

# Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

## Criticism of the culture

/Criticism of the officials/ lots of irony used, in this way the novel is a **satire**

### • **Their incapability as the wrong people are in high positions**

- Chief Medical Officer is a hypochondriac and uses home remedies (onion juice). 'Sitting behind locked doors in a feverish state of advanced hypochondria'. He is not supposed to be paranoid of illness, as he is meant to be taking care of those who are ill. In this way, Desai **denounces** the governmental system for putting the wrong people in charge.

- The Brigadier devises his plan while 'sitting in his bathroom'. This is a very unprofessional setting to come up with any reasonable plans. Moreover, when looking at the army, he wonders, 'What was the use of all this discipline?' It is very confusing to find the Brigadier wondering this, as he is the one who controls the army itself. It shows how he is in the wrong job, as he does not even see the point of it.

### • **Lethargy (not interested or concerned) of superintendent of police**

- does not abide by the rules even though he is the policeman, 'tickling her with flowers picked from the flowerbeds that had signs reading 'Do not pick the flowers''. This is **ironic**, since he is the one telling people to follow the rules, yet isn't doing so himself. However this **malfeasance** also shows the corruption of Shahkot, as a person in authority is not acting accordingly.

- he does not come up with a plan as he does not want to be promoted since he wants to stay in Shahkot and likes 'chatting with his cronies' and his 'naughty-eyed wife'. Once again, shows the corruption as he is not doing the job he is meant to do. This aspect is concealed by the humour, since he is meant to be the superintendent of police.

- Also, he has no intention of resolving situations, as when Pinky bites off Hungry Hop's ear, he does not punish her since 'The police were not going to upset the family of one of the town's most respected personages'. This **debases** the government, showing how your status can affect your treatment by officials. Nonetheless, the reader only notices how funny it is that the police respect Sampath and how the monkeys throw peanuts at them.

### • **Bad communication**

- When the Brigadier tries to call the Superintendent, his assistant says he is on an investigation, when in reality 'he was at that moment getting his shoes shined'. When even the **jurisdiction** aren't working together to achieve solutions, how are the public supposed to obey and respect them?

- The officials sometimes only end up in the same place through hearsay. 'As soon as the Brigadier heard of the proposed visit through a servant who had seen the officer driving to the orchard, he too leapt into his jeep'.

### • **Own interests at heart**

- The reason the CMO is coming up with a plan is because he wants a promotion to be 'transferred out of this place of ill-health to one of peace and calm'. This is **incongruous with his professed principles**, and even in the process of making this plan, he is ignoring phone calls thus ignoring his responsibilities.

- When the plans are all in action, the Brigadier stops everything just to catch the green pigeon which he has been chasing for during his whole life. He does not even manage to do so, and then yells at the men to carry on marching. If he was professional, he would have put his job requirements ahead of his own interests yet he does not do so.

Point to mention in conclusion or introduction: Desai always addresses them by their titles, almost making fun of their characters, the false sense of authority and the paradox of the governmental system of Shahkot.

## / Criticism of the people of Shahkot /

### • Naive

- Believe straight away that Sampath is a guru, when he is merely saying whatever comes to his mind. They even repeat his words later in the novel, and the only one who realises that they do not make any sense is the one person who is not from Shahkot; the District Collector. 'Many a pickle makes a mickle? Guptaji, this town is full of adages I have never heard before'. Yet, before moving into a tree, many viewed Sampath as a crazy person.

- Even Mr Chawla beings to think his son is something supernatural due to the persistence of his followers 'But was there nothing? He looked up at Sampath, watched his face, thought of what he said and felt slightly unsettled'.

### • Don't make up their own minds or think of their actions

- When barbed wire was placed around the post office to make it a more authoritarian place, all the townspeople begin to use barbed wire, 'inspiration for wire-use struck them'. This shows how they all follow each other's actions without really thinking or questioning what they are doing. It is more of an act as an entity than as individuals.

- When Sampath is to meet his prospective wife, no one knows what to do. One person yells for her to touch his feet and then "Yes, touch his feet' the rest of the pilgrims cried'. They do not even know what is going on, yet they are conducting this meeting. The pilgrims are chorusing the idea of one of them, yet this does not even make any logical sense and the girl ends up falling to the ground.

### • Don't take smart actions

- When there is the chaos about what to do in terms of the monkeys, there were 'Bits of information at screaming pitch, garbled and incoherent'. They all have very strong opinions, yet they're not taking sensible action to make anything happen. It is **fatuous** that they would think that this would or could solve any problems.

### • Demands for perfection in brides/girls in general

- Desai makes this humorous by exaggerating the features and listing them. The girl 'will listen respectfully when her prospective in-laws lecture her on various subjects they themselves failed in secondary school'. This quote goes to show how even though the demands are **multitudinous**, the rest of the people do not have any pressure put on them even when they are not perfect. This is very hypocritical, and absurd that the girl must be very humble and quiet.

## / other aspects which are not necessarily critical /

### • Pass on information (funny how they manage to pass information probably faster than the officials themselves)

- When people of Shahkot visited their friends 'they talked the whole time, and in this way a great deal of information was passed back and forth'.

### • Family orientated

- When the photographer of Sampath falls down due to the monkeys, he says 'My mother would not like me doing such dangerous work'. It is very sweet that his first thought is of his mother, and shows how close family bonds are in India.

## Humour

### Ammajis dentures

- 'Stuck in the ice-cream, they leered at her horribly like a ghastly cartoon: skeleton teeth mocking'. It's funny how Ammaji had longed for these dentures for a very long time, yet now she is embarrassed by them. Their personification portrays how Ammaji feels very **discomposed** by this.

- The description of the monkey makes it seem like a terrifying beast. 'The monkey's brown eyes were cold and cruel, red-rimmed and fixed firmly upon them'. This exaggeration of the monkey's appearance is comical, since one highly doubts a monkey could be so **malicious**.

- Pinky is mortified, 'looking like a sweeper-woman, with her grandmother's dentures being displayed in public'. She always puts on effort to make appearances at the bazaar, since they are the high point of her existence. Now, she is publicly humiliated, which must hurt her pride. This is hilarious to the reader, to see Pinky so embarrassed.
- Pinky puts so much effort into her appearance, yet the Hungry Hop boy says that the monkey 'must have thought you were a long lost relative'. This is amusing, as one who puts so much effort into vanity is now being compared to a monkey. Not only this, but afterwards Pinky falls in love with him. This juxtaposition of emotions makes us laugh, as it is so bizarre.

### **The whole catastrophe of a plan**

- Because the DC offended his cook, the cook quit and 'It was quite some time before they had nudged the stubborn goats into the bushes and succeeded in clearing all the cook's belongings from the path'. Ironic that it had to happen on the day they had important plans, the DC partially brought it upon himself.
- The Brigadier stops the whole march when he sees the green pigeon which has been dreaming of catching for so long. His hopeless efforts to catch it are very comical, he throws a net; 'it travelled only a few feet before falling to the ground with a heavy thump'. We can almost picture the desperation of the Brigadier as the pigeon flies away.
- The CMO causes trouble, as he blocks the way with his multitudinous bags to leave for a vacation. This is funny, as this is incongruous with his professed principles. He should not be the one taking trips due to his assumptions of his medical conditions, but instead helping other people recover from real diseases.
- Vermaji's wife is moving out as well which means that they need to take an even longer route to get to the orchard.
- This whole time 'the police superintendent was still in bed' as he wants to be demoted, unlike all the other officials.

### **Arranged marriage meeting**

- When Sampath looks at the girl he 'felt hot and horrified'. It is comical that they are expected to spend the rest of their lives together, when they can barely face each other.
- No one knows how to act appropriately. The girl ends up absurdly touching Sampath's feet, then falling to the ground as they both panic.
- Sampath wants to be alone and secluded, so trying to find him a life partner is funny in itself.
- Pilgrims dramatise the scene, as they give instructions even though they have no clue what is going on and are basically irrelevant to the scene. Because of their instructions, the girl falls, yet they're the ones to start fussing over her straight away.
- The girl is 'extremely dusty', when Sampath's ideal woman would be 'wreathed in the scent of oil'.
- Irony - absurd demands for girls to be perfect and well dressed, yet in this scene, the girl's elegant clothing makes her clumsy and makes it more difficult for her to even get to Sampath.

### **Hungry Hop boy's family and relationship with Pinky**

- Hungry Hop does not seem to be very brave
  - His sisters find him pathetic, ironic to the feelings of Pinkie
  - Pinky becomes the stalker
  - The two families embarrassed of each other
  - Hungry Hop's sisters become an army to fight away Pinky
  - Pinky takes the role of traditionally male characters in movies
- This chapter is the first time we really get to know the Hungry Hop boy, whom we have only seen earlier selling ice cream and beating away monkeys. We have no real idea of him, however now we see him as a clumsy and demure character. He has a 'regularly assigned bathing hour', making him seem like a child and he is treated this way. When Pinky merely throws a stone at him, he thinks this a missile 'to signal his end'. This makes him a very exaggerating character, which is funny.

- Moreover, to amplify this, we see the view of his sisters. They think he is pathetic and when things start to go missing they wonder, 'Was Hungry Hop boy so depressed and troubled that he was spending hours flushing things down the toilet?'. Once again, these child like aspects are mentioned. This juxtaposes to Pinky's love for him, making us wonder how Pinky, a strong woman, could fall for such a weak man. Opposites attract (?)
- Even though the sisters think little of their brother, they are prepared to fight for him. They are said to be able to transform into an army when they see Pinky. Shows how strong they can be, juxtaposes them braiding their hair and working on their vanity.
- Pinky takes the traditional role of men, by sending love letters and roses. However, though in love and caring about her vanity, she goes to the extremities and becomes a stalker. Moreover, she used to be creeped out by people who followed or even looked at her hence this is quite ironic.

## Characters

### Vermaji

- He as well, even though less obviously than the other officials, wishes for fame with his plan. He sent his plan to the 'Indian Scientific Journal, which had often published the articles of his colleagues'.
- Vermaji's wife does not see the point in his plan and 'began to plot and plan a separation from him'.

### Mrs Jyotsuna

- First, we are introduced to her as flirtatious and don't really take her seriously. 'Flirtatiously she poked Mr Gupta with a ruler so he giggled even more'.
- Has some surprising characteristics. When she notices how two-faced the spy is, she calls him a traitor and 'swung at the spy with her hand bag and hit him in the stomach'. This comes as a shock in comparison to her normally reactions, which mostly involve crying.

### How does Desai vividly convey the progressive fear of Sampath before the attempted capture of the monkeys?

- Before, he said whatever came to his mind and he did not have to think too much of it. As the angry crowd approaches, 'he couldn't think of what to say'. This shows how he is beginning to lack inspiration, and resorting to silence as he did before starting to live in the guava tree. Moreover, customarily he is more timid around officials, yet here he has nothing to say to any people of the crowd. Expresses how even they have begun to frighten him.
- His own words of wisdom 'sounded like gunfire, hit him like bullets'. This is quite a dramatic simile, since all of his sayings are very light hearted and describe different aspects of nature, the home and humanity. The fact that they feel like bullets to him shows how differently he now views the situation, as his sayings become obsolete to him. They are no longer altruistic pieces of advice, instead hurtful and used against him.
- He feels as though 'they were invading him, claiming him, polluting the air about him'. Before, they came to him for advice. Now he is being used as a weapon in between the battle of wills. He does not belong to himself anymore, which is the most disconsolate part of it all.
- Mr Chawla noticed that Sampath was going back to his old habits of not talking, 'his son was slipping back into his old silences, into his old opaque and unhappy manner'. He was very happy initially at the orchard, without any other people or followers asking for advice. Now, even though he is at the orchard, he acts as though he is back in the city. The city, in this way, has been brought to him to allow him no means of escape from it. The reader is convinced of his internal anguish since even at the orchard, he is not himself anymore.
- The orchard symbolises how the people have ruined Sampath's peace. 'Ugly advertisements defaced the neighbouring trees; a smelly garbage heap spilled down the hillside behind the tea stall and grew larger every week'. He came there to be in contact with nature, yet now it is filled

with the trash of humans. This symbolises how they have ruined Sampath's peaceful state of mind and have basically trashed it. As the amount of trash grows, so does Sampath's anxiety. Even the reader feels burdened by knowing that his haven has been **subverted**.

- He is not even eating properly anymore, Kulfi tried 'to tempt his appetite, to resurrect his fading rosy cheeks, but nothing seemed to work'. Even his favourite dishes do not cheer him up, showing how negatively he has been affected by the chaos. Just like his rosy cheeks, he is losing his **animus**.

### **Is Sampath a .. Guru / fraud / holy man**

- **Before climbing into the tree:** - started raining after Sampath is born, breaking the drought. 'It was a summer that sent the dizzy pulse of fever into the sky'. It almost seem like he brings the end to their suffering, as he brings the rain (Holy man).
- Kulfi's pregnancy. 'Kulfi, in these months, was so enormously large, she seemed to be claiming all the earth's energy to herself' This seems almost supernatural, reenforcing the idea that there is something magical about Sampath.
- 'looks at fly with interest'. This shows that he respects nature, making it seem like he is a holy man as they usually abide by nature.
- **Why he climbed into the tree:** - 'I want my freedom'. Shows that he is a fraud, because he did not want to actually be a guru, he merely wanted to escape the town.
- Before this, he worked at the post office. Mr Chawla considered him a failure as he is not driven, has no focus, unlike Mr Chawla would want him. This does not make him sound much like a guru.
- **'Followers' at the tree:** - Sampath remembers information from letters, and uses this to silence the people. This shows that he is a fraud, since he has no real wisdom.
- **Monkeys:** - the monkeys accept Sampath. 'identify Smapath as the nucleus of the bountiful community' Shows both sides of guru and fraud. We know he has a connection with animals, so this would come as no surprise. However monkeys are considered holy animals.
- **Turning into a guava :** - 'They looked here. They looked there. Up and down the guava tree'
- 'Upon the cot lay a guava, a single guava that was much, much bigger than the others'
- 'But the Cinema Monkey picked up the fruit himself before anybody had time to move and, calm eyed and wise, holding it close to his chest..'
- p203, in touch with nature which could foreshadow transformation or even show the process
- 'Mulling on its insides, unconcerned with the world..'
- 'Sampath felt his body fill with a cool greenness, his heart swell with a mysterious wild sweetness. He felt an awake clear flowing through him, something quite unlike human blood'

### **Explore the ways in which Desai makes the Atheist Spy/Brigadier/Hungry Hop boy particularly entertaining for you**

#### Atheist Spy

- He is quite *pompous*; he believes that he deserves so much more than he receives. He thinks that people such as Sampath, 'ate away these striving, intelligent souls, they ate away the progress and smothered anybody..' P120. In this passage he is referring to himself, which makes him seem filled with selfimportance, which is humorous. He also makes Sampath seem vicious with the use of the word 'smothered', implying that Sampath is killing him. This is comical, since Sampath is merely sitting in a tree and sharing advice with people.
- His *desire for fame* is very funny to the reader. 'He would hold his face out to the light and, in the midst of adulation, discover his poise, discussing fluently and with the seriousness of an intellectual..' P95. The fact that he has such big dreams for only a school teacher is amusing. Also the way he describes the situation is entertaining, as the "glory" of fame is much exaggerated and it seems almost like a scene from a movie.
- It is comical specially opposed to sampaths undesire for fame.
- The *reality* of him is a great contradiction to his imagination. When he has listened to Sampath, he 'made more top-secret notes in his school notebook' p95. This does not seem professional

nor does it sound very mature. Hence it makes him seem like a very exaggerated character, when his actions are so small to what he imagines.

- His *suspensions* are amusing. He goes overboard in thinking that sampath could 'be drugged' p99. This is very funny to the reader, because he/she knows that there is no secret behind Sampath's "wisdom". He is just saying what he thinks, and what he has learnt from letters. He is not undergoing substance abuse, so this accusation is hilarious to even be considered true.
- After his *obsession* to expose Sampath, he begins to talk like Sampath. At the Atheist spy meeting, 'Without thinking, he was repeating things he had heard under the Baba's tree. And now he was taking credit for it!' p121. The fact that he has, for so long, only expressed hatred for Sampath and is now copying him is very ironic. Without him noticing, the obsession has influenced him. The only time in the whole novel that people are actually listening to the spy is when he is using Sampath's words.
- Moreover, after this event, 'he tossed and turned in bed. What did he want in his life? The emptiness that stretched like the black night about him made him all more determined to expose Sampath' p121. This shows the extent that the obsession has gotten to, since before this he knew he wanted to be famous. Now he has let this small spying job takeover his mind, and does not even know what he is aiming for. It is humorous that even after realising this, he decides to turn his focus back to Sampath.
- His clumsiness is amusing to the reader, not very discreet
- Indirect comparison with monkey

More quotes on his obsession with Sampath ~ p153, p159

#### Hungry Hop Boy

- Pinky has put so much effort into her appearance, yet the one time she does not do so, the Hungry Hop boy notices her. He also mocks her by saying that 'after seeing you .. This monkey had to follow. He must have thought you were a long lost relative' p87. Hitherto the Hungry Hop boy's lack of appreciation for Pinky is funny.
- His initial confusion of the situation is humorous. When Pinky sends him a note, 'Was this love? He wondered. Was it not love? How could it be? Was this a perversion a malformation of a thing?' P146. His idea that Pinky has some sort of perversion for him, when she is actually deeply in love with him, is very humorous. He, however, has not yet understood this.
- The relationship he develops is entertaining. After the note, 'they managed to exchange all manner of bottles, toffees, sweetmeats, handkerchiefs and nightclothes' p148. This is not exactly a usual way of showing your affections to another person, hence it makes us laugh.

#### **Explore how Desai uses nature to convey Kulfi's obsession with food / Explore how Desai makes Kulfi particularly entertaining for you**

- Kulfi never integrates with the towns people, and represents those who do not want to live a routine life such as Sampath. It is humorous that not regulating with the norm is seen as madness, as her family says 'Clearly she was going mad'. These people are just more passionate than the rest of the family, not mad.

## Explore how Desai makes Sampath's birth such an important event in the novel

- It is an unusually hot period of time, making it seem almost supernatural. 'Even rules and laws that usually stood straight and purposeful grew limp, like plants exposed to the afternoon sun'. It is highly unusual for the actual pillars of the government to not withhold the heat, showing how this is a very strong power which lurks in the air.
- The officials do their best to end the heat. 'The police [suggest] a frog wedding to be performed by temple priests'. Most of the proposals are ridiculous, and shows just how inefficient the government is for having officials give many of these ridiculous proposals. Also portrays the desperation of the people, who are trying to come up with anything to end their suffering.
- '[Kulfi] seemed to be claiming all the earth's energy for herself'. This shows that the baby in Kulfi is very powerful, almost making it seem as though the baby is what has caused this period of drought. This baby can bring a whole town to its knees.
- Desai uses hyperboles to create a powerful effect. Kulfi is not just hungry, she is ravenous when thinking 'Of fish curries and fish kebabs. Of pomfret, bekti, ruhi. Of shoals of whiskered shrimp'. These short sentences portray Kulfi's mind set. She cannot stick to one food, as she wants all of them at once. This yet again insinuates how the baby is making her mad, like an omnipotent thing controlling her mind.
- 'There was the feeling of breath being drawn in and held, as if it wouldn't be let free again until the baby was born'. Makes it seem like Sampath's birth will give them air to breathe and allow everyone to breathe. Now this makes him seem magical, like he is the key to their lock.
- Moments before Sampath is born, the monsoon arrives. Moreover, when he is born, a 'crate of Red Cross supplies that had been dropped by a Swedish relief plane' dropped into the old jamun tree. It seems as if Sampath is their relief, and he brings happiness to the town.

! Perhaps Kulfi abides with nature, as when the rain comes, her water breaks aswell (?)

### Kulfi's relationship with Sampath

- 'The house seemed to shrink' to Kulfi when she was pregnant. The house was not big enough for her to metaphorically live or breathe in, so she drew her thoughts and desires to release her anxiety. This correlates with Sampath's anxieties as there is 'the claustrophobia he had associated with the city'.

## **Making your own essay questions: How does [author] use [narrative technique] to [achieve some important effect of the story]?**

How does Desai amusingly portray the...