

The Inheritance of Loss Study Guide

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai

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Plot Summary

The Inheritance of Loss is a book about the rigid class systems that exist in India and abroad amongst Indians, and the struggles that the people face within these classes after colonialism. The book takes place in a town called Kalimpong, which is near Darjeeling in the north-westernmost point in India. The story begins in the high northeastern Himalayas in Kalimpong. Sai, a seventeen year old, lives with a judge, his dog and his cook. It is a turbulent time, filled with dissatisfaction among the population of Indian-Nepalese, who want to separate and have their own country apart from India. There is an insurgency to draw new borders that will create peace in theory, yet violence is the tool to create this peace. They are robbed by members of the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front, who take their food, liquor and guns. This introduces the political struggle that the region is facing, as well as the breakdown of the social fabric.

The judge is Sai's grandfather, who took her in after his daughter and her husband were killed in a car accident. He takes her in in order to pay off the spiritual debts that he incurred from abandoning his wife, and later killing her, as well as shaming his father. He fights with his guilt throughout the book, making it seem as though he will one day change his rough exterior and learn to love again. Sai falls in love with her tutor, whose name is Gyan, and throughout the story they fight to accept the natural love they have created. Their love is doomed from the beginning because he is an ethnic Nepali, and she is an upper-class, Western-educated Indian girl. The cook watches over them to make sure that Gyan does not take advantage of Sai's good heart, and at the same time worries about his own son in the U.S., whose name is Biju.

Biju is the typical Indian immigrant who gets a visa to the U.S. and stays illegally, working for slave wages in the kitchen basements of New York City. There he is used and abused by his bosses and is run ragged by one in particular, who also happens to be Indian. Upset with the way his life is turning out, and by how much he misses his father, he decides to leave the U.S. with his earnings and return back to his home and his father.

Throughout the book, the political situation worsens and each person deals with it in their own unique way. All of them are consumed with guilt for how they have lived their lives thus far and desire to change their existences.



Chapters 1

Chapters 1 Summary

Sai waits for the mathematics tutor, who is also her boyfriend, to arrive as she flips through the national geographic magazine. A man she calls the judge is sleeping in his chair, his dog by his side. Sai serves tea to the judge, who complains about the service and lack of proper food. Sai explains that the baker is out of town so the cook scrounged up some chocolate pudding and warmed it on the stove. The judge was content, as was everyone else. They were so content that they didn't notice the young Nepalese men that were quietly approaching the house through the tall grass.

They were dressed in traditional guerrilla fashion and the oldest looked under twenty. One of the boys had a gun and once they saw that the dog was no threat to them, they demanded any weapons that were in the house. The judge had no phone to call the police, and the boys invited themselves to their tea time. The boys drank the tea and ate all the food they were given, defecated in the toilets, though there was no water in them and stripped the judge and the cook of their last bits of dignity by making them say they were fools aloud. The boys found the judge's rusted guns, filled two trunks with food and liquor and left. The cook broke down, and the judge quickly called for him to shut up and regain his composure, though it was all the judge could do to stop from trembling himself. The boys dishonored him, an act so disgraceful that a proper gentleman would kill the witnesses of such an act.

Chapters 1 Analysis

In this first chapter, the reader gets a clear picture of the social structures that exist between the introductory characters. The judge is the highest ranking member, followed by Sai and then the cook.

Though the judge is of a higher caste, he has fallen victim to the social deterioration of Kalimpong because of a geo-political insurgency. He is an educated man, who attended Cambridge University, a Hindu, and a man who loves his pet. His cook, who has probably worked for him almost his entire life, is a poor, tired man, whose son works illegally in the U.S. Sai's class is unknown, though she flows freely between the two men, talking to each with dignity, turning away when their honor is attacked by the insurgents.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The judge sends the cook to the police station the next day to report the crime. The police grilled him, stating that it was usually the servants who staged or promoted robberies since they were so desperate. The following day, the police went to Cho Oyu to ask more questions and to see Cho Oyu from the inside, since it was such an elaborate building but was now starting to decay.

The house was built by a Scotsman, whose passion for India made him hire hundreds of workers to build his home, who carried boulders from the riverbed up to the chosen site. The police searched around the house and were unimpressed by it, since it was in such disrepair. While searching the cook's hut, Sai noticed a picture of Biju, the cook's only child, who now worked in America. The cook beamed with pride whenever he spoke of him. The cops found a case full of letters, dumped them out and began reading them. The cook and Biju wrote as often as they could, but the last letter was dated three years back.

Chapter 2 Analysis

People in the town are very captivated by Cho Oyu and its palatial grandeur. They are always curious to go in and always disappointed when they see how run down it has become. In a way, the house is like the judge, old and worn, though once both were prosperous and important. The police search around, disrespecting the house and automatically go to the cook's room, since they always believe that the help has something to do with what goes wrong in the everyday lives of the people they serve. This shows the distinct class levels, or castes, that are so rigid they cannot be ignored. The cops read through the cook's letters, claiming they might find some evidence of misdoings, but really they are curious to see what his son is doing in America. The cook doesn't stop them from reading his personal letters because he is proud of his son, and likes that they are so interested.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In America, Biju sells hot dogs for Gray's Papaya. Biju watches as the men borderline sexually harass the pretty girls that buy hot dogs. He tried waving his confidence around the same way they did, but he was still a boy. One day after work, his co-workers take him to a Dominican prostitute. He refuses, saying that they are dirty. Each day he thinks of another excuse why he can't have sex with a prostitute. Biju is relieved when his boss has to fire them because of a green card check.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Biju still doesn't consider himself a man, especially since he is so captivated by the confidence that the men he works with portray when talking to women. He is scared to sleep with prostitutes and knows that it is not the right way, not the clean way to have sex. Though he is ridiculed for being a dirty Indian, he is cleaner than all the other men with whom he works.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The police are intrigued by the letters, even though they started to become repetitive. The letters are very similar, and Biju writes mainly about the job he is in, how it is better than the last, and how he misses his father. The cook always wrote back carefully, so Biju wouldn't be embarrassed by him, giving him advice and telling him to contact another Indian from this town who lives in America. Sai feels embarrassed for watching the cook's pride being stripped. She feels like their relationship is fake because of their different class levels. She speaks English and he, Hindi, and they never get into deep conversations. Yet she feels comfort when she sees his face and accepts the way he addresses her so tenderly when he calls her Saibaby or Babyji. Sai met the cook nine years before on arriving to Cho Oyu as a frightened child. The cook is holding a lantern and looks just as old as the judge. Sai tries to make the cook feel better by denouncing the way the police treated him. He tells her it is just their duty.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The police leave everything a mess, especially since they saw that the cook was not very well taken care of, so they should not treat him any differently. They know that it is not their fault that the help is treated badly. Sai is embarrassed by this, especially since she feels a closeness to the cook. Even though they are from different classes, she warms up to him and talks to him whenever she can or wants. They have a deep connection that will surely play out more as the book progresses. After the police leave, Sai and the cook sit around justifying the way the police treated him in an attempt to reestablish his dignity. This only ends up revealing that his dignity is completely shattered, and that as a servant, his pride is already gone and stripped.

Nandu has not been introduced into the storyline by Biju, alluding to the idea that perhaps Nandu is not actively present in his life. He was supposed to take care of him in the U.S., but as the story progresses, the reader will see that those sent to the U.S. to people who will supposedly look after them are often left left alone.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

This chapter begins with the different basement kitchens where Biju has worked. He meets different people from all over the world from places he has never even heard of. Everyone tells him their countries are full of Indians, that they can't get rid of them. It was a different world for him working in the basement kitchens, and he doesn't know how to act. He hated a Pakistani based on old stereotype and they fight that is heard upstairs so both are fired. When leaving the basement, they round the corner they run into each other again, then turn away again.

Chapter 5 Analysis

All the restaurants where Biju works are American or European cuisine, and all the food is cooked by people from developing countries, alluding to the idea that there is inequality and pseudo-slavery even in the restaurant business. Though he knows little of other countries and people, others seemed to know a lot about Indians, and they don't like them. When a Pakistani arrives as an employee, Biju is sure the people will like him better than the Pakistani, because nobody, not even Indians like Pakistanis. Biju feels comfortable hating the Pakistani, which is what is meant by "Biju felt he was entering a warm amniotic bath." It was comfortable and familiar to hate him and be his enemy. When they fight, the writer mentions that everyone in the first world above heard them, revealing that below in the basement, was third world and nothing but servants. Even in America, there is a strict class divide, just as in India. Biju is a servant just like his father and not treated any better than his father is treated in India. At the end, when they are turning away from each other, it symbolized the two cultures and how similar they are, leaving from the same place in the world (i.e., the basement kitchen), yet how they cannot stand each other.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Sai waits at the gate for the cook, who asks her where her parents are, and she tells him that they died in Russia,

Sai's father was going to become the first Indian in space with the Russians and married a Russian woman. At six, Sai went to St. Augustine's, and the parents are killed in a car accident after leaving the school. The judge was listed as an emergency contact and when he agrees, they send her to live with him. His full name is Jemubhai Patel, who decided to retire in Cho Oyu forever and be a foreigner in his own country, away from everything. Sai is thrilled to leave the strict convent. She loves Western culture.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Sai's parents fell in love and married, even though they were not part of the same religion or from the same town. They did not have an arranged marriage, as is customary, and were able to live their lives freely. It is a very brave thing to do, especially since both were of higher classes. The writer says that nobody else would be impressed by their secular marriage because everyone else would have wanted their marriages to be arranged to suitable people according to their castes.

Because Sai attended a Catholic school, she became very aware of the differences between her roots and the West. She eventually decided that English was better than Hindu and that she was a more elite member of society. When she is on the train en route to Cho Oyu and she sees the working men, the nun explains how these people have no shame and that they are of a different breed altogether. Another passenger on the train says that the workers probably think in the same fashion, which is why they don't mind defecating in the streets. They are not embarrassed because the people on the train are not of their own kind.



Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 Summary

Sai's grandfather looks and smells old. The judge tells Sai he will provide a tutor for her because she is too refined for the government school. When Sai is in bed, she can hear the termites eating the house. The judge tries to read but is distracted by thoughts about the trunk the thieves took. He thinks over the history of the trunk, when he left home as a young man to attend school in Cambridge, leaving behind a fourteen-year-old wife, whose face he couldn't even remember. The judge tries to shake off the memory of his father at the docks as he boarded the ship. In England, he finds a room to rent and registers at Fitzwilliam college. His days are filled with studying and loneliness and becomes obsessed with bathing off his "Indian smell." The judge shakes off his memories but is unable to sleep. In the morning, Sai meets her tutor. On the way to the tutor's the cook informs Sai about various neighbors—Uncle Potty and his friend Father Booty. And the two sisters, Lola and Noni, who is to be Sai's tutor. When Sai learns all the math Noni can teach, a new tutor, Gyan, is hired.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 Analysis

The judge wears white powder on his face, perhaps as a way to mask his true color. The house is being eaten away by termites—ironic that such a mighty fortress of a house can be done away so easily by the smallest of creatures. It shows that even things that seem so substantial and amazing can be destroyed by the smallest, insignificant things. Nothing is created in vain, and everything can be destroyed if it really doesn't matter.

When Jemu does not throw the coconut overboard, it is a sign that he is outrightly disrespecting his father, and that Jemu is ashamed of his father. He pities the sight of his father, standing in "a place where he should not be," referring to his social status. The customs of his people are no longer good enough for Jemu; they do not transcend into the white world into which he is venturing. His father covers his mouth in shame for having said anything to his son about the coconut. His mother also inadvertently shames him when she packs the bananas. He thinks she packed them in case he doesn't want to go to the dining salon, since he doesn't know how to use utensils. While she is protecting him from this shame, he is embarrassed by this and feels just as bad and angry that his mother has put him in such a position. He is angry that he is born not knowing how to use utensils.

When he buys the shaving brush, he is alarmed that the woman compares his brush to that of her husband's brush, pointing out that they are identical. Even though the two men have the same object, they are completely different, so different that he finds the comparison disturbing, alluding to his unease at being himself.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Though they have a watchman, the sisters are terrified, when they learn about the judge's stolen guns. Budhoo, a retired Nepalese army man, protects the sisters, though the sisters do not trust him because he is Nepali. There is political trouble on the hillside as always, and Noni and Lola wanted to get to the market and library to get some books, in case the trouble worsened. Lola's daughter, Pixie, was a news reporter for the BBC and Indians laughed at her British accent. Lola is prejudiced for anything English and had told Pixie to leave India and never look back.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The upper class naturally does not trust the lower classes. They believe that the servants are the cause of all problems, yet they continue to allow them in their homes to protect and serve them. The sisters claim to love their lives, where they live and how they live, yet they tell anyone with means to leave at the first chance they get, as Lola told her daughter. Once anyone gets a taste for the Western world, they cannot turn back. Lola becomes an honorary Englishwoman only speaking about things that are English and wanting to eat English foods. She is proud of her daughter, yet doesn't realized that the people laugh at her daughter for having a British accent. This accent that is refined to Lola is a joke to the rest of the population, and as we see later, with the rest of the English as well.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Biju starts his second year working in a restaurant where the owner's wife gave him toiletries because she thought he smelled. He is fired when his "smell" does not improve. His next job is delivering Chinese takeout where he once delivers to three Indian women, who he overhears one saying she doesn't want a nice Indian boy, but a "Marlboro man with a PhD." These "American" Indian girls were educated and liberated. Biju is unsure of how they treat him—whether condescension or friendliness. The winter cold is almost unbearable and he lives in the basement of a tenement with other illegals, and the place is smelly and dark. Biju is fired because the food cools before he can deliver it, so he finds another job and also meets Saeed Saeed, his first true friend.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Biju almost faints when Saeed Saeed sings an Indian song because it had been so long since Biju had heard anyone refer to his country in a positive way. He misses his country and his family and wants to go back home to see his father and back to a place where everyone is like him, where people don't accost him for smelling and being stupid. This tells the readers that perhaps Biju will go back to India one day with the money he has made in the U.S. He may be the one immigrant that will actually go back home.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

After the cook drops Sai off for tutoring, he does his errands in town and sells the homemade brew he starting making to support his son because the judge pays him so little. Working as a servant for a family that never appreciated you was the worst feeling in the world in the cook's mind. The cook was so jealous of servants who were treated well by their employers that he began lying about his relationship with the judge, and the cook began believing his own stories.

The judge's father, Jemubhai Popatlat Patel, was born into a peasant caste in 1919 and earned a living finding false witnesses to appear in court. He made Jemubhai study hard and deprived Jemu's sisters of any luxury so he could get the best of everything from love to food. After Cambridge, Jemubhai returns as a member of the ICS and works in another district far from home with many servants. This is where the cook at age fourteen began working for the judge. The cook was disappointed not to be working for white people because working for an Indian was a not prestigious.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Servants don't like working for Indians, only white people. There is prejudice amongst Indians, too, and to work for an Indian, regardless of how rich and powerful he is, is never the same as working for a white person, even if the white person is the lowest-class citizen. White is always better. The cook has to make due with working for the judge. The judge treats the cook very poorly, perhaps worse than a white person would, and the cook becomes jealous of other servants who are treated well by their bosses. He makes up stories to show the world that the judge is not a bad person, just a man that has had a hard life and is misunderstood. The truth is that the judge has gone through rough patches, but the lies are to help the cook accept the fact that he works for a deteriorating man. The lies help the cook keep his own dignity, and the truth about the judge will come out eventually.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Noni and Lola think Sai needs more social interaction with the right people and also instruction of being a lady. They disapprove of her friendliness with the cook, believing that those in the servant class were not only inferior but incapable of lofty emotions. Noni is sometimes jealous that Lola experienced love and marriage. Noni sees herself in Sai, though unlike Sai, her spirit was demolished at the Catholic school Noni attended and it was too late for Noni by the time she "found herself." Sai tells Noni she wants to travel. Sai and Noni tried picking up the physics book again, then put it down. Noni told Sai that if she gets a chance in life, that she has to take it. They try physics again, but Noni admits defeat and that night sends Sai home with a note for the judge that she cannot teach any more math or physics and perhaps they should get a tutor from the local college.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Noni buries the thought of her husband because perhaps they never really loved each other; it was probably an arranged marriage, and they had to learn to get along. For Noni, the lines had blurred, luck had been given to another person rather than the one that deserved it, meaning that something caused a rift in the social lines. It should only be the the upper class that should experience love and happy emotions.

Noni later tells Sai that she should take chances and run with them. Sai is still young and she shouldn't be confined to living an ordinary life. This is the first sign that Sai will end up taking Noni's advice and doing something out of the ordinary, perhaps leaving Cho Oyu or meeting new people. When Noni can no longer teach Sai physics and math, she advises hiring a student from the local college. This will be the entrance for Gyan, and a chance for Sai to have interaction with someone younger who isn't in her same social class.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The college immediately found a student tutor named Gyan, who walks the two hours to Sai's home. When sits down with Gyan an undeniable chemistry occurs with which the cook is uneasy. After two intense hours of tutoring, Gyan leaves exhausted by having been in the room with Sai, who had such a powerful affect on him. The cook tells Sai that it is strange that Gyan is Nepali, since they aren't very intelligent. She ignored his comment and starts wondering about whether she is pretty.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Gyan makes Sai think about herself as a woman and not as the girl of whom she was accustomed. Her first social encounter with a man makes her notice herself and wonder whether she is appealing to other people. Her new obsession is with her face and body. The appetite that she has is obviously sexual, and Gyan may be the one that can satisfy her.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Biju continually worries about being picked up by immigration. His admiration for Saeed grows as he gets to know him. Saeed is charismatic and has adapted to life in the U.S. Saeed is a Muslim, which means that Biju has to think about Saeed differently. Was it acceptable to like Muslims and only hate Pakistani Muslims? Saeed is black, and at home Biju had heard that black people are like monkeys and become men when they arrive in India. On the flip side, Biju had an admiration for white men, even though they had done so much harm in India.

Saeed tells Biju that Indians were disliked everywhere because they were so ubiquitous, but Saeed still likes Biju, who is no threat to Saeed. Saeed was a lady's man and had girlfriends throughout the city. Saeed's first job was at a mosque where he would ring the bell for morning prayer. Whenever he wasn't working, he was down at a nearby night club with a disposable camera in hand waiting for famous people to pass by. Biju's father writes him a letter asking him to help out the son of the MetalBox watchman. He hates asking his son for such favors, but having been asked for help was an honor in itself. Biju dreams about a green card, but Indians were not allowed to apply because there were too many of them in the U.S.

Chapter 14 Analysis

As Biju's admiration for Saeed grows, so does his confusion. Everything he had been taught about Muslims and black people was being challenged by Saeed's wonderful personality. He was proof that Muslims could be likable, and that black people were not like monkeys. Yet he fears letting all the stereotypes go too far because if he did, then it would mean that Muslims are good; Pakistanis are Muslims, so they are good, and if Pakistanis are good, then Indians are bad and they should hand over Kashmir to the Pakistanis. It was too far a stretch, so Biju constrains himself to just accept Saeed.



Chapter 15 and Chapter 16

Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 Summary

Back in Kalimpong, a letter from Biju arrives for the cook. He writes that he has a new job at a bakery and that the boss leaves them in charge. The cook boasts about his son's new managerial position. People ask him when he is going to join Biju, and he assures them that Biju is saving to buy a ticket. The cook knows money wasn't everything and it is more important for people to care about each other, like he and his son. Sai asks the judge about her grandmother and presses the cook until he admits the judge didn't like his wife. She was from a higher caste than her grandfather, but since he was a member of the ICS, an exception was made for his caste. The judge married the daughter of Bomanbhai Patel, who was the supplier of horse feed to the British military, and he also offered soldiers "unauthorized women." When he heard that Jemu would be going to England and become a member of the ICS, he offered him his most beautiful daughter. Bela panics on their wedding night, so the judge did not "deflower" her. On a bike ride the next day, their hearts connected for an instant.

Each session Sai and Gyan made excuses for why they couldn't work more. Sometimes she had a headache, or he had to leave early, and this is how they would put a stop to the agonizing tension between them. Though every time they parted, both longed for the next session. Sai knows she will leave Cho Oyu and Kalimpong one day.

Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 Analysis

When the cook thinks about Biju in America, he knows that Biju will send for him and save him from India. The cook believes that his son will take care of him, that it is Biju's duty to care for him. He depends on him completely, yet doesn't quite understand how hard things are for Biju. He has such high hopes, and Biju such terrible luck, that it seems as though his wish won't be granted. He may end up dying in India without ever seeing his son again.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

The cook is besieged by people asking for help from Biju in America. The cook tells Biju not to forget about the others back home and help as much as he could. The cook did not know Biju was doing so poorly. Saeed tells Biju that his mother gave his phone number out to half his village, who call him from the airport. His mother gave "the tribe" his address and now they are stalking him. The Tribe comes in, and the guys tell them that Saeed does not work there. The men leave, then the phone rings. Saeed knows it is the right thing to help the Tribe, but he knows them and people like them all too well. They come to the U.S. with someone's telephone number; they seek them out; eat their food; sleep in their bed, and take everything they can. Back in Africa, a tribe will share everything with everyone, which is why nobody has anything.

Biju remembers trying to contact Nandu when Biju first arrived. Nandu avoids Biju but finally tells him that there are no jobs and he should go back to India. Biju doesn't listen and insists that he help him. Nandu drops Biju off at the basement apartment, and Biju never hears from him again. Biju obsesses over getting a green card. He can't leave the U.S. without one because he may never be lucky enough to get back in. Getting a visa is near impossible, getting a second visa is unheard of—it's stay in the U.S. illegally and perhaps never seeing one's family back in India, or giving up and going home.

The bakery is forced to shut down and Biju knows he won't see Saeed anymore, for that is how it is in the U.S. Biju feels empty again and decides that he won't let anyone get as close as Saeed ever again.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Biju realized that what Nandu did to him was not personal, rather completely normal. When people got to the U.S., most wanted to cut ties with people in India, because they couldn't help the entire country. He understood the persistence of his father to help people, yet it annoyed him because he was barely making it on his own. He didn't have the promised help of Nandu and he could not promise to help anyone else. He never tells his father that in his letters, only that he is doing well, which is also stretching the truth. When his friend Saeed leaves, he is saddened once again to have lost someone that he feels so close to. It appears as though he will never have permanence in relationships and will always end up losing those that he loves.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Back in Cho Oyu, everything in the house was wet as the rainy season begins. In town there was a growing political problem. Gyan does not care about the rain; he goes to see Sai saying she had to learn, and he needs his job. Sai notes that the city is falling apart. The police was closing in on militants, but the Sikhs still wanted more land for themselves and the Punjab was unstable. It starts to hail and Gyan decides that he better go home. The judge tells him to stay in the house. He tells Gyan that while he is clever in mathematics, he has no common sense. At dinner, the judge feels that Gyan is a man with ulterior motives. He asks him what poets he admires, and Gyan cannot think of any because he is a science person, not an arts person. The judge asks why people are not well rounded anymore. The judge hates the rainy season because it made a mockery of his ideals. With each storm, less of the house was habitable which makes the judge feel older.

The judge remembers when he was a student in England where he'd take refuge from the world by referring to himself in the third person. Once he had an oral exam and is asked to recite a poem; the professors laughed at his heavy accent. He realizes that the tiniest things are triggering bad memories. In bed, the judge still thinks about his past exam where he had earned the lowest mark, but since the ICS wanted to Indianize, they accepted him as a last resort. He cried for days on end, not knowing whether he was happy or sad and sent a letter home saying he had passed.

Jemu moves to a boardinghouse and met his only friend in England, Bose, who was an optimist. He was a little more immersed in English culture and Jemu learned from Bose. The two learned to recognize when cleanliness and food were not up to English standards. Bose frequently corrected Jemu on his English pronunciation. Jemu became a man of dignity, something he did not agree with and could not understand. He envied Englishmen and hated Indians and tried desperately to become the former. In the end, he would be despised by both the English and the Indians.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Gyan goes to Cho Oyu to supposedly tutor and get paid. The judge tells Gyan he has no common sense and attacks him intellectually, making fun of him when he doesn't know how to recite good poetry. The judge is taken back to a memory of when he was made fun of for the way he recited a piece of poetry. It appears that he is comparing himself to Gyan and wants Gyan to suffer as he did when he was a student.

The judge hates the rainy season because it made a mockery of his ideals. Everything civilized that he had was made insignificant by the weather. The house falling apart makes the judge feels old, as if he is falling apart as well. The house and the judge are



synonymous in this chapter. The judge has left doors to his memory closed; there have been many years where he never let a thought wander into the next room of his memory. In the house, he physically left doors closed where the rain had made parts of the house inhabitable.

After being accepted into the ICS, the judge begins his transformation from poor Indian student to civilized Indian working for the English. He envies the English and hates the Indians and tries to separate himself from his roots. He is trying so desperately to run away from his identity, but because he is so Indian in looks and manners, he can't escape himself. He will only succeed in leaving behind those that understand him (other Indians) and being ostracized by those that he is trying so hard to understand (the English).



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Surprisingly, Biju runs into Saeed again. He's married a white American girl, whose "hippie" parents love him and admire his persistence in trying to emigrate.

Biju's father goes to the post office to complain that all his letters were arriving soaking wet. The postman told him there was no way to keep them dry during the rainy season. During this terrible season, Lola would spray poison to kill the bugs that were multiplying day after day. Thousands of insects died daily, yet it didn't matter because thousands more were born the very next day.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Biju was invisible to the people on the street, and his people were invisible to the people of the world. The writer draws a parallel between Indians and insects. The INS is like an exterminator, trying to get rid of the mass of bugs coming into its home. Few are like Saeed, who reap the benefits of the U.S. and thrive. Others are rejected daily, paperwork and procedure being the poison that keeps them out. Their dreams are killed in the process. When Lola sprays the bugs in her house, she is spreading real poison throughout, yet the absurdity of it is that even though she works so hard to keep them out, once they are inside the house, they multiply in numbers that make it impossible to ever eradicate them. Once they are in, they stay in, and nothing she does will ever get them back out. This is true of immigrants to the U.S., once they are in, they multiply in the U.S., bring their families over from India, Africa, Mexico or wherever they are from, and they never leave.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Gyan and Sai's love for one another is growing. They spend time gazing at each other, analyzing one another's features, body parts and special talents. The two were so wrapped up in their love that they seldom paid attention to the events in Kalimpong. The people wanted to return from Bengal and have their own state. The GNLF was the radical youth wing that was taking things into their own hands fighting for the creation of their own homeland, which they called Gorkhaland. The insurgency had begun.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Gyan and Sai had found natural love, something that was very uncommon, especially between two members of different classes. Their love will trigger many different emotions, good and bad, down the road with which the two will have to deal. It appears that they might be able to stay together in the end. However, Gyan gets sucked into the GNLF struggle and soon finds that his love for Sai is a sign of weakness. Sai represents the oppressors because of her status, and he is the oppressed because he is an ethnic Nepali.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Noni believes the Nepalis they should have their own land called Gorkhaland. Noni and Lola are Bongs, and Lola says that if the Neps (Nepalis) get their way, the Bongs will suffer. Noni thinks about their Nepalese watchman and grows suspicious of him. Noni tries to get Lola to look at things from the Nepalese point of view, but Lola says that the Nepalese are demanding more rights because there are so many of them there, though they emigrated illegally. Lola reminds Noni of the different sects and from where they came. Lola continues to criticize the Nepoli and Muslims. Lola then turns to bashing the U.S. and how they are so unrefined. Noni tries to defend the Americans, but Lola ignores her and asks Sai her if she has any love interests. Sai dare not tell the sisters about Gyan. Lola encourages Sai to be adventurous. Noni thinks worms,are making Sai so morose.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Noni is the more tolerant sister. She tries to understand the insurgents and explains to Lola that they just want to have their own place to call home. Noni is a sentimentalist, siding with the poor. Lola, on the other hand, believes the insurgents have no rights, and if given a little, they will run with it as far as possible. She believes herself to be more civilized than they are, more anglicized, and that equates to being better. This superiority complex will be a downfall for her in the future, but her sister will also be in trouble, even though she is more open minded. This is because they are members of the upper class.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Biju is now working at Brigitte's in the New York Financial District. Odessa, and Baz are the owners of the restaurant. Odessa says that people looking after their own interests is the rule of nature and that people can't be blamed too harshly for succeeding. Down below in the kitchen, Biju and the rest were talking about the people above. One said white people were making life difficult for everyone else, but the U.S. was better than England because at least in the people in the States believed they were good. In England, they knew they were evil. Biju saw many Indians eating beef in the restaurant, but one thing that the Indian businessmen knew was how to tell the difference between a holy cow and an unholy cow, and that is how they could eat there. Then Biju thinks about Saeed, who still refused to eat pig. He always said that he was first Muslim, second Zanzibari and then American. Thinking about Saeed gives Biju the strength to quit his job at Brigitte's, leaving the restaurant with a desire to live with a newfound purity. He will not work where they serve beef. He thinks about how terrible it is to be Indian abroad, and how some just give up their identities without a fight. He finds the Gandhi Cafe where Harish-Harry the owner tells Biju that he does not hire Bangledeshis or Pakistanis and that they are an all Hindu establishment. He gets the job and a week later is cooking along to the sweet sounds of Gandhi's best hits.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The holy cow and the unholy cow refers to identity and when a person should give in. In India, the cow is sacred, but it isn't in the U.S. By leaving the holy cow ideal in India, Indian businessmen could enjoy life in the U.S. a little better than if they spent their time avoiding beef. They were assimilating, in a way, leaving behind ideals that didn't matter but in their native country, but once back in India, they would adopt their former lifestyle wholeheartedly. It is the willingness to be part of a community wholeheartedly, living between two world and adopting the rules of each at the proper time that made some Indians fit in in their adopted country. Buji thought it was sad what happened to Indians abroad, and he didn't want it to happen to him. He didn't want to be sucked into a culture so unlike his own, to sell out for a few dollars. He knew that he could make money and keep his identity, like Saeed had done when he proclaimed that he was first a Muslim, then everything else. Biju sticks to his beliefs and finds an Indian restaurant where he can be himself. It appears that his luck is about to change for the better now that he is in a place more like home than anything he had ever experienced before. He forgets that he left home for a reason, and those reasons will become more clear in the next few chapters.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

The political trouble in Kalimpong continues while Gyan and Sai's romance flourished. Their class differences were becoming more obvious, however. She tried covering up the difference by calling him pet names. When the two discuss their parents, Gyan feels they have more in common than he thought. Gyan's great-grandfather fought for the British Army and was killed in Burma, then his brother died quickly while in the British Army, and another family member was recruited. Gyan's uncle fought for the Brits and his pension pays for schooling for the extended family. When Sai asks more about Gyan's father, Gyan doesn't answer the question. Sai gets home late that night and the cook confronts her. She tells him to leave her alone and is aware of the burden that family can put on a newfound romance. Sai laughs at cook when he threatens to smack her and calms him down as usual.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Gyan goes back and forth between wanting to be with Sai and wanting to be a man fighting for the liberation of his people. He thinks about his family and how they were used by the British and compares Sai to the British because of how Westernized she is. He blames her for the poverty of his family and for turning his back on his cultural ideals. She and people like her are the reason why his life had been so hard, and he is a fool for falling into the trap of the new colonizers. Sai doesn't realize that she is in such a position of power over Gyan, and is very Western in the way she believes in love. It never occurs to her that she can't have everything that she has always wanted.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The food at the Ghandi cafe is the same generic Indian food that is served all throughout the states. Harish-Harry knows his market saying Indians make good immigrants because they understood demand-supply. Malini, Harish's wife is also a tough businesswoman, always doing everything to get the best deals. In fact, she suggested that the workers live in the kitchen, but then they lower their salary, take their tips and work them seventeen hours a day. It is all illegal, but the workers can not complain because they are illegal. Harish-Harry and Malini say they are all one happy, Indian family, even though the workers live like animals, while Harish-Harry and his real family live in a palatial house in the suburbs of New Jersey. Biju realizes that Harish-Harry's two names is an attempt to live in two worlds and please all the potential gods. Most of the immigrant Indians were like Harish-Harry. Harish-Harry found his balance with the whites distasteful. His daughter was becoming too Americanized. He is always kind to his American customers, but admits also wants to break their necks. The only thing that calms Harish-Harry down is the money that he makes, a sum unknown to Biju.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Indians in America always tried to keep a balance between their two worlds. The writer draws an interesting parallel between Indians and the food they eat. They eat the hottest foods possible in front of Americans but then have to balance the heat out with yogurt, assuring them that the balance is normal. It is this constant assurance that they are 100% Indian and 100% American that gets them in trouble. They have to prove they are more Indian, and prove that they can handle being in the U.S. at the same time. An exhausting endeavor that gets to even the best of them.



Chapter 25 and Chapter 26

Chapter 25 and Chapter 26 Summary

The Winter in Kalimoonj is dull and cold and dry. She goes to Noni and Lola's house for Christmas. The sisters have English ornaments but give authentic Tibetan socks to everyone, which itches their feet. As Lola becomes inebriated, she reminisces about the 1960's, when things were better politically, but harder in general.

After the new year, Gyan heard a group of young men, a few of them his classmates, shouting "Jai Gorkha," which meant "Victory to the Gorkha Liberation Army," and suddenly Gyan finds himself watching and enjoying the parade. He joins the parade and becomes imbued with the spirit of revolution. He thinks about when he went to Calcutta for a job interview and knew he would never be hired. Now it all makes sense to him. He wasn't hired because he is a Gorkha. The Gorkhas are eighty percent of the population, but they are treated like slaves in their own country. The uprising deeply affects Gyan. He tells of his ancestors who fought and died for the Brits, but never were equal or had money. The men sat around in rage, hearing everyone's stories. Gyan thinks about Sai and gets upset he has wasted so much time with her. He states that the Gorkha movement should be as harsh as possible to get their freedom.

Chapter 25 and Chapter 26 Analysis

Gyan wants to be a man; he is angered by spending so much time with Sai and realizes that he has to step up and be masculine. He realizes that all his problems are rooted with colonial times, and that the GNLF is attempting to put a stop to the British influence that has left them landless. He joins the men, drinking along and telling stories of his family, saying that they should take the strongest action against the upper class and non-Nepalis. This was an old hatred that was being reborn, as often is the case. However, old hatreds never die, and perhaps this is a sign that ethnic struggles will always persist in India. There will always be lower-class citizens that will get tired of being poor and will become so desperate that they will resort to war.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Gyan is late for tutoring and in a bad mood. He tells Sai that they are all like slaves to the West, embarrassing themselves by trying to be like the whites. Sai tells him she is free to do whatever she wants, a legacy from her parents and grandfather.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Gyan is more disgusted by Sai and her riches when he goes to her house after meeting up with the GNLFF boys. He is mad that he ever partook in the cutlet and peas dinner. Why couldn't they eat normal food like the rest of the people? Perhaps they thought they were too good to eat traditional Indian food. He tells Sai that she is a fool for being so Western and that if she were to leave India and try to be a Westerner, either in the U.S. or England, that she would be laughed at and treated like a classless Indian. She ignores his comments and asks him why he is behaving so badly with her. She doesn't understand why he is so bitter all of the sudden, especially since she has no connection with the struggle in Kalimpong. She was not born there, had not lived there her entire life, and was exempt from any of the social rules and norms that existed.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

The judge thinks about his hate; when he returned from England for the first time. His relatives seemed nosy, and judgmental. Nimi, his wife, went through his things and the judge feels like a foreigner in his own home. The privacy that he had enjoyed in Britain was not recognized here. Instead of being impressed by his English manners, they laugh at him. He raped his wife for taking his things. He was glad that he could disguise his sexual inexperience with sheer force and rage. This rage would help him throughout his life, but the grotesqueness of raping his own wife "turned his civilized stomach." He tried to civilize Nimi but she was too stubborn to even try. Weeks went by where she didn't speak to anyone, not even the servants. To him, Nimi was lazy, depressed, backwards and of no use to him. He is abusive verbally and they begin to hate each other beyond the normal parameters of hate, which lasted throughout their marriage.

Chapter 28 Analysis

When Jemu returns to India, he is a changed man. He believes he has changed for the best, and when his family laughs at him for owning a powder puff, he becomes enraged. He arrived thinking he would be respected, asked about his time in England and treated like a king for being so civilized. Instead, his family members intrude in his life and treat him like any other member of the family. They cannot understand why he is so mad when someone goes through his things, and they find it absurd that he requires and expects such great privacy. He has a chip on his shoulder and out of anger beats his wife for stealing his puff. Where once he was a gentle young man who didn't sexually take his wife when they got married, he was now a violent man, who was practicing the best of English customs and the worse of the Indian ones.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Gyan asks Sai where her Hindu pride is and why she is trying to be so Western. Later, he apologizes for being so mean, and she accepts his apology only for him to be infuriated by his softness once again and gets angry for giving in to her. Gyan goes to a canteen and a feeling of martyrdom creeps over him. He was upset that he was in love and mad that Sai had given herself to him so easily. Her lack of Indianess appalls him; he tells the other revolutionaries about the guns and situation at the judge's house.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Gyan is confused about Sai. He goes back and forth, fighting back his natural emotions and inclination to love her. He knows that it is not right to love someone that is not in his own class. He knows that the right thing would be for his marriage to be arranged to a woman that his family chooses, that would bring honor to his family and that would respect him and be submissive to him. Instead he was captivated by Sai and angry for being so weak. Things were all wrong between them. The natural love they had was culturally wrong, and he had to put a stop to it.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Food was becoming harder to find in the market because of the strikes. Cook thinks about his wife and how she may have cursed him for not saying the right prayers to ward off her spirit. Cook thought that perhaps because he lied to the judge to go make the sacrifice, he didn't do it the right way and was now being punished. The cook and Biju had been scammed more than once, each time turning over large sums of money to get to the United States.

Now Sai was working at the Ghandi Cafe and slipped on some rotten spinach and landed on his knee. Harish-Harry won't send him to the doctor and if they seek treatment, Biju could get deported. Harish-Harry then advises Biju to go back to India and seek medical attention there. Biju realizes he is in a master-servant relationship with Harish-Harry and ponders going back to India. But then he remembers that his father told him to stay in the US. as long as possible and to never go back to India.

Chapter 30 Analysis

When the man curses at the animal before killing it, Biju watches in disgust as he was just stripped of his own pride and dignity. The scam artists are much like the butcher. They take unsuspecting people like animals, strip them of all they have, tempting them with money and stories of success like carrots to a goat; then, when the least suspect, they crush the people's dreams, leaving them with nothing.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

After the gun robbery at Cho Oyu, things were beginning to worsen. Sai, Noni, Lola, Uncle Potty and Father Booty were on their way to the library because they knew they would be locked up in their homes for a while due to the roadblocks and protesters. Darjeeling was so ugly because of government construction policies. At the library, they picked out books written by English writers, but only when they wrote about England. They hated when English writers wrote about India. Sai picked out an old book that states Indians can be civilized but can never be as good as the English. The book managed to ignite a fury in her; this is why it isn't good to read old books.

Chapter 31 Analysis

This is where Sai begins to understand about her culture and heritage. She sees that her people were never equal to the British, even when they mirrored everything that they did. She thinks about herself and how she had been raised so Western, believing in privilege and always thinking about herself and how she looked, just like a Western girl might. The book that she skims injects a hatred of the way things used to be and the way they are now. She feels guilty for enjoying her life so much and knowing that her father probably struggled to provide her with such a life. This is why it was unwise to read old books, because they made the hatred new again in a person of a completely different generation.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

The judge thinks of his old friend, Bose, who made fun of the way they Bose used to correct the judge's English and how they pretended to enjoy living typical English lives. Bose used to be optimistic about life, but when he consistently lost cases white people won easily, his light went out. Bose and his son became fighters for justice. The judge ignored requests from Bose to help Bose, thinking Bose was naive to believe that an Indian could cross over into the Western world completely. Bose damns the English for the way they treated him and people like him. The judge tells Bose that time was past and that time changes the past and the way it is viewed. A month later after his conversation with Bose, the judge got news that his granddaughter would be arriving. She was a westernized Indian and perhaps would possibly be the only miracle he would ever receive in his lifetime.

Chapter 32 Analysis

The judge says that the present changes the past because when you remember the past, you don't always see what you left behind. What he means by this is that whenever a person looks into their past, they have experienced so many things throughout their lives that the past is no longer what it used to be, nor does it have the same impact emotionally. Things that you learn along the way reveal things that you didn't know were there. Innocent times all of the sudden become saturated with meanings that make everything clear. In the case with the judge and Bose, in the past they knew they were part of something new, something great, which was the Indianization of the ICS. However, now that they look back on it, they see that it was all done as an image, and the ICS was never Indianized. They were just colorful symbols, token Indians there for the sake of aesthetics, and they were never and would never be equals to the white members of the ICS. The arrival of his granddaughter is the miracle the judge needs to give him some hope in life. It foreshadows future events that may soften him.



Chapter 33, Chapter 34, and Chapter 35

Chapter 33, Chapter 34, and Chapter 35 Summary

Six months after Sai and the rest of the group went to the library in Darjeeling, the Gorkha National Liberation closed down the Gymkhana. Sai and the others tried unsuccessfully to bribe the army men not to confiscate their books. A week later, the library books were returned safely, but Father Booty, who had accidentally taken an illegal picture of the bridge that the GNLFF guarded, was found to be an illegal citizen. They were deporting him after his having lived in Kalimong for forty-five years. Sai thought about how upsetting this all was, and how unclear her life at Cho Oyu would be. The police had tortured a drunk man saying he was responsible for the theft of guns at Cho Oyu; they were just practicing their torture techniques for the future.

Chapter 33, Chapter 34, and Chapter 35 Analysis

Kalimpong was in for a rough time. The GNLFF men were about to take over, and by taking the books away from the group and not being satisfied with a bribe, the group knows they will be abused. The GNLFF are gaining more power and the first people they will use it against will be the privileged people on the top of the hill in Kalimpong. The money that used to protect the residents of Mon Ami and Cho Oyu will be their demise.

The case of the robbery was closed by the police picking up a drunkard and torturing him for the crime. This served as justice and is representative of the type of justice that exists in Kalimpong and in all of India. So long as a person is charged for a crime, regardless of whether the person committed it, there is justice. Somebody needs to be charged and cases need to be closed. Justice is simply a hoop that officials need to jump through to prove that they are trying to do the right thing.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Back in the U.S. a man named Mr. Iype tells Biju about the trouble in the hillside of Darjeeling. He calls his father and when Buji is talking to the cook, a crowd gathers around repeating every word he says. Biju asks about the political situation and the cook assures him that there is no trouble, that everyone is fine. When the call drops, the cook is left trembling and Biju's emptiness was reinforced; they are in two different worlds. The cook reassures everyone that Biju was fine, and they say Buji will come back a fat man. Biju went back to work and nobody had even noticed he was gone. He missed Saeed and wanted to see the U.S. through Saeed's eyes as Buji once had.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Biju is invisible in the States. He wants to go back to see his father again because they had such a deep connection that he does not want to lose. The cook and his son are very different from the judge and his father. Both sons left home to try to better their lives and the lives of their families. The judge goes back and completely shames his family by having changed so much. Biju sees the way the West changes people and is appalled by the way Indians turn their back on their culture the second they get a chance. He does not want to be that person; he will not shame his father the way that the judge had shamed his family.



Chapter 37 and Chapter 38

Chapter 37 and Chapter 38 Summary

The situation in Kalimpong isn't improving. One day, Lola and Nana noticed that some GNKF boys had built camps on the women's property. One night, some of them broke into the house and forced the women to feed and tend to them. The sisters did as they were asked, but the men did not leave. The women locked themselves in a bedroom, pushing a trunk up to the door. The boys only laughed and told them not to worry, that the sisters were far too old for them. Lola grew angrier by the day. She was angry at the situation and then at her husband for dying and leaving her here in this obscure place to deal with the rebels. She went to the leader of the GNLF, who told her that his men needed to be billeted, and there was nothing she could do to stop them from their objectives.

Chapter 37 and Chapter 38 Analysis

Lola realizes that her husband was too much of a romantic and believed too highly in India. He thought that they would be able to retire in the hills of Kalimpong and live a comfortable life with the money he had made throughout his life. He took stability for granted, but after he died, everything was starting to fall apart. She is angry that she now has to deal with the new political scene alone, and the money that protected her in the past is what is harming her in the present.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Sai believes she and Gyan experienced was true love. Instead of turning into a prince, he turned into an awful frog. The residents of Mon Ami, who all knew that she was in love with someone asked her about the man, but Sai did not disclose any information. While in bed with a cold, she thought about Gyan and wanted to know what kind of person he really was and why he had acted so badly towards her. The next day she goes in search of Gyan.

Chapter 39 Analysis

Sai questions the type of person that Gyan is. Perhaps she is wondering whether he is a perfect match to the stereotypes that the cook always threw out about him. Maybe he was inferior to her because he was Nepali. She still could not help being in love with him and makes herself sick thinking about it. She wonders what could have happened to Gyan to make him turn on her. This perseverance and curiosity will answer her questions when she goes to seek him out.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Sai is directed to Gyan's home, which is dirty and poor. He asks her what she wants and his tone upsets her. She is mad that he never told her about the way he lived and feels betrayed. Sai wants to talk about Father Booty, but Gyan could care less about him. After a deep, confronting conversation, Gyan's humor returns. Together they were a contradiction to society, but the problem was that they wanted purity and lack of contradiction. Sai feels their love returning and calls him a pet name, which upsets him. Gyan needs to push away all of these warm love feelings that only held him down. By pushing Sai away, he refueled the anger he needs to rekindle his belief in the Gorkha cause. He rejects her and throws her down; she leaves, sad but certain she will not have him back. Back at home, the wife and father of the drunk that was tortured about the guns are trying to convince the judge he owes them reparations. The judge denies responsibility and sends them away with nothing.

Chapter 40 Analysis

The two wanted to be pure and perfectly acceptable in society, but they could never achieve this together. They are from two different classes; if Gyan gives in to his passion for Sai, he could jeopardize everything that his family had done for him. His parents sacrificed everything so he could go to college, just as the judge's family had done, and he didn't want to disappoint them by giving in and marrying a girl that was not pure. She was soiled because she wasn't completely Indian. She had been corrupted by the West and would never be the culturally and socially submissive wife that his family wished for him.



Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Biju hates being in the U.S. away from his father. He pretends to not know English when anyone tries to converse with him. There were so many people in the U.S. that "lived fake versions" of their country and other countries. He wanted to go back to India where he would be someone important by now, where his life mattered. He told Aman at a travel agency that he wanted to go home and the agent told Biju he was crazy and his soft feelings will be his demise. The agent tells him his future children would have a much better life if born in the U.S., but Biju remembers how meaningful his childhood had been, although, he only thought of the good parts.

Chapter 41 Analysis

The purpose of going to the U.S. in the first place was to make money and have a better life. His life was better when he had his father. The brief introduction of Mr. Kakkar foreshadows future events for Biju. He tells him that his soft heart will be the end of him, and that he will not get anywhere if he continues to harbor those feelings of his father. He tells him that his children will have a better life in the U.S. but Biju believes differently. He had seen what happened to Americanized Indians. They were disrespectful to their parents, disobeyed and didn't know what it was to be Indian. They didn't appreciate their own cultural heritage.



Chapter 42 and Chapter 43

Chapter 42 and Chapter 43 Summary

Gyan is full of guilt for his actions and betrayal to his family, Sai and the Gorkha revolution, all three who are pulling him in different directions. The boys arrive at Cho Oyu to demand a member of the household attend the burning. The judge volunteers the cook. On the day of the burning, July 27th 1986, the cook joins the MetalBox watchman to watch the burning together. They were instructed to yell "Jai Gorkha!" while marching, but during the march, a ton of rocks and stones were pelted in their direction from behind the post office. A panic started and the police opened fire on the marches, killing thirteen local boys. The cook ran back to Cho Oyu alone, crying and collapsing now and again. He wonders whether Biju still exists or not, or if he is only a habit of memory.

Chapter 42 and Chapter 43 Analysis

The cook thinks about his son Biju and how he has not talked to him in such a long time. Things are falling apart in Kalimpong, and it has been a long time since he has received a letter from him. He begins to think that Biju does not exist anymore, that he is a distant memory like many of the other boys that have left home to find happiness and success in the U.S. Memories of family members are very common in Kalimpong and in India, especially since the parents never want their kids to come home. They know that they will have a better life in the U.S., and when the time is right, their children will either come back to visit or will send for them. The cook used to rely on this fantasy to keep him strong, but with the uprisings, he feels that his fantasy will never come true.



Chapter 44, 45, 46, and 47

Chapter 44, 45, 46, and 47 Summary

People despise Noni and Lola and even children lined up in the street to spit on them as they walked by. The wife and father of the drunkard came were begging again and the judge was adamant about not giving them a thing. When night fell they went back to the property with a sack and snatched Mutt. Biju had boarded a plane and was headed back home. He will forget the sadness of his trip to America and would safely manage his savings, which he hid in his shoe, sock and underwear. He imagines how wonderful his meeting with his father will be. The judge calls out for Mutt and goes to report the loss to the police who laugh at him. The judge berates himself for ever bringing the dog to such a barbaric place. After the parade, things had calmed down and though shocked by the violence the people had grown accustomed to the extraordinary evil and hatred that existed all around them.

Chapter 44, 45, 46, and 47 Analysis

Biju hides his savings in his clothes because he knows that closest to his body is where his money will be safe. He knows better than to keep his savings in his wallet. However, while we know that the tension in Kalimpong is severe, and that the roads are blocked off, Biju does not. Danger looms over Biju's head, and he will be extremely vulnerable to thieves when he returns to Kalimpong.

The judge believes that by being extra vigilant over his dog Mutt, that she will be safe. This parallel exists with the other upper-class members. The sisters believed that by honoring relationships with other upper-class members they would be safe, but once the violence escalates, they realize that people's allegiances turn very quickly. The judge also was very vigilant of himself, and only of himself. He never cared about other people, except for Sai, but even that was done for selfish reasons. The lower class knew not to expect too much out of life, that they could lose theirs at any given moment because they were lower-class citizens. This is one thing that the upper class never accepted, and they always thought that their money would protect them.



Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary

Biju's flight arrived in the Calcutta airport. There is an unruly crowd, searching for their baggage and tired from the long exhausting flight. Biju saw many different people, the different types of Indians that existed. There were the computer boys, toilet cleaners, businessmen and hip-hop style Indians. Some had brought their blond, American girlfriends and were trying to remain unnoticed, though this was near impossible. Indian girls made faces at the blonds; Indian men told them they were more beautiful than the blond, though they were secretly jealous for not having a blond themselves. Many bags got lost in transit, they failed to make the flight change in France, and only those people who were non-residents were compensated for their losses and for hotel stays. It was unfair how the airport treated their own citizens, but they said it was the policy of Air France, not their own. All the non-resident Indians (NRI's) stood patiently around, knowing they would be treated with the best care for the green cards and passports that they held. They made sure that their passports were turned upwards so the officials could see what country they belonged to, since the U.S., British and Indian passports were all blue.

Biju steps out into the Calcutta air and felt the drabness of being home. Nobody paid attention to him here, either, but it wasn't the same active ignoring that he experienced in the States. He felt comfortable for the first time in years.

Chapter 48 Analysis

Biju feels comfortable for the first time in years when he arrived in India. In the States people actively ignored him for being an Indian immigrant. In India, he is ignored because he was just another person. It felt good to be ignored in this way.



Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary

The judge gets down on his knees and prays to God that Mutt is alright and at the same time, the judge thinks of the terrible things he did to his parents and his wife. His father walked away from him, saying he was no longer his "Jemu." He lives for work, having no family. He has his wife killed and later learns about Sai's birth. By taking in Sai, he hoped to repay the debt to his family.

Chapter 49 Analysis

The judge learns to forget in order to survive. He realizes that all his memories are painful to him, and they are taking a toll on his life. He wants to be forgiven for forsaking his family, but doesn't know how to ask for forgiveness and does not want to be the Indian man that they expect him to be. He hates himself and hates everything he has gone through. He lives between two worlds, where he is rejected doubly. Sai is his only hope for spiritual forgiveness, and by helping her, he is helping his own conscious and thereby trying to fix all the wrongs he has created.



Chapter 50, Chapter 51, and 52

Chapter 50, Chapter 51, and 52 Summary

Buji begs the GNLFF men to take him to Kalimpong and they agreed for a hefty bribe. The cook and Sai search for the dog and Gyan helps for Sai's sake. On his way to Kalimpong, the road is blocked and the revolutionaries strip Buji of his clothes and possessions and money and tell him to walk the rest of the way. Buji steals a dress off a clothesline so he does not have to return naked.

Chapter 50, Chapter 51, and 52 Analysis

Biju knew that leaving the U.S. was the biggest mistake he had ever made. Perhaps the bigger mistake was leaving in the first place. He struggled in the States, and was stripped of his pride and dignity over there and stripped of all of his belongings once he got to India and was headed home. The only thing that nobody can take away from him is the love he has for his father. This eternal love is also shared by his father. He, too, has been stripped of everything—his dignity early on by being a servant to the judge and again when the cops ransacked his modest room. Both these men are immune to the spiritual and emotional loss that everyone else in the book had experienced, yet they are not immune to physical loss.



Chapter 53

Chapter 53 Summary

The cook fails to find Mutt and accepts the punishment of a beating from the judge. Sai notices a woman walking towards the house and the cook goes to see who it is. The figure in the nightgown says "Pitaji?" The cook whispers, then yells Biju's name in a demented scream. The two run into each other's arms and briefly, they are consoled.

Chapter 53 Analysis

In the end, everyone had lost something or someone they loved. They inherited loss by simply being born in India. Loss is a trait that was left behind when the English left, leaving the Indians to manage themselves without a clear understanding of how to do so. The only person in the book that does not lose everything is Biju. He never loses sight of the love he has for his father, though his father had given up believing that Biju was still alive and relevant in his world. Though Biju loses all his possessions, his faith and willingness to live his life the way he was taught to live it spiritually is what saves him from falling into the deep hole of complete loss that the other characters experienced.



Characters

Sai

Sai is a young girl, who is learning about herself physically and emotionally in a small town in India. When her parents died, she was in living and learning in a convent school. At this school she learned English and Western values and principles and that anything English was superior to anything Indian. She was sent to live with her maternal grandfather, who hadn't had any contact with her or her mother since either of them were born. Sai begins growing out of her shell and is pushed by other characters to grow up and experience life. All she admits to wanting to do is travel, though she really wants to be loved by Gyan, her tutor, the way she loves him. When she falls in love with Gyan, she understands the beauty of free love. Most marriages in India are arranged, so to experience natural love is very rare, especially for someone like Sai, born to a higher caste family. She begins to understand the pains of family life when the cook and the judge begin to worry about her and Gyan's intentions. She loves the cook like a father, and is secretly jealous of his relationship with his son, Biju, since she never had a real relationship with her parents. They were absent for most of her life and the letters that they wrote each other were always very formal and unrevealing.

As far as class, she is almost unaware that it exists and does not struggle about crossing the invisible, rigid lines that every Indian understands. She talks to the judge and the cook equally, often helping the cook with the food he prepares, and even helping him clean his room, when it was ransacked by the police. This is an example of her Western values, whereas in India, a girl of her class would never offer to help a servant. In addition, a girl of her class would never fall in love with a man such as Gyan, either. She is a strong girl who is passionate about life and the opportunities that it presents to her, though she is oblivious of the opportunities denied other worthy people in the country. She is still naive, having been so sheltered in the convent school and in Cho Oyu with her grandfather. She is ambitious to learn about the world and about herself. She comes of age quickly as she begins to experience life outside Cho Oyu and the insurgency of the GNLF. She soon realizes that she is privileged beyond everyone else and in the end, feels selfish and guilty for having only thought about herself and how everyone's life affected her. She finds that being a Westernized Indian in India is difficult, if not dangerous, and as she tries to find her place in Kalimpong, she also desperately tries to find a way out.

Jemubhai Patel - the judge

Jemubhai Patel is a retired Chief Justice for the ICS. He is referred to as the judge throughout most of the book. He is a harsh old man, with sagging skin, resembling a reptile. The judge grew up in a household that sacrificed everything so that he could study in England. His sisters went without any luxury and were given only the basics for survival. He was admitted into a British college, and there was immense pressure from



his family, but more from himself, to graduate and land a position with the ICS. When he moves to England, he becomes aware of his differences, his "Indianness" People shy away from him in the streets, ridicule him on the bus and make him feel dirty and worthless. He starts tearing into himself, too, and realizes it is best to immerse himself in his studies. He goes days without talking to people and later, after graduating and joining the ICS, he meets with his only friend, Bose. While with Bose, he learns to become more British, less Indian. He learns what is proper and what is vile and finds that Indian is synonymous with the latter. When he goes back to India, he feels like a foreigner. He believes he is refined and worth more than the members of his family. When he is reunited with his wife, he learns to hate her and sends her back to live with her family, not even taking her back when he hears she is pregnant with his baby. He shames his father in the process, who is saddened that he even made Jemu leave India.

After being Chief Justice with the ICS for years, he retires when he gives up hope that he can ever bring justice to such an awful country. Soon after, his granddaughter, Sai arrives at Cho Oyu. He secretly believes that by doing right by Sai, he can be forgiven of all the harm he has done to his family's honor, though it is never clear who he needs forgiveness from, since he is an atheist. The only other being that he ever professed his love for was his dog Mutt. He treated Mutt better than most people, and when she was stolen from him, it was evident that his life would always be consumed by loss. It is unfortunate that everything the judge ever loved was taken from him.

The Cook

The cook was born to a servant and became a servant himself at a young age. His father introduced him to the judge and secured his position with him. The cook was upset at first because he would be serving an Indian for the rest of his life. He married and had a son named Biju. Not wanting his son to be a slave to another person, Indian or white, he saves, begs and pays for his son to go to America, so he can work and have a better life. At the same time, he serves the judge day and night, caters to the judge's dog, and to Sai. He cares for Sai as if she were his own, babying her and watching over her whenever Gyan is around. He is the main caregiver of the family, though he is treated very poorly by the judge. Though he is mistreated, he won't leave the judge's side, and often makes excuses for the judge, making him seem like a better person than he really is. The cook is a kind-hearted, gentle man, who believes his son will save him from his enslavement.

Biju

Biju is the cook's son. He travels to America with a temporary visa and overextends his stay. While in New York, he finds shelter in a basement, along with numerous other illegal immigrants; he finds many odd jobs. He is tortured by the fact that he has to prepare and cook beef, which is sacred in India. He is enlightened by a friend and then decides he won't touch beef anymore so finds a job at an Indian restaurant, where he is



practically enslaved just as his father is back in India. Biju is innocent, uncorrupted and a loving son. He only cares about his father and constantly worries about him. He is pressured a lot to help people back home, though he is struggling to survive in the states. He is a pushover to most and ends up moving back to India to be with his father.

Gyan

Gyan is Sai's tutor and a Gorkha, which is a Nepalese ethnic identity. He is a college graduate with a degree in accounting, though cannot find work and ends up working as Sai's tutor when her original tutor cannot teach her any more math or science. He falls in love with Sai, but then falls in with members of the GNLFF army. They convince him that he should fight for the liberation of the Gorkha people, who want to separate from India and be their own country. He thus uncovers old hatreds of Indians and Westerners and ends up hating Sai and people like her for stepping on people like him.

Saeed Saeed

A man from Zanzibar, and the man that Biju admired the most in the U.S. Saeed is very charismatic, hard working and loving of the West. He does all he can, including marrying a white woman, to stay in the U.S. and reap the benefits of being a citizen—including owning many pairs of shoes, though not all of them fit him. He constantly helps Biju, tries to show him the ropes of being an immigrant and tries teaching him to avoid his family and extended family from back home.

Lola

One of the inhabitants of Mon Ami. When her husband died, her sister Noni comes to live with her. Her husband had a good pension, but she always needed more money to carry out her comfortable lifestyle.

Uncle Potty

The judge's nearest neighbor. He is a farmer and a well-known drunk.

Father Booty

This is Uncle Potty's friend, who spends his time drinking with him. He is a member of the Swiss dairy.



Noni

Lola's sister and Sai's first tutor. She is a spinster that goes to live with Lola after her brother-in-law dies.

Budhoo

Noni and Lola's watchman. He is a Nepali and retired army man.

Bose

Bose was the only friend the judge made while studying in Cambridge. He may have been the only friend the judge ever had in his adult life. He was a different type of person than the judge, more outgoing and optimistic. He breaks the judge's heart when he tries to uncover the truth about their lives—how they are never accepted by the white Westerners, no matter how hard they tried. He is more in tune with reality than the judge ever was.

Harish-Harry

Harish-Harry is Biju's boss at the Ghandi Cafe. He is the typical immigrant that has succeeded in the states and is living in two completely different worlds. He tries to please the whites and is disgusted that he has to do so. He also fights between doing things the Indian way and the American way. He is upset that his daughter is turning out to be more American than Indian and hopes his son will break the necks of a few Americans to avenge all the work he has done for the whites. Though he is successful, he is not happy and treats his workers like master to slaves.



Objects/Places

Cho Oyu

This is the house and the property that the judge owns. It is near Mt. Kachenjunga, which is in the north eastern tip of India. It was built by a Scotsman, who fell in love with India and wanted to establish roots in the country. The house was once a grand estate with modern luxuries and lots of charm. However, throughout the years it had begun to fall apart and less of it was inhabitable. It was starting to collapse, just like the judge's health. Passages that refer to the home parallel those about the judge himself.

Kalimpong

Kalimpong is the town where Cho Oyu is located. It has a small market and the majority of the population is Gorkhas, which is a Nepalese ethnic identity.

New York City Basement Restaurants

These basements are filled with immigrants from all over the world, working in kitchens, preparing and cooking food, for the daily clientèle that dines in the rooms above. These kitchen basements are where Biju meets people of which he had never heard, though all them have known about Indians forever because they are all over the place, according to them. The kitchens show the modern slave-master relationship that exists in the modern world.

Darjeeling

The closest city to Kalimpong that had modern attractions and services. This is the tea capital of the area, and where the group from Mon Ami go often to borrow library books and food supplies they can't find in the Kalimpong market.

Mon Ami

This is where the sisters, Noni and Lola, live. It is the closest house to Cho Oyu. Mon Ami was bought by Lola's husband, who wanted to have a place to retire and live out his and her old age together. Lola and Noni grow vegetables on the hillside of the property and enjoy the seclusion, until the GNLF uprisings occur and the army men take over their property and estate.



Bong Busti

The town where Gyan lives. It is a poor village in Kalimpong. His house is unfinished and falling apart.

Ghandi Cafe

This is the restaurant where Biju is basically turned into a slave by his own people. He quits his other jobs for this one because they don't serve beef. He essentially exchanges extra wages and minimal comfort for being true to his beliefs. He sleeps in the kitchen, has rats nesting in his hair and finally quits to move back to India.

Brigitte's

At this restaurant, Biju finds that he cannot continue to cook beef. He works with other immigrants below in the basement and catches Indian businessmen eating steaks. He knows that the men see him and continue to eat the meat. Biju doesn't want to end up being like them and thus quits the job in search of a more fitting place.

Queen of Tarts

Here is where Biju meets his friend, Saeed Saeed. It is a low standard bakery that has hired all illegal immigrants. It is one of Biju's first jobs, where he meets a plethora of immigrants from all over the world.

Calcutta Airport

Calcutta is the capital of India. Its airport is where the most international flights go into. The disparities between how Indian citizens and non-Indians are treated are extremely evident; special attention is always given to non-Indians, or Indians with green cards.

Cambridge

This is the college where the judge earned his degree. Though the school was more of a study hall than an actual university, he studied as hard as humanly possible, risking his health and sacrificing any possible social life. He was a hermit at this school and made only one friend.



Themes

Indian Class System

A major theme throughout the book is the class and the caste system. Indians have a very rigid class system, where it is perfectly legal for them to treat other members of society as their slaves, as the judge treated the cook. Every character is exposed to this class divide, and Sai and Gyan are the only ones that cross that line, harboring an innocent and free romance, which is later killed by their social differences. The upper class believes that the lower class can never be trusted or taken too seriously. They believe that the lower classes are almost incapable of feeling such civilized emotions as love and respect. However, they never want to go too deeply into the lives of the lower class or know too much, as Lola and Noni did not want to know much about their maid. If the upper class were to see that the servants are people just like themselves, the upper class would be too vulnerable to judging themselves too harshly. The upper class wants to stay above everyone else because they enjoy their status and get much from it. However, when the GNLF begins its insurgency, the same status that used to protect the upper-class citizens in Kalimpong is what endangers them. Thus they realize that oppressing people for decades only made things worse for the upper class ultimately.

The class system also extends overseas. Biju experienced classism while he was working in the Ghandi Cafe. In other places he was just another illegal immigrant and not treated kindly, but in the Ghandi Cafe, he was treated like an outright slave, exploited and abused by his own people. It was easier this way because Indians know how to control other Indians and can manipulate the desperate to satisfy their own needs.

Duality

Another theme is that of duality. The judge, Sai and Biju are the three characters that experience duality the greatest. When the judge leaves home, he is faced with a critical decision, whether or not to throw the pineapple overboard to bless his voyage. He doesn't do it because he doesn't want to embarrass himself aboard a ship of Westerners. He thus sacrifices his Indian identity and tries to live as a civilized Westerner. He is discriminated against and mocked by the society he is trying to embrace, and when he returns to India he is a foreigner in his own country. He looks like everyone else, but he doesn't act like them, nor does he want to act as he did before going to England. He is stuck between two worlds, where one has its door locked to him, and the other door he has closed and locked himself.

Sai was raised outside India for the first years of her life and was taught much about Western society. She cannot speak Hindi or Gujarati very well and prefers English to anything else. She learned that English was better; the West was better, and she doesn't struggle trying to fit in because her grandfather agrees with these views and



encourages them. Also, she doesn't leave the house much, so she isn't exposed to too much outside of her Western ways.

Biju is taken out of his Indian culture, with which he has no problem and transplanted to New York City, where he finds everyone hates Indians. Here he sees how Indians struggle in the U.S. to fit in and conform. Either the Indians try too hard to be Indian in front of white people and other Indians, or they strip themselves altogether of their identities and become beef-eating businessmen, marrying white women and assimilating the West culture almost completely. Then there are the people who try to live equally in both world, never letting go completely of their heritage, but knowing when to turn it off and on, like Biju's boss Harish-Harry, who even harbors two names. It is an inner struggle as well as an outer one, because while an Indian can mentally disregard his or her heritage, they cannot do so physically and every glance in the mirrors is a constant reminder that they cannot escape their past.

Guilt

All the characters face guilt in this book. The judge is guilty for having shamed his father, first by not throwing a coconut overboard when he left India on a ship and then for having changed so much and forgetting his roots and the social ideals by which he was raised. Sai, who was raised by the beliefs his grandfather learned in Western schools, does not feel any guilt until the very end of the book when she realizes she is so self consumed. Biju is constantly guilty for having left his father and not earning the respectful position in the U.S. that his father always boasted about. Gyan is guilty for falling in love with Sai, a girl that was of a higher class, and then for not fighting like a man with the GNLF. Everyone feels guilty for the ways they are living their lives and how they are not adhering to the social norms they were born into. It is questionable whether anyone is free of guilt in Kalimpong. Perhaps guilt is less of a natural emotion and more of a social ideal itself.

Loss

Everyone in the book experiences one form of loss. Spiritual, emotional and physical loss are the major themes throughout the book. The judge loses respect for his father, then his love, his wife. The loss of his dog, the only thing that he ever really cared, about is the culmination of losses for the judge. The cook temporarily loses his son and is stripped of his dignity by the judge and the police. Lola lost her husband and Noni their land. Father Booty loses his land and his privilege to stay in India. Sai loses her innocence and her belief that she can do whatever she wants in the world. She loses her idea of self importance and even loses Gyan. Gyan loses Sai and his attempt to be a man by joining the GNLF. He loses respect for other people and for himself for getting involved with Sai in the first place. Biju loses his dignity and pride while living in the U.S. and then all his possessions when he returns to India. However, he never loses his faith in seeing his father again, and his love for his father is what gets him home and back in

his father's arms. There is hope for Biju and his father to live their lives differently and to break the inheritance of loss that has plagued everyone else in the story.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in the third person omniscient . The narrator knows everything that all the characters are feeling and often switches from their thoughts and straight into dialog. Since the book takes place in two different settings, it was important for the narrator to know everything about the characters and portray the feelings and thoughts to the readers to give the necessary closeness and physical and emotional distance that they were feeling.

Setting

The story takes place in two places. The first place is in Kalimpong, a town near Darjeeling, which is in the northernmost eastern point of India. It is bordered by Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan. There is much ethnic strife, which has existed for decades, if not centuries and was worsened when the British took control of India and redrew borders to the discontent of the different ethnic people in the area. Cho Oyu, the house where the judge, Sai and the cook live, is a deteriorating house that is much like the judge. It is a civilized establishment, falling apart in an uncivilized world. Most of the events take place in the house or near it.

The other main setting is New York City, and the different restaurants where Biju works. It is the dirty side of the posh city, the side of which no one speaks, that is filled with illegal immigrants being worked like slaves by citizens and other immigrants, who take advantage of their poverty and illegal status. The connection between the two settings is that they are both places where class matters, and the lower class always gets stomped on, if not pulverized, by the upper class.

The political setting of the story is that of turmoil and confusion. The ethnic Nepalis that live in the area want to create their own separate state called Gorkhaland. This crisis weaves its way in and out of the book and of the lives of the different characters.

Language and Meaning

The writing is smooth and poetic. The prose at the beginning draws the reader in lightly, then increases in speed to give a necessary intensity and flow at the right times, then slowing again to let the reader absorb everything. The writer includes many Indian words that she does not translate right away but are easy to pick up in context. She is clever about how she sprinkles in the words, making the reader feel as though they speak the language.

Structure

The book is divided into fifty-three short chapters that flow fairly quickly into each other. There are some chapters that begin a little choppy, and the reader can get lost, or not know where the setting is until someone starts talking and uncovers where they are. There is much description at first, but nothing unnecessary. The writer paints the settings in the readers' heads perfectly, enough to have a solid picture of the places where the characters exist. She also gives just enough detail about the characters to where the readers can paint their own pictures without the burden of over describing people. The only person who does not get completely characterized is Sai. The flow of the book is fairly fast, and a lot happens in each chapter, making them very intense, especially towards the end.



Quotes

"When you build on lies, you build strong and solid. It was the truth that undid you."
Chapter 32, pg. 229

"They were no longer relevant to each other's lives except for the hope that they would be relevant...the sick sweet rotting mulch of the human heart." Chapter 36, pg. 255

"Maybe everyone felt this way at some point when one recognized there was a depth to one's life and emotions beyond one's own significance." Chapter 38, pg. 272

"Once you start scratching, my dear, you cannot stop." Chapter 39, pg. 275

"There was grace in forgetting and giving up, she reminded it; it was childish not to — everyone had to accept imperfection and loss in life." Chapter 39, pg. 276

"How could you have any self-respect knowing you didn't believe in exactly anything?"
Chapter 40, pg. 285

"In this life, he remembered again, you must stop your thoughts if you wished to remain intact, or guilt and pity would take everything from you, even yourself from yourself."
Chapter 40, pg. 289

"India was too messy for justice; it ended only in humiliation for the person in authority."
Chapter 40 pg. 289

"Clumsy in America, a giant sized midget, a big fat-sized helping of small." Chapter 41,
pg. 293

"Cowardice needed its facade, its reasoning, like anything else if it was to be his life's principle." Chapter 42, pg. 299

"This was how history moved, the slow build, the quick burn, and in an incoherence, the leaping both backward and forward, swallowing the young into old hate." Chapter 42,
pg. 303

"It was the impoverished who walked the line so thin it was questionable if it existed, an imaginary line between the insurgents and the law, between being robbed and being hunted by the police as scapegoats for the crimes of others. They were the hungriest."
Chapter 44, pg. 310

"Human life was stinking corrupts, and meanwhile there were beautiful creatures who lived with delicacy on the earth without doing anyone any harm." Chapter 46, pg. 320

"This way of leaving your family for work had condemned them over several generations to have their hearts always in other places, their minds thinking about people

elsewhere; they could never be in a single existence at one time. How wonderful it was going to be to have things otherwise." Chapter 50, pg. 342



Topics for Discussion

Discuss class in India between the members of Cho Oyu and compare them to the members in Mon Ami. What dynamics make class relations different? What makes them the same?

Discuss Biju's relationship with Harish-Harry. How is it different from the relationship that the cook has with the judge? How is it the same?

Sai and Gyan fell in love naturally, yet Gyan forces himself away from her because he believes they did things all wrong. Why would he prefer doing things the traditional way?

The judge is not fond of Gyan and taunts him during dinner one night. Did he do this because he sincerely hated him, or because he saw himself in him?

Once Biju is in the U.S. for a few years, the cook begins to think that his son no longer exists and perhaps only a memory. Many people actually do forget about their family back home and prefer things this way. What was different between the cook and his son that kept their bond going strong?

Sai doesn't end up leaving Kalimpong, and we know that she is physically barricaded in the region. If she had left, where would she have gone and what experiences would she have had? Do you think she would have experienced racism and classism if she had traveled to the U.S., since she already knew the language and some Western culture?

Discuss loss and how all the different characters experienced it. Is one type of loss more severe than another?

What do you think Biju and his father talked about after they reunited? Do you think the cook was upset that his son returned with less than he had to begin with?