

## Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

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*Satyajit Ray*

### SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

Every Monday, Bepin Choudhury used to come to the New Market to buy books. His favourite items were crime stories, ghost stories and thrillers. He lived alone. He had not many friends. One day Bepin Babu found in the market that someone was observing him. It was a round faced man. The man saw him and smiled. But Bepin Babu could not recognise him. He reminded Bepin Babu that once he had been to Ranchi in 1958. The man had arranged a car for him to take him to the Hudroo Falls. His name was Parimal Ghose.

But Bepin's memory played a trick on him. He was sure that he had never been to Ranchi. Parimal was surprised. He gave several instances in his support. Bepin, he said, had fallen down in Hudroo and got a cut on his knee. He had brought him iodine. He had fixed up a car for him to get to Netarhat.

There was one Dinesh Mukerji also in whose bungalow Bepin Babu had stayed. Bepin always carried a book bag at his sight seeing trips. But nothing could revise Bepin's memory. He said that he was in Kanpur in 1958. Parimal told that Bepin had no children and his wife had died 10 years ago. The same year his brother died in Ranchi mental hospital. But Bepin could not recollect any such event.

Bepin believed that he had an excellent memory. He was working daily in his office and doing a responsible job. He wondered how Parimal knew all intimate details about his wife's death, and his brother's insanity. But at the same time, he was sure that he was not in Ranchi but at his friend Haridas Bagchi's house in Kanpur during the Pujas. He could write to Haridas to confirm his visit, but Haridas had already left for Japan. He found an

inch-long cut mark on his knee, but he couldn't recall when and where he had got the cut.

Then Bepin decided to go to Dinesh Mukerji's house to confirm Parimal's claim. But he dropped the idea lest Dinesh should think he had gone mad. He soon forgot all about Parmial and went to sleep.

Next day Bepin rang up Dinesh who confirmed him that he was there in Ranchi. He felt that he had lost his memory.

After Bepin Babu look lunch, Chuni Babu came to see him. He was his school-mate. He wondered how he had forgotten his visit to Ranchi. He hadn't suffered any injury in the head.

Chuni Babu had been to his school and was requesting him for a job. When Chuni Babu asked him what his last job was, Bepin told correctly that his (Chuni's) last job was in a travel agency. Chuni recalled that he himself had fixed up Bepin's railway booking in Ranchi and gone to station to see him off. He left him without requesting for a job.

Now Bepin Babu became serious about this matter. He consulted a young physician Paresh Chanda. Paresh suggested a plan. Bepin should go to Ranchi once again and might get back his lost memory. Bepin left for Ranchi the same evening.

At Ranchi Bepin Babu realised that he had never been there before. He didn't recognise any building or bazaar. He left for Hundroo falls. There two Gujrati gentlemen found Bepin lying unconscious beside a rock. Bepin Babu returned to Calcutta. He received a letter, urgent and confidential. The letter was from Chuni Lal. He said he was down on luck. But he had written a novel which might bring him fortune.

Bepin's memory suddenly came back. He told Dr Chanda that he had pain in the hip from a fall in Ranchi. He asked the doctor to prescribe some painkiller.

### TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

#### COMPREHENSION CHECK

(Page 62)

#### 1. Why did the man stare at Bepin Babu's disbelief?

**Ans.** The man, Parimal Ghose, was taken aback when Bepin failed to recognise him. He didn't believe that Bepin had a lapse of memory.

**2. Where did Bepin Babu say he went in October '58?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu said that in October 58 he was in Kanpur.

**3. Mention any three (or more) things that Parimal Ghose knew about Bepin Babu.**

**Ans.** Parimal Ghose knew that Bepin Babu's wife was dead, and his only brother had died in the same year in a Ranchi lunatic asylum. He also knew that Bepin Babu had no children and he was a lover of books.

**COMPREHENSION CHECK** (Page 65)

**1. Why did Bepin Babu worry about what Parimal Ghose had said?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu was taken aback to hear the intimate details about his life from Parimal Ghose. There seemed no reason why he should tell a lie. He wondered if he really had forgotten about his visit to Ranchi.

**2. How did he try to decide who was right his memory or Parimal Ghose?**

**Ans.** In order to resolve the puzzle about his visit to Ranchi, Bepin Babu decided to contact Dinesh Mukerji. Parimal had said that Mukerji was also in Ranchi at that time.

**3. Why did Bepin Babu hesitate to visit Mr. Mukerji? Why did he finally decide to phone him?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu hesitated to visit Mr. Mukerji thinking that it would be ridiculous if he had really visited Ranchi. Mukerji would think Bepin Babu had gone mad. Hence, Bepin Babu finally decided to phone him.

**4. What did Mr. Mukerji say? Did it comfort Bepin Babu, or add to his worries?**

**Ans.** Mr. Mukerji didn't reply clearly. But he said that he had been to Ranchi twice. He was not sure about the trip. Bepin Babu exactly wanted to know. It made Bepin Babu more puzzled. He lost his appetite.

**COMPREHENSION CHECK** (Page 68)

**1. Who was Chunilal? What did he want from Bepin Babu?**

**Ans.** Chunilal was an old friend of Bepin Babu. He wanted a favour from Bepin Babu in his job.

**2. Why was Dr. Chanda puzzled? What was unusual about Bepin Babu's loss of memory?**

**Ans.** Dr. Paresch Chanda was a young physician. He had never dealt a case of memory loss. So he was puzzled. He gave a suggestion to Bepin Babu to visit Ranchi again.

**COMPREHENSION CHECK** (Page 70)

**1. Had Bepin Babu really lost his memory and forgotten all about a trip to Ranchi?**

**Ans.** Perhaps not. He finally recollected his memory and admitted that he had visited Ranchi in 1958.

**2. Why do you think Chunilal did? Chunilal says he has no money; what is it that he does have?**

**Ans.** Chunilal wanted some money from Bepin Babu, his old friend. So he went to him for help. He assured Bepin that the term of his fortune would be back again. Chunilal had no money but he had mind and wit.

**WORKING WITH THE TEXT** (Page 70)

**1. The author describes Bepin Babu as a serious and hardworking man. What evidence can you find in the story to support this?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu was a serious, honest and hardworking fellow. He went to office regularly. He was doing a responsible job. He was not a good mixer. Being serious minded, he didn't waste time in idle chat.

**2. Why did Bepin Babu change his mind about meeting Chunilal? What was the result of this meeting?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu first refused to meet Chunilal. He was in no mood to help Chunilal out of his trouble. But he changed his mind soon. He thought Chunilal might remember something about his trip to Ranchi in 1958.

**3. Bepin Babu lost consciousness at Hundroo Falls. What do you think was the reason for this?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu might have slipped near Hundroo Falls that made him unconscious.

**4. How do you think Bepin Babu reacted when he found out that Chunilal had tricked him?**

**Ans.** Bepin Babu's first reaction was that he regretted having refused to help Chunilal. He saw through Chunilal's trick to test him, and learnt a lesson.

**WORKING WITH LANGUAGE**

(Page 71)

**1. Look at these two sentences.**

- He had to buy at least five books to last him through the week.
- Bepin had to ask Chuni to leave.

*Had to* is used to show that it was very important or necessary for Bepin Babu to do something. He had no choice. We can also use 'have to'/'has to' in the same way.

**Fill in the blanks below using 'had to'/'have to'/'has to'.**

- (i) I \_\_\_\_\_ cut my hair every month.  
 (ii) We \_\_\_\_\_ go for swimming lessons last year.  
 (iii) She \_\_\_\_\_ tell the principal the truth.  
 (iv) They \_\_\_\_\_ take the baby to the doctor.  
 (v) We \_\_\_\_\_ complain to the police about the noise.  
 (vi) Romit \_\_\_\_\_ finish his homework before he could come out to play.  
 (vii) I \_\_\_\_\_ repair my cycle yesterday.

**Ans.** (i) have to (ii) had to (iii) had to (iv) had to  
 (v) have to (vi) had to (vii) had to

**2. Here are a few idioms that you will find in the story. Look for them in the dictionary in the following way.**

First, arrange them in the order in which you would find them in a dictionary.

(Clue: An idiom is usually listed under the first noun, verb, adjective or adverb in it. Ignore articles or prepositions in the idiom).

To help you, we have put in bold the word under which you must look for the idiom in the dictionary.)

- (i) at/from **close** quarters (**close**: adjective)  
 (ii) **break** into a smile (**break**: verb; look under 'break into something')  
 (iii) carry on (**carry**: verb)  
 (iv) have a **clean record** (you may find related meanings under both these words).  
 (v) **beat** about the bush (verb)

**Now refer to your dictionary and find out what they mean.**

**Ans.**

Idiom	Meaning
(i) at/from close quarters	from nearby
(ii) break into a smile	smile suddenly
(iii) carry on	continue the task
(iv) have a clean record	clean conduct throughout
(v) beat about the bush	to make guess without proper knowledge; to make a vague idea.

**3. Study the sentences in the columns below:**

A	B
I saw this movie yesterday.	I have seen this movie already.
Bepin Babu worked here for a week last year.	Bepin Babu has worked here since 2003.
Chunilal wrote to a publisher last week.	Chunilal has written to a publisher.
I visited Ranchi once, long ago.	I have visited Ranchi once, before.

**Compare the sentences in the two columns, especially the verb forms. Answer the following questions about each pair of sentences.**

- (i) Which column tells us that Bepin Babu is still working at the same place?

- (ii) Which column suggests that Chunilal is now waiting for a reply from the publisher?
- (iii) Which column suggests that the person still remembers the movie he saw?
- (iv) Which column suggests that the experience of visiting Ranchi is still fresh in the speaker's mind?

Ans. (i) Column A \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) Column A \_\_\_\_\_  
 (iii) Column B \_\_\_\_\_ (iv) Column A \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Given below are jumbled sentences. Working in groups, rearrange the words in each sentence to form correct sentences.**

You will find that each sentence contains an idiomatic expression that you have come across in the lesson. Underline the idiom and write down its meaning. Then use your dictionary to check the meaning.

**One sentence has been worked out for you as an example.**

*Jumbled sentence:* vanished/The car/seemed to/into thin/have/air.

Ans: The car seemed to have vanished into thin air.

*Idiom:* vanished into thin air: disappeared or vanished in a mysterious way.

- (i) Stop/and tell me/beating about/what you want/the bush.

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

*Idiom:* \_\_\_\_\_

- (ii) don't pay/If you/attention/you might/the wrong train/to the announcement/board.

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

*Idiom:* \_\_\_\_\_

- (iii) The villagers/tried/the crime/on the young woman/to pin.

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

*Idiom:* \_\_\_\_\_

- (iv) Bepin Babu/orders to/telling people/under/loved/doctor's/eat early/that he was.

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

*Idiom:* \_\_\_\_\_

- (v) the students/The teacher/his eyebrows/when/said that/all their lessons/raised/they had revised.

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

*Idiom:* \_\_\_\_\_

- Ans. (i) Stop beating about the bush and tell me what you want.

*Idiom:* beating about the bush—talk vaguely

- (ii) If you don't *pay attention* to the announcement, you might board the wrong train.

*Idiom:* *Pay attention*: be careful

- (iii) The villagers tried to pin the crime on the young woman.

*Idiom:* Pin the crime on (implicate the wrong person)

- (iv) Bepin Babu loved telling people that he was under doctor's order to eat early.

*Idiom:* Under one's order (doctor's): under instruction of someone

- (v) The teacher raised his eyebrows when the students said that they had revised all their lessons. (showed his assessment).

*Idiom:* Raised the eyebrows—to feel annoyed: showing annoyance.

**SPEAKING AND WRITING**

(Page 73)

- 1. What do you think happened after Bepin Babu came to know the truth?**

**Was he angry with this friend for playing such a trick on him? Or do you think he decided to help a friend in need?**

- Ans. Bepin Babu came to know the truth what Chunilal had done. In fact Chunilal had only played a trick with him to test his friendship. Bepin Babu had a mixed feeling of relief as well as anger. He was happy to know that he had not suffered the lapse of memory. He was a little angry with his friend who was not really helpful. But he had made Bepin feel

awkward. He must have decided not to disappoint a friend in need.

2. Imagine you are Bepin Choudhury. You have received Chunilal's letter and feel ashamed that you did not bother to help an old friend down on his luck. Now you want to do something for him. **Write a letter to Chunilal promising to help him soon.**

*Or*

A prank is a childish trick. **Do you remember any incident when someone played a prank on you or your friends? Describe the prank in a paragraph.**

**Ans.** 15th November, 20xx

My Dear Chunilal

Let me first thank you for your letter dated 10th November. I am really feeling sorry for disappointing you. I can understand your resentment.

Now allow me to give you a happy news. I spoke to my friend in Delhi, and he has agreed to engage you as assistant manager in his firm.

Please come to me on Sunday. I shall then introduce you to my friend.

With regards

Yours sincerely

*Bepin Choudhury*

*Or*

On March 26, I received a letter from one of my friends. It contained a happy news that I had been granted scholarship from back date. He asked me to call on him in April, so that both would go together to the office of the Superintendent of the school. I was very glad. I even distributed sweets to my neighbours. But when I reached my friend's house, I found him laughing at me. It was April the first. All Fools Day.' I got over it soon and admired the practical joke or the prank.

□□□

## ★ The Last Bargain

*Rabindranath Tagore*

### SUMMARY OF THE POEM

A man was looking for a job. He was willing to serve anybody on payment. He was waiting to be hired. He walked along the stony road for an employer. The king carrying a sword in his hand came in his open royal vehicle. He caught the man by the arm and said that he was ready to hire him with his power. But the offer was rejected as power had no attraction for the man. The king went away.

At midday it was hot and the houses had their doors shut. The man was going along the irregular lane. An old man on hearing his offer, came to hire him with his gold coins. He counted the coins one by one. But gold also could not persuade the man to sell his services.

It was evening. The hedges round the garden were laden with flowers. A lovely maid came out and offered to hire him with her smile. But she too went away disappointed. Her smile turned into tears and she was lost in the dark.

In the setting sunlight the sand around seacoast shone golden. The sea waves beat their heads on the shore and broke up. A child sitting there was playing with sea-shells. He said to the man that he was ready to hire him but without any payment. The man finalised the deal. He joined the child in game and since then he felt like a free man.

### TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

#### WORKING WITH THE POEM

(Page 75)

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?

**Ans.** A man looking for his employer is the speaker.

2. "The king, sword in hand" suggests

(i) wealth

(ii) power

(iii) more power than wealth

**Mark the appropriate item in the context of stanza 1.**

**Ans.** (ii) power

3. *The old man offered the speaker a lot of money. Why did he turn down the offer?*

**Ans.** The man didn't need money. He valued his freedom more than becoming a slave for gold.

4. **Find in the poem, lines that match the following. Read both one after another.**

(i) I have nothing to give you  
except goodwill & cheer.

(ii) Her happiness was no more  
than sorrow in disguise.

(iii) The king's might was not worth much.

**Ans.** (i) "I hire you with nothing"

(ii) "Her smile paled and melted into tears".

(iii) "But his power counted for naught"

5. **How did the speaker feel after talking to the child on the beach?**

**Ans.** The speaker felt after meeting the child that he would get satisfaction, joy and freedom.