



A PLAY GUIDE FROM THE DESK OF  
ASHLIE CORCORAN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

# **The Orchard (After Chekhov)**

By Sarena Parmar

MARCH 21–APRIL 21, 2019  
STANLEY INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE STAGE



# Notes from Ashlie Corcoran

Welcome to our Play Guide for *The Orchard (After Chekhov)*. Inspired by Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, this is the tale of a Punjabi-Sikh family fighting to hold onto their Okanagan Valley orchard. This fresh adaptation based on the playwright Sarena Parmar's own childhood in British Columbia confronts life, loss, and the Canadian immigrant experience with both bravery and beauty.

Sarena Parmar is an artist that I have had my eyes on for a long time. I read an early draft of this play years ago, and I knew at that time that Sarena had the start of something special. When I was considering which plays to program for my inaugural season, this work came to mind right away. I love that we are celebrating the work of a B.C. writer on our flagship stage. In addition, I am thrilled that you will be witnessing the work of a creative team and cast that are all from this province. We have so much talent here in our local community.

I have always loved Chekhov's writing, but what grabbed me about Sarena's play was its particular sense of place. I also spent some of my childhood in

the Okanagan, so I recognize the places and people she has written about. The play has a great sense of longing and melancholy, while also being deeply funny. Finally, I believe that this play is infused with a contemporary feel, which transposes Chekhov's writing for our Arts Club audiences, in our time.

I hope you enjoy this production!

Yours,  
Ashlie



Ashlie Corcoran; photo by Mark Halliday

# THE **ORCHARD**

(AFTER CHEKHOV)



## **Synopsis**

**(spoiler alert!)**

### **Prologue**

The play opens in May 1969, at the Basran family orchard in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. We hear (in voice-over) seven-year-old Griesha walking with his mother, Loveleen, examining the blossoming trees on their

property. Griesha tells Loveleen that he's going down to the stream to find some salmon bones to use in the fertilizer. Peter, the boy's tutor, approaches and tells Griesha that it's time for his arithmetic lesson; Griesha whines with displeasure. After Griesha reluctantly leaves with Peter, Kesur, Loveleen's father, tells Loveleen that her son has a way with the orchard's trees, much as she does. He laments that "you can't tell a tree what to do, they're stubborn as hell."

## Act I

Almost five years later: late April 1974. In the living room of the Basrans' home, family friend Michael Lopakhin lies sleeping. It is very early in the morning, not quite 4 A.M. Barbra (Barminder), Loveleen's niece, in her mid 20s, enters and talks to Donna, a Japanese-Canadian woman who works at the Basrans' fruit stand. Michael wakes up, and, mistaking the voices for Loveleen's, welcomes Loveleen home from her five-year stay in India. Donna tells him that Loveleen isn't home yet. They remember that the fruit pickers were always very fond of Loveleen, as she worked side by side with them. Michael recalls that she was especially kind to him when he was a child. Donna mentions that she saw "another foreclosure letter" arrive in the mail, but Michael does not respond directly to this and instead questions whether he should offer Loveleen his condolences for the deaths of her son and husband five years ago; she had left Canada soon after these tragic events. Michael is eager for Loveleen to arrive, and says that he has "lots of business to discuss" with her right away.

A car pulls up to the house, and Loveleen enters with Gurjit (Gus), her brother, and Annie, her daughter. Loveleen is wearing an elegant sari. She seems happy to be home, but also melancholy, hit at once by painful and bittersweet memories. Paul, owner of the neighbouring property, enters and greets Loveleen. After Loveleen exits, Barbra asks Annie—who had gone to India to find her mother but stayed six weeks longer than expected—what happened "over there." Annie complains that Bombay was "awful," and that her mother was staying in a "dirty room above a fish shop" and didn't seem like herself. Loveleen was surrounded by "parasitic" friends, who came over to throw parties at her small, "mouldy" apartment. Loveleen also had Yash, a close family friend

(regarded as a cousin), with her in India. Annie convinced them to fly back home; Barbra notes that the family spent the last of its savings on the plane tickets. She tells Annie that the bank has been persistently phoning them: if the Basrans fail to pay what is owed to the bank, their land will soon go up for auction. Barbra says that their only chance is a "perfect harvest," which she hopes Loveleen will be able to help with, since she has always had a particular way with the fruit trees. Annie asks Barbra whether Michael has proposed to her yet. Barbra says he hasn't. She tells Annie that she's been visiting the local church, which surprises Annie, but Barbra says that "everyone hangs out there." She takes out a Bible and reads her favourite verses to Annie. Annie replies that Barbra shouldn't keep the Bible where Kesur or other family members might find it. In the living room, Michael mentions that the Basrans' land will soon go up for auction, which surprises Loveleen. He tells her that he hopes to "save" it, by purchasing the property and turning it into an RV park for tourists, though this will require cutting down most of the trees. Loveleen is shocked by Michael's proposal, and asks her brother, the property's co-owner, what is going on. Gurjit asserts that theirs is "the best soil in the entire valley," but Michael responds that they only produce a profitable harvest every other year and, in light of present circumstances, they must "separate business from [their] personal feelings." Gurjit and Kesur explain that their family has been farmers—not businesspeople—for many generations, going back to their roots in the Punjab region.

After Michael leaves, Gurjit speaks negatively about him, but then apologizes to Barbra, referring to him as her fiancé. Paul congratulates her, but Barbra tries to downplay this talk. Annie says that she is going to bed, and that she looks forward to walking around the orchard with Loveleen tomorrow. In Annie's bedroom, Donna tells

Annie that Peter has returned and that he is staying in one of the fruit-pickers' cabins on their property. Annie says that they should tell her mother that Peter is there, but Barbra says that they should wait until tomorrow at least, if not later (presumably because Peter's presence will remind Loveleen of her deceased son, and this coupled with the foreclosure will be too much for the troubled Loveleen to take in all at once). In the living room, Loveleen tells her father that she's happy he's still alive, but Kesur isn't wearing his hearing aid and so mishears her remark. She says that she missed the land—"my own country"—and its beauty. Peter enters and greets Loveleen; she is instantly reminded of Griesha and calls out his name. Loveleen tries to compose herself to speak with Peter. She asks him when he "[lost] his good looks," observing that he used to look like a student. "I fear I will always be a student," he replies. Barbra reminds them that they have chores to do, but Loveleen says that she is going to lie down to rest. Worried about the family's financial troubles, Gurjit tries to project confidence that Loveleen's return will help to yield a very profitable harvest.

In an interlude, the story shifts back to the summer of 1964. The Basran family and their employees discuss (in voice-over) the plentiful harvest as they pick fruit from the trees. Loveleen says that it's the best harvest they've ever had.

## Act II

It is again 1974, one month after Loveleen's return home. Yash, Donna, Yebi, a Japanese handyman, and Charlie, a First Nations woman who works for the Basrans, chat as the sun sets over the orchard. Loveleen and Gurjit enter with Michael, who is still trying to sway the siblings to his plan for the property, much to Gurjit's irritation. Loveleen, too, remains resistant to his plan. Frustrated,

Michael is about to leave in a haste, but Loveleen follows him and asks him to stay. He does, and Loveleen tells him about her experiences in India. There, she had a romantic relationship with a man who was "such a rush of life." When he fell ill, Loveleen sold her apartment to help cover his medical expenses, but once he had recovered, he left her. It was soon after that, she explains, that Annie showed up and made Loveleen long for her "true home." However, the man has recently written to Loveleen, asking her to forgive him and return to India. She says that she's considering it, and then, changing the subject, suggests that Michael start a family; she remarks that his engagement to "our Barminder, darling Barbra" is exciting. Michael tacitly agrees.

Barbra enters with Peter and Annie. Peter contemptuously implies that Michael is a "predator" who "insists on taking advantage [of people]." Annie interjects that Peter is a communist. Peter is critical of the Canadian government's policies regarding multiculturalism, arguing that they are ultimately inadequate. He asserts that "our country is changing, no longer living in the shadows, India will re-emerge a Superpower!" A boy, around 13 years old, approaches in dirty clothes and asks for some fruit to eat. When Gurjit tells him not to take their peaches, the boy responds with a rude, racist remark that suggests that Gurjit is a fruit-picker, rather than the orchard's owner. Loveleen nevertheless gives him a hug and some money. The boy steals some peaches, throws one at Barbra, and runs off, shouting another racist remark as he exits. Barbra is appalled that Loveleen gave the boy 20 dollars. Loveleen apologises and blames it on the fact that she has been away for so long. Annie is also upset, and laments that her mother often goes out to lunch despite their financial situation, and that she has done little work since returning, even though they stand to lose their property in just 60 days'

time. She adds that, although her father and Griesha are dead, she's "still here...rotting." After expressing all this, Annie runs off. Ashamed, Loveleen hands Michael her purse and asks him to look after their accounts. He says he will, and before leaving he reminds her of the looming date of the bank auction. Peter catches up to Annie, and tries to persuade her of the greater potential of India vis-à-vis Canada. She tells him about the stunning beauty of a gurdwara she visited while looking for her mother in India. Peter insists that Canada "doesn't deserve [them]." They hear Barbra approaching, calling for Annie, but they slip away before she finds them. Barbra opens a Nitnem (a Sikh prayer book), and she begins to pray. She confesses in her prayer that she felt alienated today at the Christian church, despite her desire to "disappear completely into a new skin, a new life." Yash approaches and startles her. He says that he is surprised to see her reading the Nitnem, as he thought she was a Presbyterian now. She tells him that she was baptized today, but that she still feels as if she will never truly be able to assimilate. Barbra hands Yash the Nitnem. He assures her that her "secret" is safe with him.

### **Act III**

It's now August, and Loveleen is sitting at a desk, looking over paperwork. She tells Michael that the harvest yielded 20,000 dollars and a relative in Vancouver has lent them another 20,000 dollars. She asks whether that will be enough to hold on to their property. Michael says that there may be a little profit, but not much, after paying the bank, plus interest charges and legal fees. Loveleen impulsively writes Michael's name on the deed for their property, and specifies that he may purchase their land. He thinks she's joking, but when she hands him the deed, he realizes that she's serious. Just then, Barbra, Annie, Donna, and Yebi enter with party supplies. They plan to

celebrate, in hopes that the Basrans will succeed at the auction.

Later that evening, people are dancing in the Basrans' living room as music plays. Loveleen wonders aloud why Gurjit isn't back yet from the auction. She asks Barbra when her and Michael are going to get married, but Barbra replies that he hasn't actually proposed to her. He keeps seeming as if he's going to propose, she relates, but then he doesn't manage to do so. Loveleen tells Peter that if he wants to marry Annie, he may do so, but he must first finally finish his studies. "Superficial beauty does not interest me," he responds coldly. Loveleen, changing the subject, admits that she's received another letter from her former lover in Bombay; he is sick again and has been pleading with her to return to India. She says that she must go. She can tell from Peter's expression that he disapproves, and she shouts at him not to judge her. Peter insists that the man is a "crook" out to "rob" Loveleen. Loveleen tells Peter that he is her son—or rather, is like a son to her. Peter runs out of the room. They hear a loud crashing sound (offstage). Annie and Barbra enter with a bruised Peter, who fell down the stairs. Tempers calmed, Loveleen asks him to forgive her and dance with her. As they dance, Kesur collapses to the floor. Loveleen and Barbra rush to him, but Kesur says that he's okay. At last, Gurjit arrives, along with Michael; the auction ended hours ago, but Gurjit's truck broke down on the way back. Michael proudly announces that he purchased the orchard. Others were about to outbid Gurjit, when, suddenly, Michael made it known that the orchard had already been sold—to him, by Loveleen. Gurjit is furious that Loveleen made this major decision without consulting with him. Michael gloats cruelly about his plans to chop down the trees and "build an army of parking pads." Loveleen, weeping, deeply regrets her impulsive decision.

In an interlude, we see a dream sequence: Gurjit and Barbra are building a canopy in the trees of the orchard and Kesur prepares a makeshift altar. Griesha runs up to them. Loveleen wonders (in voice-over) if they will ever see a “real” gurdwara. Gurjit replies that “God is in [her] heart.” The two of them enter the canopy.

Back to reality, some time has passed and the house is almost empty. The Basrans are preparing to leave their home. Yash plans to stay on and help Michael oversee the redeveloped property. Michael proposes a toast. Afterward, he makes amends with Peter, and even offers him some money, but Peter sharply declines it. Gurjit is no longer wearing a turban, his hair is cut short, and his beard is shaved off. Loveleen tries to talk to him, but he is evasive. Annie mentions that Gurjit has taken Kesur to the hospital. Peter tries once more to convince Annie to go with him to India, but she insists that she can't and says that she plans to build a local gurdwara. Loveleen tells Gurjit that his hair looks nice. He responds that he is starting a new job at the bank on Monday. Annie and Loveleen discuss their plans to live together; Annie asks her mother if she's happy, and Loveleen says that she is. Paul enters and tells the Basrans goodbye. Michael asks Barbra where she plans to go. She replies that she will be staying with a friend from her church. Michael says that he is leaving for Vancouver, where he will stay through the winter. It seems like he is trying to say something more to her, but can't quite bring himself to it. Yash raises a toast “to this old house that raised me, watched over us as we grew.” He promises the Basrans that he will look after their land. As the family prepares to leave, Michael offers Yebi a ride into town. All exit save Gurjit and Loveleen. She tries to explain that she “did what [she] thought was right.” She tells Gurjit to tell Annie that she has to leave right away, to travel back to India. He tells her that she shouldn't leave her family all over again,

that Annie “needs a mother.” He says that he feels as if he doesn't know her anymore. From offstage, Annie calls for Loveleen. Kesur enters, with an axe in his hand. The sound of a tree cracking and falling echoes through the empty house. The family had asked Michael to wait until they left for his workers to begin chopping down the trees. He apologizes. The Basrans depart in the truck, but Charlie remains on the property and reflects on the longer history of the land and her family's ancestral ties to it. “People may come and go from this land,” she says, “But...I'll be here.”

# Characters

## **Loveleen (Lallie ~ Lovely)**

The owner of the Basran family orchard, together with her brother, Gurjit; a South Asian woman, recently returned to Canada after five years in India, following the deaths of her son and husband

## **Gurjit (Gus)**

Loveleen's brother, who co-owns the orchard with her

## **Annie**

Loveleen's daughter, in her early 20s

## **Barminder (Barbra)**

Niece of Loveleen and Gurjit, in her mid-20s

## **Kesur**

Father of Loveleen and Gurjit, in his 80s

## **Michael Lopakhin**

A self-made business man (Caucasian); a longtime friend of the Basran family, who now hopes to purchase their property in order to redevelop it

## **Peter**

A South Asian man in his late 20s, who formerly worked as Griesha's tutor

## **Yash**

A South Asian man in his mid-20s, who recently accompanied Loveleen in India; although unrelated, he is regarded by the Basrans as being like a cousin, having grown up around their family

## **Yebi (Yebisaka ~ Shrimp Mountain)**

A Japanese handyman and fruit-picker employed by the Basrans

## **Donna**

A Japanese woman who works at the Basrans' fruit stand

## **Charlie**

A First Nations woman in her 50s, employed as a fruit-picker by the Basrans

## **Paul**

A Caucasian neighbour and family friend of the Basrans

## **Griesha**

Loveleen's youngest child, who died from drowning six years ago

## **Boy**

A thirteen-year-old boy who comes to the Basrans' orchard asking for fruit



# About the Playwright



Sarena Parmar is an actress and playwright. Raised in Kelowna and trained at the National Theatre School and the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre, Parmar is presently based in Toronto. Her plays have been workshopped in Toronto and Vancouver. *The Orchard (After Chekhov)* premiered at the Shaw Festival in 2018. As an actress, Parmar has performed in *A Christmas Carol*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Shaw Festival); *The Winter's Tale*, *Measure for Measure* (Groundling Theatre); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Tarragon); *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Stratford Festival); *Iphigenia at Aulis* (SummerWorks); *Beneath the Banyan Tree* (Theatre Direct); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Canadian Stage); *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet* (Forward Theatre). She has appeared on several TV series, including *The Rick Mercer Report*, *Kim's Convenience*, *How to Be Indie*, *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, *Flashpoint*, and *The Border*.

# South Asian Communities in British Columbia: A Brief History

Sarena Parmar's play is set at a critical juncture in Canadian history, as the government under Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau sought to promote a new vision of multiculturalism in Canada. During this period, many new immigrants arrived in Canada, especially from South and East Asia, while earlier generations of immigrants from these regions discovered new opportunities to forge robust communities within a more heterogeneous Canadian society. The play is inspired in part by Parmar's own childhood, growing up in a South Asian family in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. Her characters—including the Punjabi Basran family but also Japanese-Canadian and First Nations characters—represent different viewpoints concerning multiculturalism, assimilation, cultural identity, and citizenship, offering acute insight into the negotiation of these complex issues among Canada's diverse peoples. In this respect, *The Orchard (After Chekhov)* reflects on Canada's troubled past as well its present and future, particularly with regard to the place of South Asian communities in Canada. This essay will therefore provide a brief history of these communities, focusing especially on the large Punjabi diaspora in British Columbia.

The South Asian population in Canada is highly diverse, including people with ancestral ties to India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Fiji, and Sri Lanka, as well others who have immigrated to Canada from parts of East and South Africa, the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In terms of religious affiliation, there are roughly equal numbers of South Asian-Canadians who identify as Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim, with smaller numbers of Christians, Buddhists, and Jains. People of South Asian descent reside in every province and territory of Canada. As of 2016, 1,150,415 South Asian people were residing in Ontario (8.7% of the province's total population), with the majority concentrated in the Greater Toronto area. The same census indicated that 365,705 South Asian people were living in British Columbia (8% of B.C.'s population), mainly in Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley; 230,930 in Alberta; 90,335 in Quebec; 42,060 in Manitoba; 29,960 in Saskatchewan; and smaller populations residing in Atlantic Canada and the northern territories.

In British Columbia, the vast majority of South Asian-Canadians are Punjabi; that is, their ancestry derives from the Punjab region, spanning (since 1947) the national borders of India and Pakistan. Most of the Punjabi people in British Columbia identify as Sikhs, a religion dating back to the fifteenth century and historically rooted in the Punjab region. The first significant arrival of Punjabi immigrants to B.C. was

aboard the *Empress of India* ocean liner, which docked in Vancouver in 1904. The majority of these men came to work in B.C.'s lumber industry. Most of them settled in Vancouver, and in 1906 they established the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver, a religious and social organization for the city's nascent Sikh community. In 1908, they opened what was then the largest *gurdwara* in North America, originally located on West 2nd Avenue in Kitsilano. This *gurdwara* was initially used not only for traditional religious services, but also as a community centre and, at times, even a homeless shelter for Punjabi residents of Vancouver.

Ten years after the first arrival of the *Empress of India*, a Japanese steamship called the *Komagata Maru* arrived in the waters off Vancouver's English Bay, but the ship was not allowed to dock and most of its 376 passengers were denied entry to Canada due to a law known as the continuous journey regulation. This law required that ships carrying prospective immigrants could not stop at other ports between their origin and Canada. Its most serious impact was on ships originating in India, as their routes normally included stops in East Asia before continuing on to North America; the law may, in fact, have been intended to limit the number of immigrants arriving from South Asia. The *Komagata Maru* had set sail from Hong Kong (then a British colony) and stopped to pick up additional passengers in Shanghai and Yokohama, Japan. 340 of its passengers were Sikhs, while 24 identified as Muslim and 12 as Hindu. Eventually, 24 of its passengers were deemed admissible to Canada, but the remaining 352 were forced to sail back to India. Upon arriving at Calcutta, the ship was fired on by a British gunboat, who considered the passengers to be dangerous law-breakers. 19 passengers were killed, while others were captured and imprisoned. Much later, in 2008, the

governments of Canada and British Columbia would apologize to the Indo-Canadian community for this tragic incident.

In 1919, five years after the *Komagata Maru* incident, Canadian law began permitting entry to women and dependent children from India. This allowed South Asian communities in Canada, including the Punjabi diaspora in B.C., to develop further over the decades that followed, although the continuous journey regulation remained a major practical impediment to immigration from South Asia to Canada. Finally, in 1947—the year that British India was partitioned into the independent countries of India and Pakistan—this regulation was lifted. However, it was subsequently replaced, in 1951, by strict quotas capping the number of immigrants arriving from the newly independent



Passengers aboard *Komagata Maru* in Vancouver's Burrard Inlet, 1914  
(Photo: Library and Archives Canada image)

South Asian states: 150 people per year were allowed from India, 100 from Pakistan, and 50 from Ceylon (today Sri Lanka).

These quotas gradually expanded during the early-to-mid-1960s until, in 1967, Canada's immigration policy shifted to a less discriminatory "points" system that did not consider the ethnicity, race, or religion of prospective immigrants, but instead allotted "points" based on professional skills, educational qualifications, linguistic proficiency (in English or French), and established family connections in Canada. This major reform facilitated a sharp increase in immigrants from South Asia, many of whom worked as doctors, lawyers, and university professors rather than in the forestry sector, where earlier generations of South Asian immigrants had typically sought employment.

In the decades that followed this change in policy, Vancouver's rapidly growing Punjabi community was increasingly concentrated in the southeast quadrant of the city, especially around Fraser and Main Streets between East 41st Avenue and Southeast Marine Drive (where the Punjabi Market, or "Little India," is still centered today). In 1970, the Khalsa Diwan Society's *gurdwara* was relocated from West 2nd Avenue to Southeast Marine Drive at Ross Street, where it remains a focal point for Vancouver's Sikh diaspora. Later, as property within Vancouver's city limits became more expensive, many Punjabi families moved outside Vancouver, to other cities in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, particularly to Surrey, Delta, and Abbotsford. New *gurdwaras* were established in these suburbs to serve their expanding local Sikh populations. As of 2016, 164,005 South Asians resided in Surrey, compared to 37,130 in Vancouver. Across Metro Vancouver, there were 291,005 people who identified as South Asian (12% of the district's total population), with another 39,920 in the Fraser Valley. While these two regions account for the majority of the province's South Asian residents, there are smaller (historical

and contemporary) diasporic communities in other areas of B.C., particularly in the Okanagan region, where Sikh men customarily worked in sawmills while women were often employed as fruit-pickers at the many orchards around Kelowna. There are also small populations of South Asian-Canadians in the areas around Kamloops, Victoria, Merritt, and Prince Rupert.

Over more than a century, the South Asian community in B.C., and in Canada generally, has experienced adversity and discrimination, progress and disappointment, triumph and profound tragedy. In 1985, the bombing of Air India Flight 182, while en route from Canada to India via London, resulted in the deaths of all 329 passengers and crew members, 268 of whom were Canadian citizens, mainly of Indian descent. This tragedy, its underlying causes, and its effects have generated both grief and controversy within Canada's South Asian communities, which have at times been divided by strongly differing political views on the Punjab region and its Sikh population's relationship to India and its national government.

Yet, such tensions notwithstanding, South Asian communities in Canada have continued to grow and flourish in the twenty-first century, including at the highest levels of federal and provincial politics. In 2000, for example, Ujjal Dosanjh became B.C.'s premier, the first premier of South Asian descent in Canada. In 2017, Jagmeet Singh prevailed in the New Democratic Party's leadership election, thus becoming the first South Asian-Canadian leader of one of Canada's major national parties. With nearly two million people of South Asian ancestry now residing in Canada (as of the 2016 census), there will undoubtedly be many more such milestones set by members of these diverse communities in the years ahead.

# Echoes of Chekhov

The “After” in the title of *The Orchard (After Chekhov)* suggests a double meaning: The story takes place after the time of Chekhov (who died in 1904) and the period during which his plays were set. More significantly, though, Sarena Parmar’s “after” can also be understood as “in the style of.” Indeed, her play tells a decidedly Chekhovian story, with themes of familial tension, nostalgia, and loss characteristic of the Russian playwright’s work. The titular orchard is itself a clear reference to Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, one of his most well-known plays. With these points in mind, this essay will provide a brief introduction to Chekhov’s life and career. It will focus especially on the elements of his work upon which Parmar drew—and ultimately made her own.

Anton Chekhov was born in Taganrog, Russia on January 29, 1860. His father, Pavel, was the proprietor of a grocery store, who sent his son to a school for Greek boys. When Chekhov was 16 years old, Pavel went bankrupt and the family left Taganrog for Moscow. Anton stayed behind to complete his schooling. To

pay for his education, he worked various odd jobs, including writing short pieces, which he sold to local publications. He also wrote a full-length play entitled *Fatherless*, but Chekhov did not consider writing to be his main occupation. In 1879, he enrolled at I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, where he would train to be a physician. Although Chekhov achieved great renown for his literary works, he always considered medicine to be his principal vocation.

Chekhov famously remarked, “Medicine is my lawful wife, and literature is my mistress.” His “mistress,” as it turned out, would be a singular oeuvre with which admirers continue to be smitten. Although Chekhov did not live a long life, he was remarkably prolific. In the 1880s alone, he wrote nine plays, including *Ivanov* (1887) and *A Marriage Proposal* (1889). Chekhov also penned many well-received short stories, five novellas, and one novel, *The Shooting Party* (1884). However, it was Chekhov’s late work, produced over the final decade of his life, that would ultimately cement his reputation as one of modern theatre’s greatest playwrights. Strong

echoes of these works are discernible in *The Orchard (After Chekhov)*.

**“Although Chekhov did not live a long life, he was remarkably prolific.”**

*The Seagull* (1896) centers on two writers, the well-known but middlebrow Boris and the more radical Konstantin, a would-be playwright. Although *The Seagull* is conventionally classified as a comedy, it is a decidedly dark one: Konstantin, for example, attempts suicide by shooting himself, but survives when the bullet only grazes his head.

While nothing quite so grim occurs in Parmar’s play, the notes of regret, longing, and disappointment that underlie the humour in *The Orchard (After Chekhov)* are reminiscent of the bleakly comic mood of *The Seagull*.

In Chekhov's 1899 play, *Uncle Vanya*, the eponymous character helps to manage the rural family estate of a retired professor, a premise echoed in *The Orchard (After Chekhov)*, with Gurjit and Loveleen overseeing their family's orchard. Much of the drama in Chekhov's play comes from the threatened sale of the professor's estate. This is, of course, a major plot-point in Parmar's play, as the Basran family risks losing their land and their longtime friend, Michael Lopakhin, attempts to purchase and redevelop it.

"Lopakhin" is the surname of a character in Chekhov's final play, *The Cherry Orchard* (1903), the work most prominently evoked in Parmar's play. Yermolai Alexeievitch Lopakhin, like Parmar's Michael, is a wealthy businessman who came from humble roots. Loveleen is modelled on *The Cherry Orchard's* protagonist, Madame Lyubov Andreievna Ranevskaya, the property's owner, who has fallen on hard times and struggles to make prudent financial decisions. Parmar's Peter and Annie derive from Chekhov's Peter Trofimov, a university student with strong left-wing political views, and Anya, Madame Ranevskaya's daughter and Peter's love-interest. Madame Ranevskaya's servant is a man named Yasha, adapted into Yash in Parmar's play. Other characters in *The Orchard (After Chekhov)* are more or less clearly modelled on Chekhov's characters, and the story itself takes its general storyline from *The Cherry Orchard*, together with some of Chekhov's earlier plays. *The Cherry Orchard* concludes with Lopakhin purchasing the orchard and chopping down its cherry trees, as Madame Ranevskaya and her family sadly leave their cherished home.

Yet, while *The Orchard (After Chekhov)* borrows these key elements from Chekhov's work, Parmar adapts them to a new setting: British Columbia's Okanagan

Valley in the 1970s, a period of great change in Canada, as the Trudeau government sought to implement its particular vision of a multicultural country; the new policies and reforms of that era continue to shape the Canada of the early twenty-first century. Where Chekhov's plays often centered around extended families, their hopes and disappointments, the heavy weight of memory, and the changing culture of Russia in the nineteenth century, Parmar's work beautifully translates those same themes to tell a personal and culturally specific story—about Canada, its people and communities, its past and present.

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[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/ritesrituals/gurdwara\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/ritesrituals/gurdwara_1.shtml)

A short, informative article on gurdwaras, Sikh worship spaces.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/south-asians/>

An entry from The Canadian Encyclopedia on the history of South Asians in Canada.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/air-india-182-1.4174815>

A CBC interview with Chandrima Chakraborty, a scholar studying the impact and memory of the Air India Flight 182 bombing.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/sports/Mapping+ethnicity+Part+South+Asia+Surrey/5547648/story.html>

An article from the Vancouver Sun's "Mapping Ethnicity" series on the concentration of the South Asian population in Surrey, B.C.