

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Passage Based Question (Chapter 3)

Read an excerpt from *'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard'* below and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 In the courtyard down below, Mr Chawla began his morning exercises.
Determined to start the day in a purposeful manner, according to schedule and habit, he spat out the last remnants of sleep and inertia in a perfectly aimed rainbow spray of spittle. He stood in a patch of sunlight where the shadows cast by the jamun tree could not reach him. Still, at the spot where the Red Cross crate had landed the night of his son's birth, there was a large gap that marred the tree's otherwise elegant proportions. Mr Chawla bent forward to touch his toes, then backwards to form a perfect arc, one taut and tight enough to catapult himself into the sky. 5
- 2 'Ommmmm.' He let his voice fly in triumph over the rooftops. 'Ommmmm,' he roared, teeth gleaming in the morning rays. 'Ommmmm.' He informed the world that he, Mr R. K. Chawla (B.A., Pass), head clerk at The Reserve Bank of Shahkot, was ready for a new day. The air vibrated as if shot through by arrows. He was forty years old, hale and hearty. And if he was balding a little and had a small belly... well, he liked this look; it added importance to his words and inspired respect. 15
He stepped out into the world firm-footed and sure, putting to shame the sorry young men who drooped about the town, ignoring their responsibilities. Slapping his chest and swinging his arms, he jogged up and down around the courtyard.
- 3 Later, as he oiled himself with coconut oil in the small bathroom, he shouted from behind the closed door: 'The tooth powder is almost gone. you could buy 20

- some more from Diana stores.’ Or: ‘Why don't you go and see if Lakshmiiji's fever is better?’ Or: ‘The drain must be unblocked. Don't come complaining to me when we are overtaken by the world's largest cockroach population.’
- 4** He hoped to inspire his family to seek out a day as full of promise and activity as his own would be. When he took a bath, he crashed the metal buckets together loudly and poured water over himself in energetic mugfuls, flooding the entire bathroom so that miniature waves sloshed through the gap beneath the door. When he emerged, smooth-cheeked and fresh, redolent with Lifebuoy soap, he stirred the house into such a commotion the family thought they'd need the rest of the day to recover. 25
- 5** His shirt needed to be ironed. His shoes had been discovered dusty, dirty and unpolished. His socks upset him because they gathered in folds about his ankles instead of snapping with a satisfying sound of good elastic to a desirable mid-calf level. Ammaji and Pinky ran up and down trying to carry out his demands. 35
- 6** While trying to coordinate all the various activities needed to solve these problems, Mr Chawla read out bits from the newspaper as was his custom. ‘What did I tell you?’ he said, delighted. ‘Another corrupt politician! Before we are properly out of one international scandal, we are in another. Our politicians are growing careless. They are opening more Swiss bank accounts than they have Gandhi caps to distract us with. Not one truthful politician in the whole country. Yes, our parliament is made of thieves, each one answerable to the prime minister, who is the biggest thief of them all. Look how well he's doing. With each new photograph he's fatter than before.’ 40
- 7** Kulfi, though, was not interested. She sat by the window, thinking of the 45

- deep-scented, deep-hearted world of peppercorn berries, of cinnamon bark, of the flowerbuds of cloves and cassia, and the saffron stigmas of the crocus. On the walls behind her were traces of the drawings she had made so many years ago, still visible from behind a thin layer of whitewash. By this time, it had been generally acknowledged that she was a little eccentric to say the least. Her hunger during first one pregnancy and then another had settled into a permanent obsession with food. As the years progressed, she grew more peculiar. Ignoring completely the hullabaloo created by her husband, she continued to stare out of the window while her daughter complained about the choice of news items being read aloud. 50
- 8 'Hoo,' said Pinky, flapping her towel in exasperation as she paused on the way to the bathroom. 'What is there to get so excited about? It is always the same old story. Each year the same scandal. Why don't you read something that will affect us? For example, the Cinema Monkey. Is there anything about the Cinema Monkey?' 60
- 9 'What monkey?' asked her father, bewildered.
- 10 'See, you are completely out of touch with local issues! For the past month he has been creating havoc outside the cinema, harassing ladies, pulling at their saris until they drop their peanut cones. And all those boys from the university - they are going especially to the cinema, not to see any movies, but just to stand outside and watch the girls getting their clothes pulled off! Haw-ji-haw, I am too scared to go any more.' 65
- 12 Her father snorted.
- 13 'Why don't you take Sampath with you?' said Ammaji, trying to find Mr Chawla a good pair of socks while also sipping tea from a saucer. 'He can protect you.' 70

- 14 'Sampath!' said Pinky. 'What good will Sampath be! The monkey will probably choose me as the best person to target if Sampath is with me.'
- 15 'That's true,' Ammaji agreed and took another sip of tea. 'He is not very threatening. Poor Sampath,' she said. ' Look at him, sitting, sitting there as usual, with no raise in pay or promotion anywhere in sight.'

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Refer to the passage given and answer the questions which follow.

- (a) Based on evidence from the passage, describe Mr Chawla's thoughts and opinions of his own character.
- (b) Comment on the relationships between the various family members. Explain with evidence from the text.



SUGGESTED ANSWERS

- (A) - Mr Chawla is incredibly confident of himself
 - Mr Chawla views himself as being superior to others
 - Mr Chawla sees himself as an intellectual, needing to pass on knowledge to others

- (B) - Kulfi is indifferent to her husband
 - Ammaji and Pinky strive to please Mr Chawla
 - Ammaji and Pinky do not take Sampath seriously or regard him with respect