

## THE NATURE OF PASSION

Ruth Praver Jhabvala

(1956)

### Story

The story in *The Nature of Passion*, Jhabvala's second novel, focuses on a single large family. There is the father, Lalaji, his (unnamed) wife, three daughters (Rani, Usha and Nimmi) and three sons (Om Prakash, Chandra Prakash, and Viddi). When the action begins, Rani is already married to a rich man, while Usha is engaged and about to be married, while Nimmi is still a college student. Of the sons, the oldest (Om Prakash) is an unremarkable young man, married (to Shanta), living at home with his wife and working in his father's business. Chandra Prakash, the second son, is also married (but to a woman of another caste, named Kanta); he went abroad for his education and works in a separate company from his father's. The youngest son, Viddi, is a graduate but is unemployed and has a desire to be an artist. He, like Nimmi, the youngest daughter, is enamoured of all things Western.

Much of the story is taken up with the friction within the family, particularly over the issue of a suitable husband for Usha and the futures of Nimmi and Viddi. For example, Nimmi makes friends with a Hindu girl, named Rajen, who comes from a rich family and takes her to the Club, where they play tennis together. That much, perhaps, her father would accept, but she wears a short dress that would shock the father and mother. For this reason, Nimmi keeps this all a secret.

Nimmi angers her parents by becoming friends with a Parsi boy (Zoroastrian community) called Pheroze Batliwala. She even accepts an invitation to go to dinner with him in his car, which she knows will cause further turmoil in the family. Meanwhile, Om Prakash tries timidly to show some initiative. He works in his father's company, but in a separate office in central New Delhi, where there is no air conditioning. He suggests that the office might work more efficiently if they had air conditioning, and his father agrees but does nothing about it. Om Prakash knows that his father will not act and he has to accept it. Lalaji, whose mind never strays far from the 'bottom line,' is desperate to secure a large contract from the government. This is the driving force behind much of the action as the novel unfolds.

The main source of tension between the 'family' and Chandra Prakash, the second son, lies with his wife, Kanta. Because she is not from the same Punjabi caste, they view her with suspicion and sometimes dislike. Kanta, in turn, considers her in-laws to be money-grubbing nouveau riche (which they definitely are) and wants to avoid them at all costs. This sub-plot comes to a head when Shanta (the 'good Punjabi' daughter-in-law) gives birth to a baby and everyone goes to the hospital. Everyone, that is, except Kanta. Meanwhile, Viddi, the artistically-inclined youngest brother, adds fuel to the fire by his repeated requests to study abroad, as his older brother Chandra Prakash did. When those requests are turned down, flatly and angrily, his sulking poisons the atmosphere in the house. He is, however, 'bought off' by his father, who gives him a certain amount of money each month to keep him happy. Nimmi's future is then decided when her parents choose a husband for her. He is Kuku, who is rich (of course). Surprisingly, the rebellious Nimmi is happy with this decision because he plans to go on honeymoon in Europe.

Having stoked up these various forest fires of resentment, discontent and suspicion, the novel ends with a reconciliation of sorts. Lalaji has secured the big contract, and everyone gathers for a feast to celebrate Nimmi's betrothal. Viddi, the young rebel, makes jokes with Om Prakash, the older brother whom he used to mock. Even Kanta consents to be present. Lalaji drifts off, dreaming of the grand weddings for Usha and then for Nimmi, at which he will display his wealth and impress his guests, among whom he will count ministers of state and captains of industry. Yes, the future looks bright.

## Themes

Money The 'passion' of the title refers to the desire for money that drives forward the story. The novel itself opens with a scene describing Lalaji getting up in the morning and reading the newspaper over a cup of tea. He focuses on two items. First, there is a notice that the government is tendering for a construction contract worth 25 lakhs rupees (a very large sum in 1956). The dream of securing this contract will haunt Lalaji from page one to the final page of the novel. The second item he reads with interest is a 'matrimonial', that is, an advertisement for a bride: 'nice, Punjabi family seeking suitable wife, with wheaten complexion and graduate degree for tall, UK-educated boy, 27.' Lalaji has 'married off' one of his daughters and another is engaged, but Nimmi remains at home, and Lalaji knows that he will need to offer a substantial dowry to any prospective groom's family. Thus, the novel kicks off with two, inter-related desires that concern money. Money also shapes the arc of Viddi's story in the book. He criticises his father's money-obsession and declares his intention to live as an artist, without caring for the 'green stuff.' But, he is tamed by his father's offer of 500 rupees a month. Other characters, like Nimmi, are also trapped in materialistic desires, such as being able to get into the best club in Delhi, go to the best restaurants and go to Europe on her honeymoon. Usha, the phlegmatic and unappealing second daughter, may be oblivious about the power of money, but her mother's fears that she will not make her future in-laws happy are assuaged by the expectation that 'they will be content enough when they think of the dowry they have got with her.' Chandra Prakash, the independent second son, is not all that independent. His salary is insufficient to pay for the expensive furnishing for his new house and the yearly holiday in the hills. And so, he reluctantly accepts money from his father. The epigram for the novel is a passage from the *Bhagavad Gita*, which states that 'the nature of passion [*rajas*] gives rise to a thirst for pleasure and [creates] an attachment to desire.' As Viddi acidly comments to a friend, 'The only book we have in our house, aside from financial registers, is the *Bhagavad Gita*. But no one even reads that.' Even if Lalaji read that book, it is doubtful that the nature of his passion would change.

Women A second theme of this novel is the position of women in upper-class Indian society. As the novel (not so subtly) reveals, even in this elite class, many of whom are 'westernised' and have lived abroad, the most important fact in a woman's life is marriage. And in the 1950s, it was overwhelmingly an arranged marriage, which meant negotiations over dowry and astrological charts. As the rebellious youngest daughter, Nimmi, complains to her friend, 'Oh, you don't know what it's like for a girl in a family like mine. Everyone expects us to sit all day in the women's quarter [of the house], to learn how to cook and afterwards to be married and have lots of children, and never go out anywhere.' Her friend sighs and says, 'It makes me so angry. How can you have democracy if women aren't emancipated. Arranged marriages are like selling you as a slave.' It is important to note that the friend, Rajen, comes from a family that, unlike Nimmi's nouveau riche family, has lived a privileged life for generations and has transcended some of the traditions that still bind Nimmi's family. When she goes to her sisters and sisters-in-law to ask for help in avoiding an arranged marriage, they are sympathetic but unhelpful. 'I can't do anything,' they say to her. 'It's all for the best. Best not to upset the apple-cart, you know. Besides, I have my own life to lead.' This is the tragedy of Nimmi's situation. She is educated and westernised enough to realise that she does not want an arranged marriage, but her family is not ready to depart from tradition. And, so, in the end, Nimmi, with no place to go, is absorbed into the deep layers of tradition that exert such power. The idea that 'it's all for the best' is also confirmed for Nimmi by her observations of her brother Chandra's marriage to a woman who comes from another caste, and is the subject of abuse from her in-laws, in particular Nimmi's own, usually kind mother.

Artists A third theme in the novel, a correlative of the first two, is that art and artists (in the broadest sense) have little value in Indian society. The intellectuals in the novel (a journalist, a painter and a playwright) do not get employment and hence they have no money and waste their talent and time by sitting in cheap restaurants, drinking coffee and thinking of ways to earn some money. Zahir-ud-din is an unemployed painter who has nothing to do and so deceives Viddi into getting money for him from his rich father, Lalaji. There is also Bhawa is a dramatist, who writes plays on social problems and sometimes stages them, but somehow never succeeds in gaining success. He, too, deceives Viddi into paying for the expenses of one of his plays. Viddi himself knows what a philistine family looks like when he tells his friend, 'At home, we have a radiogram....it is in very big in walnut case and of course like everything in our house, it cost a lot of money. But nobody ever listens to the radio. The only book in our house, beside business registers, is the *Bhagavad Gita*, but no one ever reads it.'

## Characters

Lalaji Lalaji is the protagonist of the novel, although he shares the stage with several of his children. He is a Punjabi businessman who has come to New Delhi recently and made his fortune in the building trade as a contractor. While he is obsessed with money, he is at times generous with his gifts to his children.

Rani Rani is the oldest daughter, married and settled with two children, and therefore the least controversial of the children. She lives with her husband in a nice house, wears fashionable clothes and jewellery and sends her children to the best English-medium schools.

Usha Usha is the second daughter, who is rather different to Usha. She is engaged but has little education, personality or individuality. Her chief interest seems to be sitting down and eating sweets.

Nimmi Nimmi, the youngest daughter, is the rebellious one. She is studying in college, where she meets people from families even richer than her own, which impresses her. She acts in innocent ways that shock her family, but in the end she accepts an arranged marriage.

Om Prakash Om Prakash is the oldest son, a 'chip off the old block.' He is not well educated, doesn't speak English and works for his father. He and his wife and children live with his father, Lalaji.

Chandra Prakash Chandra Prakash, the second son, is more of an individual, who has scandalised the family by marrying Kanta, who is not from the same Punjabi caste as they are. He studied abroad, came back and set up a business apart from that of his father.

Viddi Viddi, the youngest son, wants to be an artist or a journalist, anything, it seems, but a businessman like his father. Although he is sincere, he is also superficial and in the end comes to accept his family and the reality of financial responsibility.

**Lalaji** (Controlling)

**Character** Lalaji, or Lalaji Narayan Dass Verma, to give him the full name he prefers to use in official contexts, is the protagonist of this novel. He is the father of a typical, nouveau riche Punjabi family, a successful businessman and a somewhat lonely husband. We are given an early insight into this man by the author's beautifully worded opening sentences: 'Lalaji was himself the only one to sleep outdoors. In the mornings it was chilly and he had to cover himself with a sheet, but he preferred to wake up to the sky, the hedges and the crows rather than the loneliness of his expensive bedroom. He did not like his bedroom...with all its unnecessary furniture. But a bedroom suite was a social necessity, so he had bought it.' There it is in a nutshell. He must keep up with the Joneses, so he buys something he doesn't want but which he can afford. Lalaji is pretentious, but also wealthy and manipulative with members of his family and business partners, and in the latter case sometimes acts with dishonour. Lalaji does have redeeming characteristics, however. He is protective of his children, all six of them, and very proud of most of them. He is generous to them, and, a big plus, he treats his daughters with as much respect as his sons. In the business world, he is cold, almost ruthless at times, but at home, he is softer and kinder, but still never relinquishes his control.

**Activities** Lalaji follows a set morning routine, which involves cleaning his teeth with a twig from a margosa tree (instead, his wife points out, of using one of the seven marbled bathrooms inside the house). Up at six o'clock, he bathes, has his tea and reads several newspapers. By nine he is driven to his small office in a fashionable part of New Delhi, where he spends all day running his contractor business, meeting visitors, telephoning people and wheedling information, all with the single purpose of securing construction contracts. His lawyer, however, is received only in his house, because of the privacy he desires.

## Illustrative moments

Manipulative Although Lalaji has many admirable qualities—as a father, he is kind, protective and proud (most of the time) of his children—underneath much of his behaviour is a desire to manipulate others. He doesn't like criticism or opposition to what he sees as the right path in life, which is to say, his path. A subtle illustration of this manipulation occurs toward the end of the novel, when Viddi, his

youngest son, is summoned to his father's office. When the boy turns up, Lalaji has actually forgotten why he had sent the car to pick him up at some seedy café and bring him to the office. But he quickly recalls his purpose and tells Viddi to sit down, offers him a cold drink and then lays out a proposal. 'First of all, son,' he begins, 'you must forget all this nonsense of going abroad and studying. Waste of time.' 'But, father,' Viddi cuts in, 'I want to be an artist and write books, so...'. Lalaji dismisses his son's words with a wave of the hand and gets down to business. 'Now, listen, son, this is what I'll do.' As he talks, in the back of his mind, he is imaging how a profitable contract can be won with the government. 'You can make a lot of money when you take over this business from your older brother.' Viddi says, 'But I want to be an artist, not a salesman, or whatever it is you.' Lalaji ignores this and says, 'Now, listen again. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you 500 rupees a month. Hear that? 500. You don't have to work, you just spend it as you like. OK?' The astonished Viddi is won over. He gives up his plans to go abroad and accepts his father's generous offer. What he doesn't know is that his father believes that this handout will 'teach him about the value of money, that the cash will 'hook him on the idea of making more,' and that eventually he will be brought into the materialist world. On the face of it, Lalaji's offer is generous, but it is in fact a carefully calculated ruse to alter his son's 'ridiculous idea' about becoming an artist.

**Pretentious** Lalaji is a proud father and a protective father, as well as a 'reasonable' husband, but he is also a pretentious man. This failing is, the author suggests, an inevitable result of the aspirational social class to which he belongs. His grandparents were landless peasants, his father owned a small plot of land, but he, Lalaji Narayan Dass Verma, is the CEO of a large construction company in New Delhi. He has money and status, and he makes sure that everyone knows it. The best example of his showmanship is his dream for the wedding of his youngest daughter, Nimmi. In the final pages of the novel, at a family picnic, he describes to himself what this grand event will be like. 'If the talk of Usha's wedding [the middle daughter, already engaged] would go on for years, the memory of Nimmi's would carry over into their next rebirth. A hundred cooks and confectioners would be sitting in his house day and night to prepare the feast; six bands in red and gold uniforms to serenade the guests; whole streets lit up by the illuminations from his house; Delhi drained of chickens and rice and spices; traffic blocked by cars bringing guests; the women in saris stiff with gold, bent under the weight of their jewellery; the richest men in Delhi, ministers, secretaries, the whole government should come to honour his daughter.' And when Nimmi stepped out to greet the crowd, everyone would say, 'Who is that queen?' And the answer would be: the daughter of Lalaji Narayan Dass Verma. It is the musings of a proud man, but the pretentiousness overshadows the pride.

**Dishonourable** There are moments when we glimpse another side of Lalaji, in his business dealings. He is a contractor, who bids for government contracts to build public sector projects—roads, bridges, tunnels, apartment buildings and schools. It was, and still is, a very lucrative sector of the economy, largely because the sums involved are immense and the men involved are corruptible. There is a contract that Lalaji has been pursuing for most of the novel, a contract with the Ministry of Public Land Development, a noble enterprise established in the 1950s under the leader of Nehru, the socialist leader who kickstarted India's state-owned industrialisation. A moment comes, toward the end of the story, when Lalaji receives bad news. All his lobbying, all his hints at bribery and all his powers of persuasion, have yielded nothing: the tendering of the contract has been delayed. A new Deputy Minister has cold feet and said the process will only start again in six months. Lalaji calls in his 'contact man' in the ministry and tells him, 'We can't wait six months. Let this new, whatever his name is, smell our money and we'll have a different story.' The new Deputy Minister, it turns out has been abroad to get a degree in business administration. But Lalaji says to himself that if he can only get close enough to him to 'confront him with temptation—actual, concrete, naked temptation in the form of a pile of banknotes—he will forget his foreign instruction and follow the proper instincts of man.' This is Lalaji's tragedy. He believes that corruption is inherent in humankind.

**Nimmi** (Compliant)

**Character** Nimmi is the most important female character in the novel. As the only sister who is not yet married or engaged, she represents a possible new kind of future for an Indian woman. She is also the pampered princess of the family, the one for whom her father has great hopes. In this way, the author has set up Nimmi as the bellwether character for testing the opportunities that a young woman, from a wealthy family, had in India in the 1950s. Nimmi is a strong-willed teenager, who rebels against the social conventions that constrain her and other women, especially the tradition of the arranged marriage. She is still in college, but her parents are openly speaking of the time when

she will be married: in other words, she can only look forward to a life as a wife and a mother. No one expects her to have a career. For the time being, though, Nimmi acts with a certain amount of freedom. She can play tennis in a short skirt; she can, albeit it secretly, go on night-time drives with a Parsi boy (not from her own Punjabi social group and not a possible husband). She can even be kissed, although it is not a particularly sensual or erotic experience for her. While she expresses herself with ferocity on some issues, like marriage, she is timid and sweet. All her social rebellion melts away when the boy her family have chosen for her husband turns out to be charming and sophisticated, almost like a lover. Now, she can dream of wearing expensive saris, going to Europe on holiday and living in a palatial house. Innocent and at times rebellious, Nimmi is ultimately a typical, compliant young woman.

**Activities** Nimmi appears to enjoy college, where she meets various kinds of people, and she especially likes her classes on English poetry. She also likes to spend time at the Club because that is where rich and stylish people go. She plays tennis there and sometimes takes tea, but always with other young women. Her nocturnal drives with the Parsi boy are kept secret from her parents. She also likes to dress up for formal dinner parties, held either in her own house, the house of her father's business associates or, best of all, at the Club. But special joy was to be had when the Parsi boy took her (in secret, of course) to a different kind of club, The Sweet Spot, which was a Night Club.

### **Illustrative moments**

**Rebellious** Nimmi, the unmarried college girl with her hair still in plaits, is the voice of the social critic in the novel. It is through her, that the author presents a critique of the money-obsessed nouveau riche in Delhi and their arranged marriages. We have a good illustration of her rebellious attitude in the very first scene where she appears. It is morning, and the family are eating breakfast. The telephone rings and Lalaji, the father, is told that his daughter-in-law has given birth to a girl. Nimmi is busy reading the cinema notices and celebrity news in the morning paper when he announces, 'A girl! All the rich men in Delhi will be after her, because I will give her a huge dowry. A sum no one can imagine.' Hearing this, Nimmi puts down her banana and says, 'Dada, why do you think you can buy everything with money?' Her father replies, without wit but with cold-eyed sincerity, 'What else can you buy it with?' Nimmi is about to shout at him but keeps her peace, knowing that she cannot change him, and returns to reading the news about the latest film stars in the paper. This brief scene encapsulates her character quite well. She is quick to criticise the materialism that is rampant all around her, yet she is powerless to effect any change and is content to return to the superficial, and also money-driven, world of cinema celebrities.

**Defiant** The most important battle that Nimmi fights with her parents is her arranged marriage. The parents have not been impressed with her choices of boy friends at college, especially not the Parsi boy, Feroze, and they quietly talk about 'her husband' as if he will appear as surely as the sun will rise. But Nimmi digs in her heels and goes to her girlfriend, Rajen, to seek advice. In this conversation, she shows her defiant character. She will not marry someone she 'does not love,' even though her mother says that she will 'learn to love' him. 'My husband will not be a school lesson,' she hisses to her friend. 'We will share interests, like reading and travelling, and we will be soul-mates.' Her friend then points out that if she had a 'love marriage,' her father would undoubtedly cut off any money, including dowry. 'Doesn't matter,' cries Nimmi. 'I can get my degree and work...as a teacher, get my qualifications and become a teacher.' The friend informs her that teachers' salaries are very low, which prompts Nimmi to make big plans. 'I'm not thinking of that kind of school. No, I'll set up on my own, you know, and give tuition to the children of rich people. I'll charge high fees. Everyone does.' And so the conversation proceeds. The friend points out obstacles, realistic ones, it has to be said, and Nimmi jumps over them with astonishing ease. She is determined and will not back down.

**Compliant** Nimmi's staunch opposition to her arranged marriage was an exercise in sloganeering, a verbal, symbolic protest, and she probably knew it. All her barriers come tumbling down when she is 'introduced' to a prospective bridegroom, named Kuku, who comes from the 'right' kind of family (i.e., same caste and rich family). Their meeting is chaperoned at a distance by the two families, who sit on a darkened lawn. The setting is romantic, just Nimmi and Kuku standing alone near a pillar of an ancient monument in one of Delhi's many parks. Here is the passage: 'He is handsome, especially the way he gracefully holds his cigarette, and Nimmi's lip begins to tremble as he speaks. "You see, we'll have jolly times together." Of course, he hadn't actually asked her to marry him; he only spoke of what they would do when they were married. He looked so nice, so young, so charming—he was wearing a gaily-flowered bush-shirt and suede shoes—that it was easy to imagine they were lovers and the marriage one of their one choosing.' He tells Nimmi sweet things, and she 'gave a little tug at

her sari to make it fall more gracefully around her feet.’ She says that she wants to finish college, but he dismisses that (‘you’ll learn nothing there’), and she admits that John Keats probably won’t be important once she’s actually married. She imagines going to the Club with him, in his expensive car and shiny suit, and she in her gorgeous sari and jewellery. At the end of this secret exchange of words in the dark, Nimmi ‘felt jubilant.’ What Jhabvala is underlining here is the powerful pull of what we would now call ‘gendered’ roles in Indian society. The rebellious Nimmi can talk, but without material support, without independent means, she will nearly always comply with expectations in the end.

### **Viddi** (Superficial)

**Character** Viddi is a well-drawn character, who fits a certain mould—the rebellious student and opinionated would-be artist—but transcends that stereotype at the same time. Viddi is the youngest son, always a difficult status, who wants to break away from the stultifying business-culture represented by his wealthy and manipulative father. He dreams of being an artist (of an undefined medium) or a journalist and of going to the west, where he imagines himself living among sophisticated people. Very quickly we see how superficial his ambitions are. When asked by a friend why he wants to go abroad, he can only say because he ‘will lead a gay life, in ballrooms, with lots of glamorous girls.’ Despite this obvious lack of depth in Viddi, he is still likable, in part because he is juxtaposed with the equally unpalatable characters of his money-obsessed father and older brother. In the midst of his pontificating about art and life and literature, he does sometimes express an idea that we can admire. And he does represent the age-old dilemma of how an artist (in the broadest sense) can survive and keep his ideals in a society in which success is defined by financial status.

**Activities** Viddi, the student, is rarely seen in college or studying. Instead, we see him mostly at home, arguing with his father, or lying on a bed in his room, which was the only room in which he was allowed to smoke his cigarettes. He also goes quite often to the Renaissance restaurant because it is glamorous with its chromium-plated bar and expressionistic murals. It is also where Viddi can run up a bill because the manager knows his father. He usually goes there at tea-time to hear a jazz band and eat cakes.

### **Illustrative moments**

**Contemptuous** Viddi, the youngest son, the student and would-be artist, is severely critical of the materialistic concerns that dominate his family and their social circle. Such an attitude is hardly surprising in someone like Viddi; indeed, we would be disappointed, as readers, if he lazily conformed to the values around him. What is surprising, though, is the intensity of his contempt for his father. This hatred is expressed clearly in an early scene, when Viddi is sitting in a restaurant with an older man, who is a journalist. When the man asks why he is upset, Viddi says, ‘You do not know what is like in my father’s house. Sometimes, I think I will go mad. They understand nothing, they know nothing, only money.’ The journalist says that actually he would like to meet his father (for his own ulterior motives). This is the next passage: ‘Viddi said, “How you would hate him,” his own hate brimming in his voice. “You do not know what he is like. He is so crude. He is crude in his manners and his ideas are crude. He knows only money. When I speak of something else, he laughs and picks his teeth. He is uneducated; he can barely read or write; he speaks very bad English.”’ Viddi’s contempt for his father is as extreme as it is superficial and only illustrates Viddi’s own shallow character. A father who picks his teeth and is not fluent in a second language is hardly a disreputable character, but to someone who is so concerned with his own social image, like Viddi, he is embarrassing.

**Opinionated** Viddi has a lot of opinions about a lot of things, but especially about art and literature. After all, he is a college student who is studying English literature and has read a lot of books. His fixed ideas about drama, for instance, are articulated in a scene, toward the end of the story, when he meets his friends in the Renaissance restaurant (where else would a budding artist go?). There, one of his friends is bemoaning the fact that his play did not do very well the night before—in fact, there were only 13 people in the audience. Someone else says that the critic’s review in the newspaper was scathing, and Viddi agrees saying that the play lacked emotional form. When the playwright’s friend gets angry with Viddi, he leans back with his cigarette and declares, ‘In art, I must have my own opinions. I don’t care who my friends are, my opinions are sacred.’ The others turn on Viddi, but he continues, ‘There are too many characters in the play, and they all say unreal things. You should read the classical plays by Shaw, for instance.’ The friend defends himself by saying he has read the classical Sanskrit plays, which are ‘our national heritage.’ Viddi scoffs at this and claims that ‘those

things may be all right for colleges and examination papers, but the real thing is found in modern English and American plays. Having delivered his profound comments, Viddi then beckons to the waiter and orders a sherbet for everyone. This is a cleverly written scene that allows Viddi to display both his serious and his superficial sides.

Dependent Unfortunately, as his father would point out, Viddi's opinions won't pay his bills. And for that reason, despite his bravely independent ideas, Viddi is dependent upon his father. This dependence, with its advantages and disadvantages, is illustrated in a scene at the end of the novel. The situation is that one of his artist friends has landed him with a bill for nearly a thousand rupees; it seems that Viddi had unwittingly agreed to provide the catering for a reception after a play's premiere. Now he is in a fix. He tries to put a brave face on it and says, 'An artist should never have to think about money, only his art,' but the reality is that Viddi will be taken to court unless he produces the money. He gets 500 a month from his father, but that 'had already been spent on a new suit and membership fees to the Club.' So, tail between his legs, Viddi goes to his father, who is out, and ends up asking his older brother, Om Prakash, for the cash. 'He will file a law suit against me if I don't pay him,' Viddi says, almost in tears. His brother reassures him that 'we know how to handle such people. You just sit tight. Let him file as many law suits as he likes. Why we have 14 or 15 suits outstanding against us right now.' Viddi relaxes as his older brother continues to use 'we', as a sign of the solidarity. His brother and father are experienced, he thinks, they know the business world, money, courts and all that sort of thing. In this scene, Viddi realises that, like his sister, Nimmi, he is safer inside the family circle and its cultural conservatism than he is outside it.