

Questions 1-10 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Amit Chaudhuri, *A Strange and Sublime Address*. ©1991 by Amit Chaudhuri. A ten-year-old boy named Sandeep travels with his mother, his aunt (Mamima), and his uncle (Chhotomama) to visit family in Calcutta, India.

Two boys were playing carrom on the steps of a small, painted shed which had the following words on its wall in large, black letters: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPORTSMEN. A single table-tennis table inside the shed could be glimpsed through the window. The boys interrupted their game to give Chhotomama directions to the house in a series of sporadic, enthusiastic gestures. Oh yes, they knew the old couple. And yes, their son and daughter-in-law had arrived last night with their first child.

“Is it a girl or a boy?” asked Mamima, rolling down the window.

“A girl,” said the boy.

Mamima rolled up her window before the mosquitoes came in. The two boys vanished behind them. When they reached the house, they found that the old man was waiting on the verandah with a lantern in his hand. Moths were shuddering round and round the lantern, though the old man was oblivious to them. He had come out because he had heard the throbbing of the engine in the distance. The night had been silent except for the questioning cry of an owl and the continual orchestral sound of crickets in the bushes. The throbbing of the engine had, therefore, travelled through the silence to the old man’s listening ear, and to his wife’s ear, even when the car was relatively far away and beyond their range of vision. They had pondered over the sound, and finally, he had lit the lantern and shuffled out. “I told her,” he said, referring to his wife. “I told her that I heard the car, I knew it was the car, I told her you were coming.”

Once they were inside, Mamima gave the pot of yoghurt and the pot of sweetmeats to the old lady. “There was no need,” she said. “Oh really,” she said. “This is too much,” she insisted, with the air of one who has just received the Kohinoor diamond as a birthday present. “Come, come, come,” said Chhotomama, with the air of someone who has just given the Kohinoor diamond as a birthday present, and refuses to be overawed by his own generosity. “It’s nothing.” It was nothing, of course, only Ganguram’s sweets and yoghurt, but they fussed and fussed and created the illusion that it was something, something unique and untasted and unencountered.

The son and the daughter-in-law emerged shyly from the anteroom. They both stooped gently to touch Chhotomama’s feet, and Sandeep’s aunt’s and his mother’s feet, a traditional greeting and a mark of obeisance towards one’s elders.

“Oh no no no,” said Chhotomama, struggling to keep the son’s hand away from his feet. “There’s no need for all this.” This was half a token gesture towards modesty, and half towards the new, “modern” India—Nehru’s secular India, free of ritual and religion.

“I have not met you for two years, Dada,” said the son, struggling to get his hands near Chhotomama’s toes. “You must not stop me.” This was half a token gesture towards modesty, and half towards the old, “traditional” India—Gandhi’s India of ceremony and custom.

Sandeep, meanwhile, had come to the conclusion that the grown-ups were mad, each after his or her own fashion. Simple situations were turned into complex, dramatic ones; not until then did everyone feel important and happy. Will they never grow up? thought Sandeep irately. He glanced around him. A single blue, fluorescent tube was burning on the wall. It was not a big room. Despite its bareness, the impression it gave was of austerity rather than poverty. It made one remember that poverty meant displacement as well as lack, while austerity meant being poor in a rooted way, within a tradition and culture of sparseness, which transformed even the lack, the paucity, into a kind of being.

1

According to the passage, the old man was standing on the verandah because

- A) he was watching cars travel down the road.
- B) the two boys had reported the visitors would soon arrive.
- C) he had heard what he believed to be the visitors’ car.
- D) he enjoyed listening to the quiet sounds of the evening.

2

In the passage, the yoghurt and sweetmeats are compared to a

- A) jewel.
- B) cuisine.
- C) wedding gift.
- D) generous donation.

3

As used in lines 37 and 40, “air” most nearly means

- A) atmosphere.
- B) absence.
- C) demeanor.
- D) melody.

4

The characters’ behavior during the gift giving mainly serves to

- A) emphasize the lavish value of the gift.
- B) inflate the significance of the gesture.
- C) convey indifference toward the gift.
- D) stress the need for polite behavior.

5

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A) Lines 43-44 (“It was . . . yoghurt”)
- B) Lines 44-46 (“they . . . unencountered”)
- C) Lines 52-54 (“Oh no . . . all this”)
- D) Lines 58-60 (“I have . . . stop me”)

6

The description of Chhotomama and the son’s interaction mainly serves to

- A) show how the characters diverge in their approaches to cultural practices.
- B) emphasize the characters’ complex relationship.
- C) stress the characters’ misinterpretations of Indian history.
- D) depict how the characters created gestures that became routine.

7

Over the course of the passage, Sandeep comes to view the adults as

- A) strict.
- B) reserved.
- C) sophisticated.
- D) immature.

8

Sandeep would be most critical of which action from the passage?

- A) The two boys playing carrom
- B) Mamima’s inquiry about the gender of the child
- C) The old lady’s reaction to the gift
- D) The son and daughter-in-law waiting in the anteroom

9

Which lines from the passage most strongly suggest that India has experienced social change?

- A) Lines 36-37 (“There was . . . she insisted”)
- B) Lines 48-51 (“They both . . . elders”)
- C) Lines 54-57 (“This was . . . religion”)
- D) Lines 73-76 (“It made . . . sparseness”)

10

As used in line 72, “impression” most nearly means

- A) appearance.
- B) belief.
- C) imitation.
- D) recollection.