

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard Study Guide

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard by Kiran Desai

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Plot Summary

"Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard," is a tale of a young man named Sampath Chawla who lives in the town of Shahkot, India. He is born on the night a severe drought ends when a ferocious monsoon sweeps over the region. Immediately following his birth, the Swedish Red Cross makes a food drop right in front of Sampath's house. The people in the community of Shahkot are convinced that Sampath is destined to be an important man. Not only does he bring on the much needed rain, he causes the Red Cross, flying over Shahkot, to drop food for the hungry people. Sampath's eccentric mother and demanding father are not so sure about their baby becoming a great man. To Kulfi, his mother, he is an odd looking alien with a large brown birthmark on his face.

Twenty years later, Sampath has not yet lived up to the prediction of greatness. In fact, he is anything but great. His father tries to counsel him on how he can get a better job or at least a raise in salary at the Post Office where he works. Sampath pays no attention to his father's advice. At the Post Office, Sampath spends hours alone, steaming open letters written to and from neighbors and by so doing, he learns a great deal about their personal lives and their secrets.

Not surprisingly, Sampath is fired after disrobing and mooning those gathered for his boss' daughter's wedding. Kulfi feels sorry for Sampath, with whom she feels a great connection, and gives him a fresh guava. After he eats it, he immediately feels energized and transformed. With no job and no prospects of one, his father is frantic and orders his son to immediately go job hunting.

Sampath has other ideas and decides to run away. He bolts off the bus to an attractive orchard he sees in the distance. He climbs a beautiful guava tree and decides that he belongs there. After discovering where their son is, the family tries to intervene and get Sampath to climb out of the tree and come home. Only Kulfi tells the others to let him be. Sampath announces he is staying in the tree. He becomes known as a great hermit who is wise and all-knowing. The citizens are convinced of his supernatural abilities when he alludes to private matters in their lives—information that he took, unbeknownst to them, from their own letters.

A great controversy develops about the monkeys who live in the guava tree with Sampath. The large monkeys attack people and often steal alcohol and get very drunk. The town officials are determined to rid the town of the monkeys but Sampath decides to save his lovely friends. How he saves them is both surprising and magical. When his father looks for him, he finds a large guava in his place with a brown mark on its skin. Sampath is able to save the monkeys and find a new home for himself; Sampath's dream to become part of the nature becomes a reality.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

There is a heat wave in the town of Shahkot, India. Everyone in the country is obsessed with the temperature, praying for a monsoon. Innovative suggestions are offered: Vermaji of the university invents a giant fan to bring in the monsoon clouds; the police offer to sponsor a frog wedding to be performed by temple priests; and jets could fly in special formations that would drive the clouds—just to name a few. The heat causes the roads to become pools of tar. Plants grow limp and weak. Tourist buses turn around and leave. By September, hope for monsoon has vanished. Food is scarce. Supply planes fly over but do not stop in Shahkot.

Twenty-one year old Kulfi Chawla is pregnant during this drought, growing amazingly large in the oppressive heat. She is so large that people stare while she seems to not even notice them. All Kulfi thinks of is food, craving all varieties. Everyday Kulfi walks to the market to bribe the butcher and vegetable sellers with silk and other valuables for delicacies. Mr. Chawla, her husband, complains to his mother who arranged the marriage. His mother, Amma, tells her son to be patient. Kulfi is in a delicate stage and will come out of it. Mr. Chawla buys books on babies and follows his wife around telling her how to take care of herself—to exercise and take vitamins for the baby's health. Kulfi pays no attention to him. Amma gives her other advice—to sing and take herbs. Kulfi ignores her as well, filling her time by drawing pictures of food all over the floors and walls and even the ceilings of their small house.

Finally the sky darkens and the winds pickup—the monsoon is on its way. The townspeople are jubilant. Mr. Chawla lines the windows with plastic sheeting. Amma sets out buckets to catch rainwater and candles for the inevitable loss of power. The rains come and, as Kulfi watches out the windows, she stretches her hands out so she can feel the raindrops. As Sampath kicks inside her, Kulfi stands in the window, becoming soaking wet, oblivious to her husband's shouts to get away from the window. In the next two hours, Mr. Chawla and Amma help as Kulfi delivers Sampath as the skies continue to pour and the thunder claps remains deafening. The boy is born with a distinguishing brown birthmark on one cheek. At the moment of Sampath's birth, the ground shudders. A Swedish Red Cross plane had just dropped a large supply of food outside their house. The townspeople are scrambling to the food, joined by Mr. Chawla who is bringing in shopping bags full of sugars, flours and other basics.

Kulfi is not enjoying the celebration of the rain or the birth of her baby. As she looks at Sampath, he seems almost alien to her. The townspeople try to cheer her, assuring her that he will be a great person. The Swedish people have already honored him with a gift of food for the town at the moment of his birth.



Chapter 1 Analysis

Kulfi is a strange woman who is obsessed with food, a symbol of a hunger inside of her that has not been met. Part of her hunger may stem from the relationship with her husband that does not seem to be fulfilling. She does not communicate with her husband or her mother-in-law. She ignores them and does not seem to be overjoyed at being pregnant and, after the baby is born, seems to only go through the motions of being a mother.

Kulfi has isolated herself from her family and when her baby is born, she is less than delighted. He seems foreign to her, almost like an alien, and she seems to have a strange foreboding about his presence and his future. There is no compelling reason for Kulfi to feel the way she does—as least it has not been explained at this point. The townspeople think he is a special person. His birth is a wondrous event—it brings the monsoon, ends the drought and brings a supply of food from the skies. The author raises the curiosity of the reader as to whether the mother is right that there is something unsettling about her baby or if the townspeople are right and that he is a good omen and will be a great person.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

It is twenty years later and there is another heat wave. In the very same house where he was born, Sampath is miserable. It is night and he cannot sleep. It is so uncomfortably hot and his father, grandmother and little sister, Pinky, are all fast asleep, snoring and wheezing and keeping him awake. Even his mother, whom he loves the most, is sound asleep and making disturbing noises. He goes on the roof for relief, but he cannot escape the heat and is unable to fall asleep there. His only salvation is the joy he feels when he sings about meeting the princess from the kingdom of Cooch Behar.

He stays awake all night and watches the sun rise on Shahkot. The sunlight reveals the ugly parts of his neighborhood, illuminating the trash bins, TV aerials, washing line and other clutter of the neighborhood. His grandmother greets him as he returns inside and admonishes him for not sleeping.

Chapter 2 Analysis

It seem as though the young adult Sampath is something like his mother—he is different from the rest of his family and stays isolated from them. He does feel a connection with his mother, whom he loves the most. Sampath has a fantasy of escaping the squalor of his homeland, dreaming of meeting a princess from a far away land.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Mr. Chawla exercises in the courtyard in the morning before work. He has an important position at a bank. He is noisy during his routine, attempting to gain the attention of his neighbors. Inside, he is demanding, shouting orders to his family to help prepare for work. Pinky and Amma run around, trying to keep up with his demands. He clangs metal buckets together while he showers and allows the water to run over the shower and out the door.

Sampath is sitting at the table looking at a fly that has landed on his breakfast. As is his daily routine, Mr. Chawla reads headlines from the paper each morning at breakfast. Most of the articles are about new scandals and political corruption. Pinky is bored with the articles, telling her father he should read about current events like the Cinema Monkey who hangs out in front of the theater attacking women so he can get their peanut cones. The men like to watch the monkey attack the women, hoping to see the monkey pull the saris off the women.

Mr. Chawla grows impatient with his son and smashes the fly on his food. He scolds Sampath for his lack of enthusiasm and his inability to get a better job or a raise in his salary in his present position. Sampath has a menial job at a post office, which the neighbors have belittled as a flunky's job. Mr. Chawla gives Sampath tips on how to please his boss but Sampath barely listens to him. Kulfi is still obsessed with food and thoughts of food. Since Sampath was born and then Pinky, food has been her only focus. Everyone agrees that Kulfi is eccentric. She quietly feels sorry for Sampath, especially since her husband compares her son to a potato.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Mr. Chawla likes to have attention—he makes noise and demands to gain the notice not only of his family but of the entire neighborhood. He prides himself in having an important position at the bank. He feels superior to his son, whom he considers a failure with no ambition. Sampath does not reveal much about his inner thoughts. During the lecture from his father, he really pays no attention. Sampath is in a world of his own much like his mother who, in her own way, feels sorry that Sampath is being denigrated by his father. Sampath's younger sister is adding a new dimension to the story. Her tale about the Cinema Monkey is probably opening up a new thread to the tale.



Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Chapter 4

Sampath rides his rickety bike through the crowded path to the post office. There are fences and stretches of barbed wire that make him divert his way during his journey. Pinky is riding on the back, hanging on for dear life. She finally insists that he let her off. His riding is too dangerous and might cause her to fall off. She will take a bus to work from now on. Sampath watches as she gets on the bus. She pulls a hairpin out of her hair to be ready for any man who might want to get too friendly with the pretty girl. Sampath hears a man yowl soon after she is on the bus. He hears people asking her what is wrong with a man winking at her. He hears others cheer her on.

When Sampath arrives at the post office, his co-workers are sitting around gossiping. One woman, Miss Jyotsna, is complaining about the Cinema Monkey. He ripped her sari off going after her food, which forced her to go to the tailor for new clothes. The post officers workers are being recruited to help in the planning and preparation for the wedding of their boss's daughter. It is common protocol for workers to help in such arrangements. When the boss, Mr. D.P.S. arrives, he orders everyone to get to work. Sampath begins working on a ledger that contains the various costs of the wedding. As hard as he tries, he cannot stay focused enough to total up the amounts correctly.

Sampath is given a new pile of letters to sort. Instead of sorting them, he steams them open and takes all day to read them in a leisurely fashion. This has been his routine for many months. He has learned so much about the community—feuds between families, love affairs, babies born, people dying and fearful talk of natural disasters, floods and earthquakes. He is lost in reading these letters and does not complete his work for the day. He is scolded and told to come in early the next day to catch up. On his way home, he has pleasant thoughts of a postcard he saw that day of an ape with a very big red bottom.

Chapter 5

Sampath attends the wedding of his boss. He is given the assignment of filling glasses with sherbert. He manages to eat more than his share while doing so. Sampath sneaks off to look around his boss' house. He finds a room where the bridesmaids got ready for the wedding. He is drawn to the beautiful pearls and silks he finds in the room. He drapes a beautiful sari around himself and dons a jeweled nose ring. He fancies himself as attractive and finds a mirror to admire himself. Sampath's spirit is elevated as he leaves the room to return to the wedding party, still wearing the sari and accessories.

When Sampath goes outside by the fountain, his boss and his wife are stunned at his appearance. Sampath jumps in the fountain and begins taking off his clothes. After



taking off the sari, he takes his shirt off and throws it up in the air. He takes his pants and underwear down and moons his brown rear end at the traumatized people.

Sampath is fired from his job and sent home. His father and grandmother are aghast at the turn of events. His father warns him to go first thing in the morning to look for a job. Sampath's mind is elsewhere. He is glad he does not have to work at the post office any longer—he hated the job. He does not want another job like it. Kulfi feels very sorry for her son and offers him a fresh guava. At first he does not want it, but then takes it because he is so hungry. When he bites into the fruit, it literally explodes into the air—pieces actually landing on neighbors. He immediately has the sensation that the clear juice of the guava has entered his body and is running in his bloodstream.

Sampath feels exhilarated and senses that something new is circulating within him. He rejects thoughts of a job, his father's lectures, and interview strategies as they run through his mind. When Kulfi sees that the guava explodes, she offers to make an egg for him. He tells her that he does not want an egg. He wants his freedom.

Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

Chapter 4

Pinky has a personality more like her father. She is tough and opinionated and asserts herself to her brother and the stranger who tries to flirt with her. Sampath is quiet at work and stays isolated from the other workers. His attitude at work is very much like his attitude in his home. There is another mention of the Cinema Monkey and Sampath takes special note of a postcard with the picture of a baboon, strengthening the thread that began in chapter 2 about monkeys. Sampath is lost in fantasy. He has no interest in his menial job. He is in the habit of reading the mail of other people. It takes him away from his nowhere job and his mundane existence. He is able to survive an unrewarding, unpleasant existence through his fantasies.

Chapter 5

At the wedding party, Sampath attempts to find a new identity and leave his old, unhappy life behind him. By mooning his boss and the wedding guests, Sampath is showing his true feelings about them—that is, total disregard. He is happy that he is fired from the post office. He is ready to leave that part of his life behind him and does not want to seek another job like it. His mother is instrumental in giving him a way out. Her own fantasies in trying to free herself from her unhappiness have been passed on to Sampath. Sampath, like his mother, wants to break free. She has found a unique freedom in her isolation and her obsession with food. That obsession with food is the instrument, the guava, that now is planting the seed of freedom in her son.



Chapters 6 and 7

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

Chapter 6

While the rest of the family goes to a wedding, Sampath sneaks out and takes a bus to a far away orchard. He bolts from the bus to escape an old woman sitting next to him who keeps asking about his family and his job. He runs toward a large guava tree and climbs up to its top branches. Some people on the bus think they see a large monkey climbing in the tree. Sampath feels the energy and beauty of the orchard and tree. He feels at home and when he bites into a fresh guava, he once again feels that wonderful energy and hopefulness from the fruit. The wondrous feeling he derives from the fruit and setting make him feel more at ease and at home than he can ever remember. He finally is able to get some sleep, falling into a deep slumber in the crook of one of the branches of the guava tree.

Chapter 7

The Chawla family is in deep distress, worried about the whereabouts of their son. They park themselves right in front of the police department but they fail to get any help. Mr. Chawla is sure he would have found Sampath by now were he the Superintendent of Police. Word travels back to the family that a strange man is living in a guava tree in an orchard outside the town. Many think that only a monkey could live in a tree like that. Mr. Chawla is immediately positive that it is Sampath. The family travels to the orchard and find Sampath who is not happy to see them. He would like to tell them to go away but he does not want to hurt their feelings and says nothing.

The Chawla family seeks the help of medical doctors, homeopathic and naturopathic doctors—none of whom can help the boy and get him to come down. Pinky is embarrassed by his behavior, Amma is worried about his health and safety and Mr. Chawla is just outraged. Kulfi thinks back to her youth, when she felt much confusion about her identity and her place in the world. She tells the others to "Let him be." Mr. Chawla is further outraged by his wife's reaction telling her no wonder Sampath turned out so strange with a mother like her. Kulfi's family had worried they would never be able to marry her off and might be stuck with her. Insanity did run in the family and her parents were frightened by her behavior, fearing that she was going insane. Finally, they paid a large dowry to Chawla's family and arranged the marriage. Chawla was not thrilled by the wife who had been chosen for him although he did find her very attractive, compared to many of the neighborhood girls.

In desperation, they seek the advice of a holy man who tells them to find Sampath a wife. A neighbor, Lakshmiji, is acting as marriage broker and finds a young woman for Sampath. The girl is brought to the tree, which her family forces her to climb so she can be near Sampath. She is only up in the tree a short while when she falls with a thud to



the ground. Mr. Chawla is at the end of his rope and asks his neighbors, who have gathered at the tree, what he should do. Sampath begins to recognize that some of the those gathered are people whose letters he read at the post office. He asks one of the men if his jewelry is still buried. He asks one of the women, how the lump in her throat is. He tells another man to stop using the current product and try a different product to regrow some hair on his head. The people are amazed—they think he is a prophet. The next morning when Mr. Chawla is reading headlines at breakfast, he reads aloud the article about the former post office employee who is living in a guava tree. The child-like man is spiritual in nature and has "unfathomable wisdom."

Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

Chapter 6

Sampath finally feels "at home" when he runs away and finds a guava tree where he again feels the energy of the guava. The guava is symbolic of freedom and his love for the person he is. His mother is the only family member who accepts him just as he is. The others in the family all want him to be something other than what he is. He feels comfort in his freedom and in his mother's love and support. Some of the people on the bus confuse Sampath with a large monkey as he climbs in the guava tree. There is obviously more to come about Sampath's connection with a monkey or monkeys.

Chapter 7

Sampath has finally found himself and discovered his true nature—to be with nature, live an isolated life and enjoy a life from a totally different perspective than his father and from most men. The only person who truly understands him is his mother. They are very much alike. As she thinks back, she can relate to much of the confusion that Sampath is experiencing. Despite his happiness, everyone in the family—except Kulfi—are bent on changing him. Watching her son in the tree, Kulfi recalls her younger days when she was misunderstood and not allowed to find her own way in life—to end up where she really belonged. She so relates to him that she pleads with the others to "let him be."

The guava tree, symbolic of his mother's love and freedom, is providing Sampath with everything he needs. In an ironic twist, Sampath's reading of letters during his years at the post office now make him seem like a seer, an important man. The prediction that Sampath would become a great man is coming true, even though it is in a round-about way.



Chapters 8 and 9

Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

Chapter 8

It dawns on Mr. Chawla that Sampath, with his growing fame as a prophet, could make a lot of money for the family. The people are continuing to visit Sampath at the guava tree. Amma and Kulfi are staying at the orchard, tending to the needs of Sampath. To bring Sampath greater comfort, they rig a cot up in the tree and bring him a large umbrella to shield him from the rain and sun. Pinky climbs up the tree with food everyday. Unfortunately, she drops a lot of the food so they rig a pulley contraption that will allow them to send food and other items up to Sampath. Amma heats tubs of hot water on a nearby fire and sends them up by pulley so Sampath can bathe.

Sampath continues to amaze the people with his wisdom and prophecy. Miss Jyotsna and Gupta from the office visit one day. Sampath mentions Jyotsna's debt to the sari shop. She is amazed—she always had kept that secret. She was not aware, of course, that one day when she was called to the boss' office at the post office, Sampath combed through her purse and found the bills that she owed to the sari shop.

Of all the people, Kulfi understands Sampath the most. She knows in her heart that he belongs in the tree. In her youth, she always had a great connection to nature and would prefer to be alone with her thoughts in the woods and countryside. Since food always has meant so much to Kulfi, she is inspired to create fabulous dishes for Sampath. He is prospering from her food—his cheeks are plumping and the tenseness is leaving his face.

Chapter 9

Pinky is feeling a little left out from all the attention that Sampath is getting. She asks her father about a typing course she is supposed to take. He tells her it is unimportant. She is hurt as it was his idea for her to take the course. He is obsessed with plans on how he can capitalize on Sampath's new found fame. He has taken a leave from work in order to focus his full attentions on these plans. Pinky wishes her mother took more interest in her wardrobe. When going to the bazaar, it is important for a young girl to look well-cared for and stylish. Pinky dresses elaborately one day and when she returns home from the bazaar, complains that a man had followed her. Her father scolds her that she is asking for men to look at her with the way she dresses and makes up her face. He tells to wear simple clothes to the bazaar in the future.

Amma wants a pair of dentures so Mr. Chawla sends Pinky with her grandmother to the denture market. Pinky takes the back way to the bazaar so that no one sees her looking so drab. Amma picks out a pair of dentures that are a little loose but suitable. They go to the cinema and buy ice cream afterward. The Cinema Monkey appears and starts



chasing Pinky and Amma. Just as Amma is taking a bite of her ice cream, the monkey attacks her and takes her cone. Amma's dentures are stuck in the ice cream. The ice cream boy, known as the Hungry Hop boy, chases after the monkey and retrieves Amma's dentures. Pinky is humiliated beyond belief but the boy makes her feel better by seeming so nonchalant about the incident. Pinky realizes that the boy, whom she has known for years, suddenly seems very attractive. She is mortified that she looks so plain and unattractive.

Back by the tree, Pinky cannot control her emotions and cannot stop crying. While Amma is cooking, her new dentures fall in the pot. As she is fishing her teeth out, she tries to tease Pinky out of her bad mood but Pinky is beside herself with sadness and anger at her father for making her look so plain and ugly in public.

Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

Chapter 8

For once in his life, Sampath is impressing his family and neighbors. His wisdom and advice is astonishing the people who gather. He is enjoying his new fame and importance and is keeping quiet about the source of his uncanny knowledge about his neighbors. Still, there is the inkling that he is beginning to believe in his powers.

The connection between mother and food and mother and son is growing in clarity. Just as Sampath now seems to have a purpose and reason to be alive, Kulfi is inspired to cook elaborate meals for her son—something she had never done before. She feels a link to him and she is now able to focus all her thoughts and obsession with food and apply them to a real-life situation involving the person she loves above all else. She is able to feed the emptiness she always felt by nourishing her son.

Chapter 9

This chapter focuses on Pinky who is struggling herself. She is trying to cope with a domineering father and a mother who has virtually abandoned her. Pinky has a personality more like her father and is headstrong and opinionated. Pinky wants to portray a glamorous image to the outside world, a way of escaping an existence in which she does not feel adequate satisfaction. She feels that her physical beauty is all she has in attracting a man and gaining the new life she dreams of. The one day that she is forced by her father to dress plainly, she meets a young man who seems to like her for what she is. Pinky feels humiliated that she looks so drab and does not understand that the boy is nice to her because he likes her for who she is. She keeps thinking of the boy and feels like she has wasted an opportunity by looking so plain and unattractive. She does appreciate his depth in liking her for herself.



Chapters 10 and 11

Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

Chapter 10

The family sets up living quarters in the guava orchard. Mr. Chawla gets help in tying in electrical and water lines so that his family can live more comfortably. Mr. Chawla realizes that part of the appeal of Sampath is his rejection of the luxuries of modern living. For that reason, Mr. Chawla wants to make sure to keep a balance at the compound between modern conveniences and the austere life. The family begins to make a little money off their famous hermit. Amma is selling tea to visitors, Mr. Chawla is selling flowers and garlands and guavas from the tree are being sold the day after they fall off the branches.

Sampath's responses to visitors have evolved from information he already knows from letters to those that include lyrical words of wisdom that may or may not be relevant, like, "There is no sign of the fruit when you buy the shoot," (p. 94), and "A bird cries for an insect," (p. 95). A reporter from an atheist society grills Sampath vigorously. He wants to expose him as a fraud and is gleeful when Sampath seems to avoid some of his questions. Amma offers the excuse that Sampath has always been remote from the real world. His performance in school was dreadful but the family could never coax him into doing better. Ms. Jyotsna, who is a regular visitor, relates how difficult it was for Sampath to adjust to working at the post office.

Sniffing the air near the guava tree, the reporter detects a strange odor of cardamom and cloves. He begins to suspect that Sampath is on drugs, maybe even opium. Back at his small apartment, the atheist reporter begins to make plans for a thorough investigation of the guava tree hermit.

Chapter 11

Kulfi spends her days in the deep woods and ponds, collecting exotic foods so she can make intricate meals for her son. The goat herders warn her to beware of snakes, scorpions and leeches but she is undeterred in her mission to find the right ingredients for her recipes. The meals simmer sometimes for days. The dishes have an aftertaste that explodes in Sampath's mouth hours after he eats them. Sampath now eagerly awaits the meals his mother brings him every day. Mr. Chawla has a pen of chickens that taste Kulfi's food before Sampath eats it just in case some of the exotic ingredients might be poisonous.

The devotees who come to see Sampath are intrigued by Kulfi's meals and try to discover some of her secrets but she will not divulge any of her recipes. The atheist spy begins to suspect that Sampath is drawing his powers from the concoctions his mother makes for him. However, every time he tries to get near Kulfi while she was cooking,



she hits him with a broom and shoos him away. Mr. Chawla is concerned with all the attention that Kulfi's meals are getting and cuts the visiting hours for Sampath. This limitation only increases Sampath's popularity—that is, until the monkeys arrive.

Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

Chapter 10

The purity of Sampath's existence is being challenged by the outside world. His family is encroaching on his new found existence by modernizing the area around the guava tree in the orchard. They are capitalizing on Sampath's new fame by selling items to his devotees and visitors. As his fame grows, these things are making his credibility diminish. The atheist reporter is beginning to think that he will be able to expose Sampath as a fraud. While Sampath is being himself, outside forces are trying to change him, just as others did in his past life. He escaped but the old life is following him.

Chapter 11

Kulfi's life-long obsession with food has finally found a purpose. Not only does it satisfy her inner hunger for satisfaction, it allows her to nurture her son in ways she never has before. The son is responding to the new cuisine his mother is working day and night to produce for her son. Although Kulfi, for the first time in her life, is providing true nourishment to her son, outside forces are pecking away at their new and successful union. The reporter thinks Sampath's power could be from Kulfi's dishes, while the devotees are trying to steal Kulfi's recipes, causing access to Sampath to be restricted.



Chapters 12 and 13

Chapters 12 and 13 Summary

Chapter 12

A troupe of monkeys make their way to the orchard. They are at first curious to see the strange being living in one of their trees. However, he partially wins the apes over by mimicking their behavior and sounds. After they observe all the food that surrounds this human, they decide to live adjacent to him which enables them to have scraps of more food than they could have ever imagined. The devotees are all amazed at how tame the monkeys have become in the presence of Sampath. Even Miss Jyotsna and Pinky—who had both been attacked by one of the monkeys—are stunned by the tame behavior of the once menacing creatures. "He has charmed the monkey!" The monkeys take to Sampath in an almost worshipful way. They tend to him and groom him. His hair is shinier than ever.

The presence of the monkeys is not welcomed by everyone. Mr. Chawla is upset because he cannot sell and resell food because the apes eat it all up. Kulfi does not cook as much, fearing that the monkeys will invade her pots. The monkeys remind Pinky of how horrible she looked the day she met up with the Hungry Hop boy, making her constantly burst into tears. She feels closer to her brother and understands him more than ever before. In her sadness, his words of wisdom inspire her. Pinky dresses up and decides to seek out the Hungry Hop boy. The atheist spy follows her. Pinky stabs him with her hair pin so deeply that he goes immediately to the clinic when the bus arrives in town. When she locates the Hungry Hop boy, Pinky is so elated and angry at the same time that even though she feels like kissing him, she bites part of his ear off. The boy is taken to the clinic to have the ear sewn back together and Pinky is marched off to the police station. The boy and the spy leave the clinic at the same time.

At first the police are harsh with Pinky, telling her offense was quite serious. When they learn that she is the sister of Sampath, they are almost apologetic. They drop all charges, drive her home and climb up the tree to get blessings from Sampath. The policemen want a picture with Sampath which gives Mr. Chawla the idea he could sell photos of Sampath for profit. Mr. Chawla finds a photographer in town and brings him out to the orchard to take photos. As the photographer hangs precariously in Sampath's tree trying to snap photos, the monkeys think Sampath is in danger and attack him. Amma slings stones at the monkeys to keep them at bay and the photographer is finally able to take a picture.

Multiple copies of the photo are made and become popular items. A copy of the photo is reprinted in the Times of India. After the article in the Times, visitors and mail pours in for Sampath. Miss Jyotsna brings out enormous amounts of mail for Sampath—some envelopes only bearing the photo of Sampath as an address. The atheist spy has a meeting with his group and complains about Sampath to the point that the others are



bored with him. He begins to spout some of the wise sayings that he has heard from Sampath. He is still determined to expose Sampath as a fraud.

Chapter 13

The monkeys discover rum and get drunk. At first, no one knows why they are acting so strangely. Even Sampath cannot calm them down. The monkeys love the rum and as visitors and devotees visit the orchard, the monkeys attack them, searching for alcohol. The people chase them off but the monkeys are frightening the people with their aggressiveness, sharp teeth and loud screams. The monkeys even rummage through the mail that Miss Jyotsna brings to Sampath.

Chapters 12 and 13 Analysis

Chapter 12

The monkeys and Sampath have found each other. They are alike in many ways. Sampath has a power over the monkeys who defend him and care for him. Of course, food is the driving force that keeps the monkeys around and at bay. Yet, the monkeys' presence is having a negative effect on Kulfi who has grown more protective of her food. She wants only to cook for Sampath, she does not want to cook for the monkeys. They are taking some of the joy she had found and her renewed connection with Sampath. She had been hungry for fulfillment all her life. She finally felt satisfaction when she was able to marry her obsession with food with the nourishment of her favorite child, Sampath.

Kulfi is not concerned with his importance, she is only concerned with filling the emptiness, something she can easily relate to. Pinky is suffering from lack of attention although she is able to have attention, albeit negative, when she bites the boy's ear off. Pinky is beginning to understand and appreciate her brother more than she ever had before. Pinky is beginning to grow up and focus beyond herself.

Chapter 13

The monkeys are rebelling in a sense. They have found something they like better than tending to Sampath and eating his food. The monkeys have returned to their prior patterns of behavior at the bazaar in town. Sampath has lost his power over them. How will they be calmed down, short of letting them get drunk? Will they spoil Sampath's orchard home? Will the monkeys be the downfall of Sampath's new found freedom and purpose? These are all questions that the author has raised for the readers to consider.



Chapters 14 and 15

Chapters 14 and 15 Summary

Chapter 14

The Chawla's bank account is growing. Enough money is accruing to build a proper hermitage for Sampath—a sturdy, concrete building away from the disturbing, drunken monkeys. Sampath says he will never leave the tree and the monkeys are not drunk, they are just playful. Kulfi sides with Sampath. Sampath feels a real connection to his mother and the monkeys. The monkeys are having no luck in stealing liquor in the orchard so they return to the bazaar where they overpower an old woman who is selling illicit liquor and devour the whole supply. When they return to the Chawla compound, they are drunker than ever before.

The monkeys destroy everything in the compound. Pots and pans go flying, mail is shredded, objects are thrown and smashed. They even send Sampath reeling, making him fear for his safety. Finally the monkeys seem to tire of the compound and go off to another area down the road where they continue their rampage. The next day Mr. Chawla starts off early for town. He is going to see the proper official and have something done about the monkeys who are disrupting the sanctity of Sampath.

Chapter 15

Mr. Chawla visits the Chief Medical Office at his home. The CMO is not thrilled with Mr. Chawla's arrival as he is rude and loud and demands an immediate solution for the monkey problem that is disrupting the holy man's compound. The CMO reminds Mr. Chawla that there is a close association between the beloved god Rama and the monkeys. However, Mr. Chawla insists that they must be controlled. The CMO tries to contact the the biology department at Lady Chatterjee University but cannot get through.

At the same time, the man they are trying to reach is reading the article about the rampaging monkeys. He recalls another incident in which officials kill the head monkey of a rampaging group and string him up to intimidate the others. This could control the monkeys unless they elect another head monkey. The man's wife reminds him that when he tried to get monkeys to eat food laden with sleeping pills that street urchins ate the food instead which caused quite a controversy. She reminds the man that the monkeys are dangerous and they will probably attack him if he tries to contain them. It is a confusing morning, the CMO cannot contact the university and the brigadier general cannot reach the police—all parties trying to deal with the monkeys. Finally, Mr. Chawla and the CMO take off to visit the university to seek help in person.

The monkeys return to the compound where Sampath lectures them about their behavior. However, they are so dear to him that he cannot stay angry with them and he



forgives them. The monkeys are very quiet and just lay around. They are probably suffering from hangovers.

Chapters 14 and 15 Analysis

Chapter 14

The behavior of the monkeys is now beyond bearable. There is a chink in the armor of the great hermit, Sampath, who can no longer control them. They have turned on him and destroyed his hermitage and his food. This is not a happy time for Sampath who loves the monkeys but knows he will not survive if they continue their terrible behavior. The situation is coming to a breaking point.

Chapter 15

Mr. Chawla is determined to have the monkey problem taken care of. He wants to have someone dispose of them because they are disturbing the compound and, probably more important to him, they are causing him to make less money. Sampath still loves the monkeys, despite their behavior. Mr. Chawla and Sampath are headed for a conflict over the monkeys. Although Sampath has not shown assertiveness in the past, with his new found powers and stature he will no doubt be ready to battle his father over the monkeys. He loves the monkeys while his father loves the money he can make if they are not there.



Chapters 16 and 17

Chapters 16 and 17 Summary

Chapter 16

The Hungry Hop boy is at home nursing his ear. He recalls with fear the incident in which he was bitten while his nemesis Pinky is planning another meeting. Sampath is trying to console Pinky with the right words but he is preoccupied with many disturbing matters—the monsoon that will be coming soon, the talk of building a concrete hermitage for him and the controversy around the monkeys. For now, the monkeys are behaving beautifully—they are sober and calm. Sampath takes in the beauty surrounding the compound. He almost feels as though he could be absorbed into his surroundings—become one with nature.

Pinky decides to write the Hungry Hop boy a letter, reminding him that they have known each other since they were children. She apologizes for biting his ear, telling him it was out of the emotion she felt in her heart for him. She decides to deliver the letter to him in person. Pinky sneaks around the back to avoid the boy's eleven sisters whom she knows will chase her away. She wraps the note around a stone and throws it in the bathroom window where she sees the boy's face. The stone hits him in the jaw and knocks the bottle of hair oil out the window which Pinky is able to catch. The boy is astounded by the note and wonders if Pinky could be his true love. Pinky begins coming every day, tossing up messages to him while he, in turn, throws her items from the bathroom. The sisters soon catch on when all their grooming products are missing. The girls chase Pinky away and send a note to her father to keep her away. Pinky and the boy begin exchanging messages via the milkman.

Chapter 17

Sampath is desperately trying to write a poem but just cannot get his thoughts down in words. He continues to be preoccupied about his future, his life in the orchard, the fate of the monkeys. Sampath admires his mother, who seems to never be overly concerned about anything and just goes about her life as it comes to her. The atheist still spies on Sampath but, much to his surprise, his thoughts are often filled with Sampath's words of wisdom. The spy has actually begun to enjoy his time in the Orchard which makes him fearful.

Kulfi is searching for a new, exciting ingredient for her dishes. She is hoping to find a new berry, mushroom or bird—something that she has never cooked before—to add dimension to her cuisine. She even considers large animals like elephants and monkeys—she thinks that it would be quite the dish if she could cook a monkey. The spy tries to follow Kulfi, but loses sight of her in the thick woods.



Chapters 16 and 17 Analysis

Chapter 16

The monkeys are behaving but Mr. Chawla is determined to get rid of them. Sampath is trying to become part of his environment. Such an event would be the ultimate act of escapism. He would be one with nature and along with his beloved orchard, guava tree and monkeys. Perhaps he will be able to escape with the monkeys before Mr. Chawla does something drastic about them. Worry about the future is driving Sampath to dream of disappearing.

Pinky has convinced the boy whose ear she cut off that they are in love. Although the love affair had a rocky beginning, the two become enraptured with each other. Perhaps she had to bite the boy's ear off, or felt she did, to actually get his attention.

Chapter 17

Sampath is unable to express himself when just his emotions are involved. He is able to provide wisdom and advice when it is for others but when it comes to his own feelings and thoughts, he is lost. The atheist is becoming more and more attached to Sampath but, still being the investigative reporter that he is, would still like to find something on Sampath. Kulfi contemplates cooking a monkey. Surely that move would upset Sampath and the entire orchard. Perhaps it is her subconscious way of settling the monkey problem for her son.



Chapters 18 and 19

Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

Chapter 18

The monkeys are at it again, drinking and attacking people both in the orchard and at the bazaar. The monkeys have become quite dangerous. They attack two young men who are having a drink at a cafe. The men are bitten up and down their arms and are taken to the hospital. Monkey bites are dangerous because the animals can carry rabies. A report about the possibility of rabies from monkey bites is published in the newspaper which frightens the community. The Hanuman Temple takes the side of the monkeys and issues a statement that the monkeys have been treated unfairly and that evil forces are attempting to corrupt Hindu practices. The holy men state that they are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the monkeys.

With all the furor surrounding the monkeys, people are paying less and less attention to what Sampath has to say. The two warring factions on the monkey issue settle themselves at the base of Sampath's tree. Half the people defend the monkeys and half want them done away with. Miss Jyotsna remains faithful to Sampath in his defense of the monkeys. When the atheist proclaims that the monkeys should be destroyed, Miss Jyotsna swings her purse at him and hits him in the stomach. This impresses Pinky and Amma, who like the girl's spirit. They have to side with Mr. Chawla, however, since Sampath himself is in danger of contracting rabies from the monkeys. The debate is the main topic in Shahkot and in many other towns. A Monkey Protection Society is formed. Everyone is taking part in the debate about the monkeys. The police have to break up physical fights that break out from these arguments. There is no longer peace in Shahkot.

Chapter 19

Verma of the university devises a plan to kill the Cinema Monkey and display his carcass so that the other monkeys will be intimidated and disband to the forest. He delivers his plan to the Chief Medical Officer who must approve it. The Brigadier develops a plan in which a firing squad would enter the orchard area and continually shoot their guns to chase off the monkeys. This plan would have to be approved by the District Collector. The Chief Medical Officer is staying in isolation, suffering from a bad case of hypochondria. He is, however, well enough to develop his own plan to rid Shahkot of the drunken monkeys and at the same time reduce domestic abuse and get himself promoted. He proposes to have all liquor banned from the town.

The three men who had devised plans visit Sampath to receive his blessings. They are followed by crowds of angry devotees who are opposed to the plans, the details of which had leaked all over town. Sampath is preoccupied and does not know what the fuss is about. As the shouting grows louder, he hears only bits and pieces of the



arguments and cannot decipher what they are saying. He does sense it involves his future and that of the monkeys. He becomes so upset that he throws up, which causes the people to retreat without a blessing for any of the plans from Sampath.

Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

Chapter 18

The debate is coming to a head. Half the people are for the monkeys and half are for getting rid of them. Sampath remains loyal to them, but the debate has usurped his power and stature, No one listens to his words of wisdom any longer. The whole community is obsessed with the monkey debate. There is anger and bitterness over the monkeys with no real solution in sight. Even though Sampath is in danger of being bitten and contracting rabies and the monkeys have basically taken his importance away, he stays loyal to them.

Chapter 19

Three plans are devised to rid the town of the monkey problem. The most violent plan is to kill the Cinema Monkey, or head monkey, and scare off the others. When Sampath is approached for his blessing for the plans, he is inexplicably unable to understand what the people are saying. He knows that their anger involves his future and the monkeys. By not "understanding" what the people are requesting from him, he is able to avoid the entire situation. He becomes sick over the angry mob, which makes them go away. Sampath is putting off the inevitable battle—strong voices want a resolution to the monkey problem and Sampath wants to continue life in the orchard and leave the monkeys be.



Chapters 20 and 21

Chapters 20 and 21 Summary

Chapter 20

The new District Collector, who is in charge of a town like a mayor, arrives in Shahkot. His new secretary, Mr. Gupta, formerly of the post office, greets him with stacks of plans and proposals. Mr. Gupta tells him that the monkey controversy is a terrible business.

Chapter 21

The DC visits Sampath although neither man speaks. The meeting is interrupted by crowds of protestors, making it a futile exercise. The first proposal meeting is held with the Brigadier at the new DC's residence, which is surrounded by protestors including members of the Monkey Protection Society. The DC does not consider the Brigadier's plan as prudent. The CMO's is the second plan reviewed. The plan has been met with protests from the cafe owners who do not want to give up their liquor licenses. In addition, other towns are protesting, fearing that the monkeys will be forced to raid their towns for liquor. Eventually, the whole country could be overrun with drunken monkeys. Next, Verma's plan is rejected as too violent and unsanitary. At home that night, the DC tries to think of a plan to deal with the monkeys. They have just raided a retired Judge's residence and stolen all his liquor.

While the DC is eating dinner, Mr. Chawla comes to see him. He proposes that the monkeys all be captured by soldiers and policemen and taken to another forest, far away enough that they could not return. Mr. Chawla is growing concerned in many ways—his family's bank account is dwindling and the old sad, remote look is returning to Sampath's face. The DC approves Mr. Chawla's plan since it involves no guns, no religious concerns and no business interruptions. The only caveat is that Sampath will have to temporarily descend from the tree while the plan is executed.

Although Sampath refuses to come down, he is no longer happy with the orchard. It has been filled with debris and trash from all the people. It no longer has the purity it had when he first discovered it. He has thoughts of escape. His mother has thoughts of cooking a monkey. His father assures the DC that when the plan is executed, he will get Sampath to ascend the tree.

Chapters 20 and 21 Analysis

Chapter 20

The decision about the marauding monkeys will fall to a complete stranger to the town, a person who knows nothing about the situation. He is told by his new assistant that it is "terrible business," which can do nothing but prejudice him about the problem he faces.



Chapter 21

Mr. Chawla's non-violent plan to capture the monkeys and take them to a forest far away is accepted by the new District Collector. Mr. Chawla's main concern, although he does not voice it to the DC, is his dwindling bank account. He is also concerned with Sampath's loss of enthusiasm which could further dry up his bank account.

Kulfi, as she does with every problem or situation in her life, thinks of the monkeys in terms of food. It is apparent that while she may still be thinking of Sampath's meals, she has lost sight of his feelings—he could never eat the monkeys that he loves. The District Collector selects the least intrusive and non-violent plan to rid the town of the drunken monkeys. He appears to have only good intentions. Sampath senses that his days are numbered in the orchard, which really no longer represents the beauty and freedom it once did. He is planning an escape. There is the sense that if he is able to escape this time, it will be far away enough that no one will find him. Perhaps he will be with the monkeys in their new location.



Chapters 22 and 23

Chapters 22 and 23 Summary

Chapter 22

The Brigadier, still bitter from having his plan passed over, is reluctantly training his soldiers for the monkey raid. The policemen are considered incapable of such duty and are not included in the training. Sampath is growing more and more concerned about the orchard. He has decided he must escape, perhaps up to the mountains where there are no people. He looks with sadness at the monkeys, who are playful and happy and unaware of what is about to take place. Kulfi is worried about Sampath because he is sad and is refusing to eat. She plans a big new feast for him but she is unsure how to prepare the beast.

Chapter 23

The Hungry Hop boy is literally trapped in his house. He hears the demonstrators and commotion over the monkeys and wants to take the ice cream van to the bazaar to see what is taking place. However, his sisters will not allow him to leave the family home until he is married. He hears them making plans for his wedding. Through the milkman, the Hungry Hop boy sends a note to Pinky about his sisters' plans. She writes back that they must escape to another town. She tells him to meet her on April 30th, the day that the town will be caught up in the monkey capture. Pinky tells Sampath of her plans and invites him along. He declines, knowing that it will just be a dusty, bumpy trip to another town.

The Hungry Hop boy reluctantly meets the girl that his sisters have picked out for him. He is stunned by her beauty and pleasant personality. He cannot sleep that night, trying to decide whether to run away with Pinky in the morning or stay and marry the other girl. He sneaks the van out early before anyone else is awake. When he meets Pinky, he will either tell her that he cannot run away or he will elope with her. Suddenly coming up fast behind him he sees the monkey hunters who yell at him to get out of the way. His van gets hits by one of their vehicles but he is still able to drive on to meet Pinky.

Chapters 22 and 23 Analysis

Chapter 22

The city officials are proceeding with their plans to capture and move the monkeys. Sampath has lost all enthusiasm and knows that the orchard is no longer an appropriate home for him. He has great sympathy for the monkeys. As he looks towards the mountains, perhaps the thought of leading the monkeys to the mountain forest strikes him. The monkeys are facing two perils—they are going to be captured and moved from their habitat and Kulfi wants to cook them.



Chapter 23

The Hungry Hop boy is irate that his sisters are forcing him into a marriage. They think they are saving him from a fate worse than death in keeping him away from the girl who bit his ear off. They arrange to meet and he feels relieved, for the time being. As much as the Hungry Hop boy resists meeting the girl that has been arranged to marry him, he finally does and he is overwhelmed with her presence. He tosses and turns all night trying to decide what to do. In the wake of this uncertainty, he may decide to marry neither one of them.



Chapters 24 and 25

Chapters 24 and 25 Summary

Chapter 24

The DC and Gupta take off for the staging area in the orchard on the morning of the monkey raid. They are delayed when an old man is blocking the road with his belongings, which he is moving to his ancestral home. The Brigadier's convoy of soldiers is heading toward the orchard when they come upon a road block. The Chief Medical Officer is taking off for an extended vacation, due to his ill health, and his belongings are strewn across the road, making passage impossible.

The DC and Gupta arrive to see that they are once again delayed. Everyone is warned to turn around and go another way since there is another roadblock in front of Verma's house. His wife is angry with him for wanting to kill the monkeys and is moving out. The convoy takes another route, and lo and behold, they find themselves right behind a slow-moving ice cream truck.

Chapter 25

Kulfi is sleeping by a simmering cauldron of liquids and spices. She plans to make one of the monkeys fall into it during the monkey raid. When she wakes, she thinks of one more ingredient she needs to get from the forest. She will have just enough time to get the spice before the raid starts. The atheist spy watches as she departs. The spy is still being haunted by the words of Sampath and knows instinctively that he must break free of his current existence. Pinky is waiting under the tamarind tree for the Hungry Hop boy.

Sampath sits still in his tree. He has been awake all night watching the beauty of the forest as it transitions from day to night. Just before dawn, Sampath feels a strange sensation coming over him. An unusual strength enters him as a numbness sweeps over his limbs. The less sensation he feels in his body, the sharper his mind becomes. He picks one of the last guavas that the tree will produce that season and holds it in his hand.

The Hungry Hop boy is still filled with uncertainty. Pinky sees his van on the horizon and just as suddenly it disappears. Then it reappears and disappears. The Brigadier grows impatient with the ice cream van, which is sometimes ahead of them and sometimes behind them. The atheist spy positions himself in a tree above Kulfi's bubbling pot. Finally, the Brigadier grows so impatient with the Hungry Hop boy that he has his men capture him in a monkey net. He is thrown in the back of one of their vehicles.

The monkeys alight from the trees but the men cannot get to their nets because the Hungry Hop boy is entangled in them. Pinky discovers him there and is totally disgusted with his letting her down at such a crucial time. Mr. Chawla calls to Sampath to come



down from the tree but he is not there. They climb up to find a giant-sized guava sitting on his cot. It has a strange brown mark on it. The monkeys quickly snatch the guava and run with it. Everyone chases after them, but they are too fast and cannot catch them. They pass Kulfi who is still in the forest and turn and bow to her as if to say good-bye.

Suddenly, there is a loud snap and a splash heard. No one knows what it was. Back at the tree where Kulfi is cooking her stew, there is an empty broken branch hanging over the pot. Her broth is still simmering and bubbling.

Chapters 24 and 25 Analysis

Chapter 24

Plans to remove the monkeys are being delayed by circumstances. Portraying the effort of the convoy to get through to the orchard is a comical and an effective way to keep the monkey catchers away from their prey. Perhaps it is serendipity that will save the monkeys from being removed from their home.

Chapter 25

All the loose ends of the tale are tied up in this concluding chapter. Kulfi's plot to capture and cook a monkey is revealed. The Hungry Hop boy shows that he is not ready to commit to anyone. In fact, he is the only creature that the soldiers capture in the net that night. Pinky realizes that the Hungry Hop boy is not for her—he is immature and not reliable.

Sampath begins to have strange feelings all over his body. There is a numbness that is coming over him yet it sharpens his mind. It is not a negative experience and Sampath does not fight the transition that is coming over him. When Mr. Chawla discovers that Sampath is gone, he finds a giant guava sitting on the cot in his place. The guava has a brown mark similar to Sampath's birth mark when he was born; this symbolizes Sampath's rebirth. The monkeys snatch the guava and run off to the mountains and no one is able to catch them. Sampath's wishes to move to the mountains are being fulfilled by the monkeys. Sampath had come to terms with the fact that life was over for him in the orchard. The only person that the monkeys and the guava say good-bye to is Kulfi.

The monkeys, on the orders of the wise seer Sampath who is still there in spirit, take him to the mountain where they can plant the guava seed and grow a new tree in which to live in safety and freedom. The spy, who wanted to escape from his meaningless life, gets his wish—although perhaps not exactly in the way he would have chosen.



Characters

Sampath Chawla

Sampath Chawla is a young man who is dissatisfied with his mundane existence. When he was born, great things were predicted for him but by the time he is twenty years old, he is not even close to being great. When he is fired from his job for his unusual behavior, it turns out to be the start of his freedom. Although his father lectures him on how to get a new and better job, Sampath is not interested. He has other ideas. Sampath feels no connection to his town and community; there is another life beckoning to him.

Before he is fired from the Post Office, Sampath spends many days steaming open the personal letters of his neighbors. He learns intimate details about their marriages, affairs, health and fears. After losing his job, Sampath runs away and plants himself in a guava tree in a lush orchard. When his father cannot coax him down from the tree, his legacy grows. Surely, he must be a hermit, a holy man. When he makes comments about people's private lives, from the information he read in their own letters, they are convinced he has supernatural abilities.

Sampath's best friends become the monkeys who live with him in the guava tree. The monkeys often display bad behavior—in fact they often get drunk from stolen liquor—but Sampath always defends them. When town officials are determined to get rid of the monkey problem, Sampath is able to save them and find them and himself a new place to live in peace without the disturbances of modern life.

Kulfi Sampath

Kulfi Chawla is Sampath's mother. The story of "Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard" begins when Kulfi is pregnant with Sampath. She is the "odd" one in the family, not taking part in many conversations with the others nor behaving as most young, pregnant women do. Kulfi is obsessed with food and eating food. One could attribute her thoughts of food to normal cravings during a pregnancy. However, as the story progresses, she becomes even more obsessed with food.

Although she is non-communicative in most cases, she does have a special affinity with Sampath. He is her favorite child and she can relate to him since he is the one most like she is. He likes his solitude and he does not ascribe to the conventional things people plan for or pass their time doing. When Sampath decides to live in the guava tree, she is the only family member who says, "Let him be." She knows the isolation he craves because she had similar experiences in her youth—in fact, she still feels many of those same yearnings of youth—to be truly satisfied in life. The lack of satisfaction with her life is symbolized by her obsession with food, a persistent hunger to be fed spiritually as well as physically.



Kulfi's storyline has a strong impact on the main storyline, which is Sampath's story. It is Kulfi who gives Sampath the first magical guava and it is Kulfi who devises intricate recipes with exotic ingredients for her son. Kulfi is finally able to satisfy her obsession for food by providing abundant amounts of it for her son. The food nourishes him physically and lends moral support to Sampath's quest for find his rightful place in the world.

Mr. Chawla

Mr. Chawla is Sampath's frustrated father. He cannot understand why his son is not more ambitious. When Sampath becomes a renowned prophet, Mr. Chawla see it as an opportunity to fatten his bank account.

Pinky Chawla

Pinky Chawla is Sampath's younger sister. She is more like her father—domineering and aggressive. Towards the end of the story, she begins to understand her older brother and feels closer to him.

Amma

Amma is the grandmother who lives with Sampath. She is always concerned about her grandchildren and will do anything for them. One day, she drops her dentures in a pot of food she is cooking, fishes them out and continues cooking the food.

The Hungry Hop Boy

The Hungry Hop boy is Pinky's love interest. They plan to elope but when his sisters introduce him to the girl they have arranged for him to marry, he has second thoughts about running away with Pinky.

Lakshmiji

A neighbor of the Chawlas, Lakshmiji serves as the marriage broker when the holy man tells Mr. Chawla to find Sampath a wife.

Chief Medical Officer and District Collector

The Chief Medical Officer and the District Collector are the town officials who must approve the plans to rid the town of Shahkot of the rampaging wild monkeys.



The Monkeys

The wild monkeys live in the guava tree with Sampath. They often display bad behavior and become drunk on stolen liquor. They care for Sampath and protect him. Sampath comes to their rescue when the town tries to execute a plan to get rid of them.

Miss Jyoshna

Miss Jyoshna is a pretty co-worker of Sampath's. She is one friend that seems to understand him and stays loyal to him throughout his journey.



Objects/Places

Shahkot, India

Shahkot, India, is where Sampath is born and raised. At twenty, he leaves the family home looking for his rightful place in the world.

Tierra del Fuego

The Tierra del Fuego is the volcano that is throwing up ash in the atmosphere during the beginning of the story.

The Post Office

Sampath has a job at the local post office. He spends most of his days steaming open the letters of neighbors. He learns a lot of secrets about them, ranging from marriage problems and love affairs to health issues and fears.

The Guava Orchard

The guava orchard is where Sampath establishes his new home after he runs away from his family home in Shahkot, India.

The Guava Tree

Sampath plants himself in a beautiful guava tree that he seems drawn to. No amount of intervention will get him to come down. He stays there and becomes a legendary prophet.

The Cinema

A marauding monkey, called the Cinema Monkey, attacks women exiting the cinema so he can steal their peanut cones. The women in the region are frightened of the aggressive animal who sometimes pulls their saris off during the attacks.

The Sermon on the Guava Tree

The wise sayings of Sampath from his position in the guava tree come to be known in the region as the Sermon on the Guava Tree, an oblique reference to the Sermon on the Mount.



The Woods

Kulfi spends many hours in the thick woods that surround the guava orchard. She is constantly looking for new and exotic ingredients for the lavish dinners she makes for Sampath. The woods are dangerous as they are inhabited with poisonous snakes, scorpions and leeches.

The Large Guava

When it is discovered that Sampath is missing from the guava tree, his father discovers a large guava sitting on the cot in his place. The guava has a mark on its rind similar to Sampath's birthmark.

The Mountains

Sampath looks longingly at the faraway mountains. They are beautiful and remote and isolated. He dreams of living there to escape the annoyances of modern life. At the end of the story, the monkeys are running with the large guava to the mountains.

The Bazaar

The bazaar is the town hub where all the vendors and shops are located. The cinema is located there as well and is the site of attacks by the Cinema Monkey.



Themes

Satisfaction with One's Life

The story of Sampath is the tale of a young man who is uncomfortable and unhappy with his existence in the modern world. He has a mundane job which he hates and does such a poor job at that he is never given a raise. However, he does not care about jobs and raises because he knows deep down inside that he does not belong in such a situation. Sampath is a dreamer and feels at one with nature, often fantasizing about being far away from modernity and its distractions and annoyances.

Until Sampath runs away from home to live in the guava orchard, he has never asserted himself, especially to his domineering father. However, after he finds the orchard and the guava tree, he knows he belongs there. He finally stands up to his demanding father by refusing to climb down from the tree and return home.

Sampath and his mother Kulfi have a deep connection. Throughout her entire life, she is considered odd by her family and neighbors. Like Sampath, she does not care what others think of her. There is another drumbeat that she is following. However, unlike Sampath she is never able to realize her dreams of contentment. When Sampath takes root in the guava tree, Kulfi is the only family member who does not insist that he come down from the tree and return home. In fact, she tells the others to "Let him be."

Kulfi is constantly obsessed with thoughts of food and eating food. Her obsession indicates her "hunger" for the life she is meant to have but is not able to realize. When she sees the opportunity for her son to truly find himself—something she has not not blessed with—she understands and supports him.

Liberty

To Sampath, true freedom translates to abandoning the modern world in favor of the world of nature. Ironically the only world he has ever known is in the civilized world but he knows instinctively that he does not belong there. Sampath feels trapped in so many ways. The story of Sampath's emergence into the world to which he belongs begins when he is twenty. He is suffocating from the oppressive heat, unable to sleep from the unbearable temperatures and the snoring of his relatives who all sleep in the same room in the small house. He escapes to the roof, but even in the night air, he is plagued by the heat and cannot sleep.

At the Post Office where he has a menial job, he again feels trapped—it is not where he belongs yet his father will explode if he quits. He does not want to be there and either consciously or sub-consciously devises a plan that immediately gets him out of the post office. At the wedding of his boss' daughter, Sampath sneaks off to a room where he dresses himself in saris and jewels. He rejoins the rest of the party, still dressed like a woman, and begins stripping. After he removes the women's clothing and accessories,



he takes his shirt off and throws it up in the air. To make sure he is fired, he then takes his pants and underwear off and moons the wedding guests. It is his way of freeing himself from the job that he hates and letting his boss and the others know what he really thinks of them.

Magic

The tale of "Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard" is an example of magical realism. Although the people and settings are realistic and familiar to the reader, there are elements of magic sprinkled throughout the story that the reader must accept in order to have a complete understanding of the story. The first hint of magic is when Sampath is born. The town of Shahkot has been suffering under a severe drought and the people are praying for a monsoon. At the instant of his birth, the drought ends and the monsoon begins. The townspeople deem it a miracle and proclaim that Sampath will become a great man. Sampath is born with a brown birthmark on one cheek.

After Sampath loses his job, his mother brings him a special guava to eat. As soon as he eats it, he is suddenly energized and exhilarated as never before. He feels the juice of the guava running through his body. That experience gives him the confidence to finally strike out on his own to find his place in the world. He is drawn to a beautiful guava tree on the outskirts of town. Sampath immediately climbs the tree and feels at home for the first time in his life.

Wild monkeys are terrorizing the town but Sampath is able to establish a deep friendship with them. Even though the monkeys are naughty—they steal liquor and get drunk—Sampath always defends them and they in turn care for him and protect him. At the conclusion of the story when the town officials are determined to rid the area of the monkeys, Sampath saves them. He magically turns into a large guava, a guava that has a brown mark on its rind similar to Sampath's birthmark. He is thus reborn and becomes one with nature. Just as the townspeople set out to capture the monkeys, one of the monkeys grabs the large guava and they escape to the mountains where they can plant the guava seed and have a beautiful place to live in peace and safety.



Style

Point of View

The story of Sampath and the guava orchard is written in third-person omniscient. It is the all-knowing style of fiction writing that allows the reader to know the actions and thoughts of the characters. The author, Kiran Desai, is a native of India and therefore familiar with the country's geographical make-up and customs and mores.

The story is written with a sympathetic tilt toward the eccentric protagonist who feels lost in the modern world. Even when Sampath's behavior is less than acceptable, there is a softness provided by the author that blunts the actions of the young man. The reader is quickly led to understand how difficult it would be for a dreamer like Sampath to live under a household run by his demanding and domineering father who has absolutely no understanding of the ways of his unique son. The storylines about Sampath and his equally eccentric mother are told to evoke sympathy for them. A sympathetic understanding of the unusual boy makes the reader more accepting of the unusual path his life takes after he runs away from home.

By providing the background of Sampath's mother, the reader is able to see and understand the connection she has with her son. They are very much alike and, because of her own struggles with her own place in the world, their relationship gives more depth to the entire story.

Setting

The story of "Hullabaloo in the Orchard Garden" has two main settings. The family home is in the town of Shahkot, India. The protagonist, Sampath Chawla, is born in the house and lives there until he is twenty. Prior to his birth, the town of Shahkot is experiencing a severe drought. The people are hungry since they cannot grow food in the oppressive heat and arid conditions. On the night he is born, a monsoon hits the town. Mentions of the drought conditions and the torrential rains are accompanied by vivid descriptions of the impact the severe weather has on the town.

The second main setting is the guava orchard. Out of a strong instinct to leave the town and find out where he truly belongs in the world, Sampath takes a bus to a region outside the town. When he spots an alluring orchard out the window, he bolts from the bus. He is immediately drawn to the area. After climbing a large guava tree, he feels like he has found his home. The areas surrounding the guava orchard are described as thickly wooded and dangerous as they are inhabited by cobras, scorpions and leeches. This is the area in which Kulfi finds some of the exotic ingredients for the elaborate dishes she begins making for Sampath in his new residence.

Although the story ends as Sampath and the monkeys are heading to the faraway lush mountains where Sampath will make a new home for them.



Language and Meaning

There is a fairy tale element to the story of the "Hullabaloo in the Guava Garden." The story is an example of magical realism—that is, the setting of the story is realistic and the characters are believable but an added component of magic provides a means for deeper understanding. The magical portions of the story are told in a forthright manner with no apologies. The reader must quickly adjust to the magic and accept it as part of the story.

Symbolism is used heavily by the author. Kulfi, the protagonist's mother, is obsessed with thoughts of food and eating food. Kulfi was always eccentric, even as a youngster growing up. Her parents had a difficult time getting Kulfi to behave "normally." A very similar challenge faces Mr. Chawla in trying to convince his son, Sampath, that he should get a better job and make more money—things that have no meaning to Sampath.

Kulfi's obsession with food symbolizes the chronic hunger that is the backdrop of her life. She has never felt she belonged in the life she has and has never wanted that life. Therefore, her obsession with food is her "hunger" for the life she was meant to have. Kulfi is the only one in the family who understands Sampath's need to become part of nature and abandon normal life. She tells the others to "Let him be."

It is when Kulfi hands her son the magical guava that his life changes. Biting into the ripe fruit, Kulfi feels an immediate transformation, along with an energy and exhilaration he has never known before. Sampath becomes friendly with the wild monkeys in the orchard. The monkeys represent Sampath's sympathy with nature and his rejection of modern conveniences and the conventional life. At the conclusion, Sampath has found where he belongs, which symbolically represents the rescue of the monkeys and a new, safe home for them away from the town officials who want to do them in.

Structure

"Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard" is separated into twenty-five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the time just before the protagonist's birth when the town is suffering under a severe drought. After Sampath's birth, the story then skips twenty years into the future when Sampath is twenty-years old. There are no flashback sequences in the story as it moves in chronological order from that point on. From the second chapter on, approximately six months of time are covered.

In the first few chapters, several threads are created about the characters and plot-line. The author makes off-hand but frequent references to monkeys, although their relevance is not clear until the reader is well into the story. The author also uses cliff-hangers at the end of many of the chapters to make the story a real-page turner.

There are several storylines that are interwoven within the main story. There is a subplot about Sampath's mother, who is reputed to be eccentric. Her obsession with food



eventually ties into the story near the tale's conclusion. Another storyline features Sampath's sister, Pinky, who is the opposite of the sedate Sampath. She is aggressive and combative but gets to appreciate her brother at the story's conclusion in new ways when he makes the transformation from kind of a loser to a revered wise man.



Quotes

"[Kulfi] looked at the tiny creature in her hands, a creature that looked as if he had come from another planet altogether, or had been discovered in the woods, like something alien and strange." (Chapter 1, p. 12)

"And if he was balding a little and had a small belly...well, he liked this look; it added importance to his words and inspired respect." (Chapter 3, p. 19)

"If it wasn't for me, Sampath would be sitting in a special museum for people who are a cross between potatoes and human beings." (Chapter 3, p. 26)

"Yes, he was in the right place at last. Tiredness rolled over him like a wave, and closing his eyes, he fell into a deep slumber, lodged in a fork in the guava tree." (Chapter 6, p. 51)

"Yes, they [holy men] can be like a child or a madman. Other times, instructing others, they return to the plane of consciousness to share their wisdom." (Chapter 10, p. 96)

"Seeing him she was filled with a rush of elation and rage. How placid and smiling he was! For a minute she thought she might kiss him, but the vein of aggression pounded powerfully within her and she bit him instead." (Chapter 12, p. 113)

"[Sampath] forgave them completely. He could not blame his lovely monkeys. This was not their fault—it was the fault of those who brewed the liquor that had turned the langurs into alcoholics." (Chapter 15, p. 140)

"'Poetry,' said Brother John, 'is born of hardship and suffering, of pain and doubt.'" (Chapter 17, p. 151)

"He thought of how the moon goes around the earth and the winter season comes after the monsoon. Of how years, pass, leaving memories, and how the future is unknown, of how a man can speak while an animal cannot, and how people speak many languages and cannot understand each other." (Chapter 17, p. 152)

"These people were trampling on him. They were invading him, claiming him, polluting the air about him. They were dirtying him with their dirty minds." (Chapter 19, p. 166)

"There, up high, as if tumbling from the sky, a waterfall cascaded down sylvan slopes, so pale, so distant he did not know if it was real or merely his imagination melding with the power of sight to produce a trick upon him." (Chapter 22, p. 185)

"Upon the cot lay a guava, a single guava that was much, much bigger than the others: rounder, star-based, weathered...It was surrounded by the silver langurs, who stared at it with their intent charcoal faces. On one side was a brown mark, rather like a birthmark..."(Chapter 25, p. 207)



Topics for Discussion

What weather disasters occur before Sampath is born and on the night he is born? What is Kulfi's reaction to him? What is unusual about his face?

How does Sampath learn a lot about his neighbors? Once he is a "prophet" in the guava tree, how does he use the information that he learned about his neighbors? What do the people attribute his uncanny knowledge of them to?

What is Kulfi obsessed about and what causes her obsession? How does she use her obsession to support and nourish Sampath? What is the new ingredient in her bubbling pot at the end of the tale?

Why does the Cinema Monkey attack women? What happens when the monkey attacks Pinky and Amma? What does Hungry Hop boy retrieve from the monkey for Amma?

What are the three plans proposed to solve the monkey problem in Shahkot? What are the reasons the new District Collector rejects all of these plans? What person comes up with the plan he approves and what is that plan?

What causes the Hungry Hop boy to feel uncertainty about running away with Pinky? What stops the Hungry Hop boy from meeting Pinky? What does Pinky think of him once she finds him?

Where is Sampath when his father is looking for him just before the monkey raid? What unusual marking on the guava resembles one on Sampath? What are the monkeys going to do with the large guava once they reach the mountains with it?