with the quilt. Ruby marvelled at its beauty, saying that she had the perfect fabric to finish it off. Dina knew that there was nothing left to add.

Dina was no longer her old self, and sometimes Nusswan found himself missing his headstrong sister. She assumed her daily chores, giving Ruby more time at the country club. Because Dina was forty-three, Nusswan saw no point in bringing up the subject of marriage again.

Chapter 16, The Circle Is Complete Analysis

This chapter sees the end of all of the plots within the story - the completion of circles. Characters not connected in any way at the beginning of the novel, come together. We also observe the end of Dina's independence in her flat. She loses faith in the tailors' returning and receives notice that Maneck will not be returning.

This chapter also reinforces the symbolism throughout the novel - the unfinished quilt, and Beggarmaster's bag of coins, which causes him to be killed. Ultimately, the reader witnesses Dina's spirit broken.



Epilogue, 1984

Epilogue, 1984 Summary

Eight years later, Maneck was returning home from the Gulf for his father's funeral. He passed through customs at the airport and rushed outside to find a taxi to take him to the railway station, but the driver said no - it was right in the middle of the rioting and was too dangerous. Maneck was unaware of the rioting, but the driver did not give him many details. After being refused by more drivers, he offered double fare to one because he did not want to miss the train and his father's funeral. The driver agreed to take him and told him about the riots. Three days earlier, the Prime Minister had been murdered by her Sikh guards, so Sikhs were being butchered in the towns. He warned Maneck to shave off his beard to avoid being mistaken as a Sikh himself; the driver had done so days earlier. The murder of the Prime Minister was provoked by the government's attack on the Golden Temple, where the Prime Minister suspected Sikh terrorists were hiding out. Taking in all the driver's narrations, Maneck began to feel nauseous and cursed the riots, but the driver reminded him that the previous year it was the Muslims, and one day it could be the Parsies.

Aban began to weep when her son arrived home, but Maneck was subdued, and his mother asked him if the mountains were too dull for him now that he had travelled far. But he did not have answers for her questions, or for his own. She told him how much his father had missed him, and he accused her of blaming his cancer on him, but she denied this until she was sure that he believed her. As they sat on the porch, she told him about the funeral arrangements. The General Store had not opened since his death, and she asked him whether he planned to return permanently. He had not thought about it yet. She prompted him for more information about his job and Dubai, but he did not give her much information. His unhappiness started to affect her. Changing subject, she suggested that he go visit her family in the city again and at the same time to visit Dina.

The morning after the cremation, Maneck and Aban followed Farokh's usual walk through the woods to spread his ashes. While they were walking, Aban fell down a slope and injured her knee. Maneck ran to the road to raise the alarm and within half an hour, a group of her friends came to help her home. Once they had left, Maneck emptied out the rest of the ashes. When Maneck returned to the house, Aban's friends were still there. They asked about his time in Dubai, but he remained secretive, and they left a few minutes later. Aban again questioned Maneck about his unhappiness, but he said there was nothing to tell. Then he opened up. He told his mother that her and his father had sent him away and told him that he couldn't come back, and because of that, he lost everything. She pleaded with him, saying that they did everything for him, but he refused to discuss it further.

Later, after making sure his mother was safely in bed, he went down to the cellar where his father's bottling machinery lay idle. He pottered around until he came across a stack



of newspapers in the corner. He scoured the articles about the Emergency until he came across a story of three sisters who had hanged themselves so that they would not be a burden to their parents. They were the sisters of Avinash. His hands began to shake as he pushed himself out of the chair and ran out onto the porch into the rain. He ran out into the deluge, slipping and sliding, not caring where he was going. Eventually he covered his face with his muddy hands and wept. He stayed until the rain had almost stopped before returning to the house, where his mother was waiting anxiously for him. It was then that he decided that he would visit the city and his relatives. He would leave the next morning and return to Dubai from there, where he would resign from his job and come back to the mountains. Aban could not be happier.

When he arrived at the city, he decided to visit his relatives first so that he would have more time with Dina and the tailors. He endured the relatives for an evening and made the excuse that he had to leave for a dinner meeting, which impressed them. The next day when he went to Dina's apartment building, he did not recognise it due to the renovations. A security guard informed him that she no longer lived there. He racked his brain for Dina's maiden name; he remembered it was "Shroff." He stopped at the chemist and looked up her brother's address and remembered it. On his way there, he passed a marquee with a sign announcing His Holiness Bal Baba. He asked the attendant what it was all about, and was told that after meditating in a temple in the Himalayas for many years, Bal Baba can tell you anything by just holding some of your hairs. Maneck was curious, and went in for a look, and recognised the man as none other but Rajaram. He confronted the holy man with his true identity, but Rajaram answered that he was no longer that person, but Maneck could see that behind his calm composure he was furious. Maneck made a mental note to bring Ishvar and Om back in the morning. On his way out, he recognised a man writing at a table toward the back as the proof-reader he had spoken to on the train. On approaching him, he discovered that he was right; the proof-reader remembered him, too. Only one other time had the proof-reader been able to share the story of his life--with a woman at the courthouse.

To Maneck, Dina looked nothing like he had left her eight years ago, and she, too, did not recognise him when she answered the door. She was cold toward him as she asked about his experiences in the desert and further as she told him of what had happened to the tailors. She told him that if he was not in a rush, he could see Ishvar and Om - they would be there at one. He apologised, saying that he could not stay and rushed off. Before he left, she gave him the chess set that had belonged to Avinash. On his way out, he passed two beggars, one pulling the other along on a trolley. He knew it was the tailors and inwardly begged them to recognise him. They shook their coin box, asking for money, but he just stood there, and the beggars went past. He continued on his way.

He went to the Vishram, which had become a prosperous restaurant. He was shown to a table and ordered a coffee and mused as to how the clientele had changed since his last visit. The coffee arrived and the waiter tried to start a conversation with him, asking what he thought about the Prime Minister's son taking over and whether or not he would be a good ruler. Maneck brushed him off, and the waiter left to attend to another table but soon returned to check Maneck's cup. He asked if Maneck wanted anything to eat, and his over-attentiveness was getting on Maneck's nerves. Maneck felt the obnoxious



waiter came with the new dycor, the new Vishram, and his thoughts wandered to the old times - he and the tailors having tea, Shankar rolling around out front. He picked up the chess box and pulled out a piece at random: a pawn. The waiter noticed him and saw it as a chance to talk - his son also played the game but didn't have a set because it was too expensive. Maneck was again offered food but instead just ordered another coffee and went to the toilet. When Maneck finished, he asked to be moved to a table near the kitchen - he did not mind all the noise; he wanted to be close to something real rather than the new fake dycor of the restaurant. After a couple of hours he left, forgetting his chess set. The waiter ran after him with it and warned him to be careful for the rest of the day.

Maneck jostled through the crowds to get to the train station. He noticed an elderly woman standing next to him - she was standing too close to the edge of the track and he wondered if he should pull her back, but it was she who pulled him back, warning that a fast train was going to pass. He hugged the chess set to his chest as the train approached. Just before it reached them, he leapt into its path. His last thought was that he still had Avinash's chess set.

At one, Om and Ishvar knocked on Dina's back door, and she ushered them in and served them some food and filled their glasses. She told them to eat quickly as Ruby would be coming back earlier than usual that day. She told them about Maneck's visit, and they told her that they had passed him, but that either he did not recognise them or he simply ignored them. Dina lamented that he had changed very much in the past eight years, and that hopefully next time they would all be able to meet. But Om was angry, saying that the Maneck they once knew would have waited for them. Ishvar consoled Om saying that Maneck had been away for so long that time had changed him. Dina agreed and reminded them that over the weekend, they should not come to the house as everyone would be home. As they ate, Ishvar noticed that the quilt that he sat on had a thread unravelling, so Dina loaned him a needle and thread to fix it; they then rushed out. She shook her head as she shut the door; those two made her laugh the way Maneck used to.

Epilogue, 1984 Analysis

The conclusion to the story brings one of Maneck's regular observations to fruition: everything ends badly. Returning home after eight years, all the tragedy finally gets to Maneck, and he ends his life. Dina's spirit is still muted. But ironically, despite being reduced to beggars, tragedy has not managed to dampen the spirits of Ishvar and Om.



Characters

Dina Dalal

At 42, Dina Dalal looks especially good for her age. Widowed just three years into her marriage to Rustom Dalal, the love of her life, she had shunned the idea of getting remarried, despite her brother's urgings, and instead made a living for herself as a tailor. A resourceful woman, when her eyes began to fail, she sought out tailors to fill orders for an export company, so that she could continue to pay the rent on the flat, which had been left to her by her late husband. The move was also a risky one by Dina because if she was found to be carrying on a business out of her flat, she could be evicted by the landlord. Dina's beloved father had died when she was young, and she was raised by the heavy hand of her brother. Nusswan, who had denied her a college education and encouraged her to marry instead.

Dina has a hard exterior, but when it comes to a crunch, she is a real softie. She has a strong sense of pride, particularly when it comes to her brother, Nusswan. Despite her dislike for her family while she was growing up, Dina has a strong sense of family, and after being denied the chance to have her own when Rustom dies, develops her own 'family' when Ishvar and Om move in with her and Maneck - it is almost like she and Ishvar are husband and wife, and Om and Maneck are their children.

Despite her tough and headstrong nature, the events of the novel gradually take their toll on Dina, until at the end she is quiet, subdued and withdrawn.

Ishvar Darji

Badly scarred from an accident back when he was in the field with his father as a cobbler, one half of Ishvar's face is frozen and shows no emotion. Despite this, Ishvar is a soft-spoken, easy-going person, and is friendly and conversational. He has a strong sense of duty but, at the same time, is very humble and respectful.

Once in a comfortable spot, Ishvar is happier to stay there rather than pursue greater things. After his accident, Ishvar was sent to be an apprentice tailor with Ashraf. After their training, his brother, Narayan, returned to their village to start his own business, but Ishvar stayed on with Ashraf, content with working in the shop. This same ability to be content where he is can be seen when he and Om move in with Dina, and his house hunting efforts become half hearted.

Another of Ishvar's characteristics is his loyalty. The prime example of this is in his relationship with Om, whose side he never leaves even when things get rough. This is done out of both loyalty to Om and loyalty to his family, especially his brother. Other example of this is his keeping Beggarmaster's secret and not exposing Rajaram, even when he knew that he had committed murder.



Omprakesh Darji

Having lost his father when he was just a teenager, Omprakesh, or Om, is a hot-headed, surly adolescent, who is clearly trying to find his place in the world. His father's death is the first of many tragedies to come his way, which he seems to take in his stride with the help of his uncle. Om always seems to want more for himself; when working with Dina, Om wanted he and Ishvar to work for themselves, and when living in the slums, he refused to appear to be happy. Om's way of dealing with situations where he is not happy is to sulk, a habit which becomes very frustrating for Ishvar.

Om is a typical teenage boy; he finds humour in crass jokes; he is curious about women and sex and covers this up by joking about it. At such a young age, he does not understand the importance of marriage and family, or of a good day's. He is also very untidy and does not pay much attention to his health or grooming, and he has both lice and worms. Much of Om's problems can be attributed to the absence of a mother because once Om moves in with Dina, she sees that his health problems are corrected, and he begins to take better care of himself in the same way that Maneck does.

By the end of the novel, it is clear that Om has matured. His devotion to his uncle is clear, and he takes on a big responsibility in caring for Ishvar once his legs have been removed.

Maneck Kohlah

Maneck is also a teenage boy, but comes from a vastly different background to Om and is, thus, a completely different person. While not wealthy, Maneck's family is quite well-off, and Maneck, in many ways, has been spoiled as a child. His gripe with his family is due to their sending him away to college; he would have much rather to stay in the mountains with his family and run the General Store. Through his reactions to the poverty and living conditions in the city, it is quite clear that he has been sheltered for most of his life, and therefore finds his new way of life difficult. When he tries to stay on and complete his degree, the motivation is not to gain more education, but rather to be around his new-found friends; he does not enjoy going to college. He even jokes about becoming a tailor, which is a fine example of the fact that he, too, is trying to find his place in the world.

Maneck is a neatly groomed, attractive young man with good manners and educated speech. Still a teenage boy, though, he, like Om, makes sexual and crass jokes and is curious about woman but at the same time has an air of decency about him; for example, refusing to spy on Dina in the bathroom.

Coming from such a sheltered lifestyle, Maneck finds it difficult to deal with the tragedy that surrounds him once he moves to the city. The first real example of this is the death of his friend Avinash, which affects him deeply. When he returns to the city eight years later, he is unable to deal with all of the heartbreak, which leads him to commit suicide.



Nuswan Shroff

Dina's older brother, Nuswan is a well-educated, man who is very set in his ways. After his father died when he was just a teenager, he took on the responsibility of caring for his mother and younger sister, Dina, who he brought up with a heavy hand. He is a man of tradition, preaching marriage and family to his headstrong sister. A successful businessman, he is one of the upper class in society and approves of the reforms that the Emergency is bringing about and has little compassion for the poor, seeing them as beneath him. But despite his apparent hard heart, Nuswan does have a soft spot in him, particularly when it comes to his sister.

Ashraf Chacha

As the owner of Mumtaz Tailoring, Ashraf takes on Ishvar and Narayan, and later Omprakesh, as apprentice tailors and teaches them everything he knows about the business. Ignoring protests from his wife, he becomes more like a father figure to them, especially because their father, Dukhi, is a close friend of his. A Muslim, Ashraf does not judge people by their religion and takes Ishvar and Narayan in, regardless of the fact that they are Parsi. He is patient and kindly and continues to try and help Ishvar and Om, even when he cannot care for them in his own home anymore.

Narayan Darji

Om's father and Ishvar's brother, Narayan was the youngest and favoured of the two sons. He, too, became an apprentice tailor with Ashraf but once qualified returned to his village, where he started a very successful tailoring business. Oppressed by the cast system for his entire life, once successful, he takes much delight in ignoring the boundaries of caste, sending sweets to everybody when Om is born. However, he does remain true to the traditions of his caste, teaching Om the ways of a cobbler. Narayan is headstrong, and it is this attribute which ultimately causes his death as he tries to break out of the unfair caste system and vote for himself.

Dukhi Mochi

Father to Ishvar and Narayan, Dukhi is a devoted family man and being brought up in the caste system, knows his place within it and also the punishments given for stepping out of it. When tanning work was short, Dukhi had no problems finding work elsewhere, and his love for his family overcame any pride that he might have. His love for his children is particularly shown when he risks banishment from his caste and even death to have his children trained in the tailoring business, but he is constantly aware of the punishments for breaking out of caste, as he discourages Narayan from trying to vote.



Aban Kohlah

Having lived in the city all her life, when Aban marries, she moves to the mountains with her husband, Farokh, and runs the General Store. She is a tidy and orderly person and manages to raise her son, Maneck, while running the family business. Maneck being her only son, she devotes all of her time and attention to him, particularly making sure that he has everything he needs when he goes away. Aban is also a bit of a social butterfly as well, with many well-respected friends.

Farokh Kohlah

Maneck's father, Farokh is a lover of nature and animals and a well-respected man in the mountains. His Fizzy drink, Kohlah's Cola, is renowned among its towns, and Farokh relies upon word of mouth for sales of the cola. Farokh is a practical and old-fashioned man, who, when modernisation comes to the mountains, refuses to be swept up in the hype of advertising and marketing. He does, however, recognise that this may see the end of the cola, so he sends Maneck to college to get a degree, not only for Maneck's sake but also for the sake of the family should their business fail. It can be said that he put their family's welfare before his relationship with his son.

Zenobia

A school friend of Dina's, Zenobia is a hairdresser working in a beauty salon. She is very resourceful, mainly because of her upper-class customers, as well as keeping contact with people she knew from school. She is a good friend of Dina and helps her out when Dina is in a crisis. A middle-class working woman, Zenobia seems to like to think of herself as upper class, chiding Dina for having the tailors live with her, as if they were beggars rather than tailors.

Rajaram

Neighbour to Ishvar and Om in the slums, Rajaram was initially a happy-go-lucky friendly man, who helped the tailors find their way in their new surroundings. Initially a barber by trade, he turned to hair collecting because it paid more. After the slums were flattened, he became a Family Planning Motivator because it was easier to work on the right side on the law regardless as to whether it was moral or right. But when things become hard for him, he turns back to barbering and hair collecting, which eventually is his downfall. Rajaram is opportunistic and obsessive and, despite his friendly personality, tends to take advantage of his friends' goodwill.



Shankar

Born to a beggar and then taken away from her for "professional modifications," Shankar has no hands and no feet and gets around on a skateboard-type platform given to him by Beggarmaster. He is, and has always been, a professional beggar that makes his money by having people feel sorry for him and give him alms. But despite his apparently bleak circumstances, Shankar is happy with his way of life as it is all that he has ever known. However, such a life makes it hard for Shankar to find friends, and his funeral is not as mournful as it should have been.

Beggarmaster

Beggarmaster is an ironic character, as he demands authority through threats and violence, and his profession takes advantage of the poor. However, in this novel, Beggarmaster is a friend of the main characters, and we see his softer side. While also being a shrewd businessman, he values family, wanting to shower Shankar with gifts once he discovers that he is his half-brother. He stands by his beggars, investigating when two are murdered and being with Nosey, a beggar, when she died. It is his love of money, however, that is his undoing, as his coin bag weighs him down while he is being attacked.

Ibrahim

The rent collector for Dina's apartment, Ibrahim has no family and shares a flat with a night-shift worker, who sleeps in the apartment during the day. Once he was a hard-headed employee of the landlord, but Ibrahim gradually grows weary of his job, until he is unable to be as intimidating as he should be. Although taking many tongue lashings from Dina, he befriends her in his own way and tries to help her by warning her of the landlord's intentions.



Objects/Places

Dina's flat

Originally Rustom's family flat but inherited by Dina after his death, this is where Dina and Maneck live, and where Ishvar and Om eventually move in, and where the sewing business is run from.

Vishram Vegetarian Restaurant

This is the restaurant where Ishvar and Om regularly have their tea, which becomes Shankar's new hangout.

Nusswan's house

The house that Dina grew up in and returns to after she is kicked out of her apartment.

The hut in the slums

Ishvar and Om's home before it was flattened by the government.

The doorway of the chemist shop

Where Ishvar and Om slept while they were homeless.

Mumtaz Tailoring

The shop where Ishvar, Om and his father, Narayan, were all apprentice tailors, and where Ishvar and Narayan practically grew up.

The Village

Ishvar and Om's hometown.

The Mountains

This is the area where Maneck and his family lived. It is also the location of the General Store.



The General Store

The store that Maneck's family owned and ran.

The Emergency

The Emergency is a fabricated political situation at the time of the story.

The quilt

The quilt Dina is putting together from pieces of cloth that she is collecting. It becomes symbolic of the times that she spent with the tailors and Maneck and eventually becomes the cushion on Ishvar's platform.

The Singers

This is the brand of sewing machines that the tailors use.

Au Revior

The export company that Dina works for is named Au Revior.



Themes

Corruption of Power

One of the strongest themes running throughout the novel is power and how it can easily be corrupted. The primary example of the misuse of power is the Emergency when the Prime Minister changes the law that found her guilty of cheating. She writes new legislation that gave her the right to do whatever she wanted, even if that meant suppressing the people's rights. Stemming from this corruption is the other examples of abuse of power: police brutality, compulsory sterilization, the flattening of slums and the clearing the streets of beggars and sending them off to work camps. These laws also allowed people to be wrongfully sent to jail and any authority to use force if they thought it necessary. The author uses this initial corruption of the Prime Minister to show how quickly people will abuse power if they know they are able to get away with it.

There are plenty of other examples of the corruption of power beyond the typical authorities. Another prime example is the caste system in Ishvar's village, and how the upper class used their wealth to establish superiority over the not-so-wealthy castes, to buy votes and, at times, to terrorize them. Another example is Nusswan's authority over Dina and how he used his position to try and mould her into the woman he wants her to be. Beggarmaster is another example, but in his case, he used violence to gain power, rather than money and influence. And before she befriended the tailors, it can also be said that Dina abused her power as a boss as well.

Family

Family ties, whether blood relative or not, have an important role throughout the novel and are the motives behind many of the characters' actions. The most obvious example is that of Ishvar and his nephew, Om, who stand by each other to the very end, after the rest of their family is killed. Despite their many disagreements, they stay true to each other, taking their turns to care for one another. As for Dina, her family history made her the woman that she was, with Nusswan's discipline making her headstrong and proud, and her Aunty-in-law teaching her to sew to make a living after her husband was dead. In a crisis, it was family who Dina automatically turned to, and, in the end, only family would take her in. Likewise Maneck's upbringing made him the man he was and his family's decision to send him to college put him in Dina's apartment. His family is who found the job for him in the Gulf. The strong connection of families can even be seen with Beggarmaster paying special attention to Shankar after discovering that they were brothers, and Monkey man killing Beggarmaster for turning his niece and nephew into beggars.

However, what this novel also shows is that there need not be a blood connection for people to become family, and it shows family as a relationship that is developed rather than by birth. For example, Ishvar often refers to Maneck as his second son, and in



many ways was more of a father to him in his later life than his real father was. Another example is Ashraf Chacha, who became like a father to Ishvar and Narayan during their days as apprentice tailors.

Poverty

The one thing the reader cannot ignore throughout the story is the display of poverty on many levels. It shows all different levels of poverty, from those who are struggling to get by to beggars to those who are employed, but still are under the poverty line, such as Ishvar and Om. The novel gives some insight into how those in poverty live and how something as simple as a lock of hair can give them so much pleasure. It shows the outrageous things people will do for money, such as have their limbs cut off, so that people will take pity on them and give them more alms. For middle-class readers living in the Western world, the reality of poverty in the lives of the characters makes them realize how lucky they are.



Style

Language and meaning

The main point to make about the language used throughout the novel is that it uses many familiar Indian words and phrases such as "yaar" and "hai ram." At first this can confuse the reader not familiar with these terms, but their constant use makes it easy to understand a word's meaning by the context in which it is used. Otherwise, the language is easy to read and flows well. While occasionally the narrator does describe the feelings of the characters, he mainly sticks to their actions, and the reader interprets the feelings through these actions. The author provides in-depth detail about the settings and situations surrounding the action, sometimes to a point where it can distract the reader from the action itself.

Point of view

The story is told through the eyes of an omniscient narrator who imparts the feelings of all the characters at once. This point of view is necessary for the narrator to effectively give the reader the details of the main characters' pasts and also to follow the different storylines happening in the same period of time.

Setting

The novel is set in Bombay, India during the Indian Emergency in 1975, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency when she was convicted of committing electoral fraud. Under her rule, and under her trusted son's watchful eyes, there was forced sterilization, and slums were destroyed in the name of city beautification, and, generally, the poor were persecuted. The novel is a story of some of these poor people and how they survived this period.

Structure

The novel is made up of sixteen long chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. The chapters are divided into untitled "mini-chapters." The main storyline is linear, with the narrator only departing from the main story to sketch the backgrounds of characters. An entire chapter is devoted to establishing the history of each of the main characters. Generally, though, each chapter is devoted to one character's story, unless of course the action is when they are all together.



Quotes

"She liked Ishvar's face, the type that would put people at ease and encouraged conversation." Page 9

"Government problems - games played by people in power. It doesn't affect ordinary people like us." Dina on the Emergency, page 75

"It was hard for them not to be resentful - the birth of daughters often brought them beatings from their husbands and their husband's families." Page 100

"Crossing the line of caste had to be punished with the utmost severity." Page 147

"There was nothing to distinguish the small hutment colony from the huge slum across the road; it had been incorporated into the inferno." Page 182

"What was there for anyone to laugh about in this wretched place?" Page 186

"The slow coach gets left behind." Page 221

"She only knows important things, said Rajaram. Things her friends want her to know." Page 259

"The way she talked, her voice sounding old, having endured a vast range of weather." Page 270

"They said it's a new Emergency law. If shacks are illegal, they can remove them. The new law says the city must be made beautiful." Page 295

"No obstacle slowed them (the police) down, not shrieks nor wails nor the comical threats of drunks and lunatics." Page 323

"She did not notice that already, in her memory, those months with Ishvar and Om, of fretting and tardiness, quarrels and crooked seams, had been transmuted into something precious, to be remembered with yearning." Page 355

"The pattern of each day, thought Dina after the first week, was like the pattern of a well-cut dress." Page 388

"These Emergency times are terrible sister. Money can buy the necessary police order. Justice is sold to the highest bidder." Page 432

"Before you can name that corner, our future must become our past." Page 491

"Why did humans always do that to their feelings? Whether it was anger or love or sadness, they always tried to put something else forward in its place." Page 503



"The lives of the poor were rich in symbols, she decided." Page 511

"What to do, no one takes pride in good workmanship anymore." Page 523

"The tailors were too distraught, however, to be able to mourn the loss or fully comprehend it. Yesterday's events in the market square had merged with all the other tragedies in their lives." Page 538



Topics for Discussion

One of the main themes throughout the novel is the abuse of power. Do you think at any stage Dina abused her power as the tailor's employer or as Maneck's landlord?

The final chapter in the novel is called "The Circle Is Completed." Outline some of the "circles" in the novel and how they are completed.

Do you think that the relationship between Ishvar and Dina was ever romantic? Give examples to support your answer.

Discuss Beggarmaster as a character - is he a "good" or a "bad" character?

Discuss the different examples of family in the novel.

What role does religion play in the novel?

Discuss the author's use of symbolism in the novel, with particular reference to the quilt.