



## Discussion Questions

1. Consider how the novel uses setting (metaphor of the river; “The rains separate lovers, after all, when roads become rivers”) and ideas around the things that literally separate us, whether distance or death.
2. Bijou’s perspective on the act of immersing her father’s ashes is interrupted by thoughts of her life in D.C. and other events that seem, to her, to have led to this rite. She is clearly conflicted about the rite itself, but why? And in what other moments of the novel does Bijou compare here to there or now to before?
3. Why is the book titled *Bijou Roy*, and not, for instance, *Nitish Roy*, considering that his character arguably occupies the most room in the story? What other title might you consider for the novel?
4. Consider the women who influence Bijou throughout the novel: Sheela, Pari, Anuja, Kamla, Ketaki, and, of course, Billie Holiday. What do you think is their role in shaping Bijou’s experience? You might like to review chapter ten, wherein these characters gather as an ensemble, at last. Consider, too, Zenia’s role at the dinner “get-together” later (an event further shaped by Ketaki’s elopement).
5. How might Bijou’s relationships with Crane and Naveen compare to Nitish’s relationships with Kamla and Sheela? In other words, how do Bijou’s choices and experiences as a young adult echo those of her parent’s?
6. Unpack this quote and explain its larger significance to Bijou’s experience in India and with Naveen: “Perhaps there were no coincidences, only collisions, only physics and whatever copacetic philosophy could be sussed out in a place like this; if not this café, then one very much like it, somewhere halfway between home and the world, amid friends, cold glass, and smoke.”



7. To what extent does Crane represent “the boy next door” and, similarly, to what extent does Naveen represent “India?”
8. How has Naveen’s relationship with Ashok (and Nitish) defined his life before he met Bijou? Why does he desire to involve Bijou in conversations about their parents?
9. The first chapter contains a number of allusions to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, including the lines spoken by Ophelia after her father Polonius’s death: “And will he not come again?” Compare this with the middle of chapter seven, when Naveen and Bijou walk along Shakespeare Sarani Road to the Maidan, where conversation involves *Hamlet* more directly.
10. Discuss the role of photographs: chapter six (the photo album) and also the photo of Bijou that Naveen has in his room.
11. Chapter six is told entirely from the perspective of Nitish. It is a flashback to 1967 and follows Nitish through his mid-20s as he embraces “revolutionary” ideas. Consider it against the scene in chapter three when Nitish, in a conversation with Padam, says, “When you’re that age, you think you know everything. The question of sanity is a moot point.”
12. In what the author has referred to as a coda of sorts, the book concludes in Nitish’s perspective. The prose strings together a number of his memories, largely in fragments, and concludes by landing on one significant idea. What is it? How does it define a “purpose” in life? How does it define a father-daughter relationship?