

FICTION: PATOL BABU, FILM STAR

SUMMARY

PatolBabu lives a life of resignation and isolation in Nepal Bhattacharji Lane, fighting hard for existence.

One morning he is informed by his neighbour Nishikanto Ghosh to make up his mind for a film role to be offered by his brother-in-law, Naresh Dutt, on behalf of a film production house in which he works.

PatolBabu feels both nervous and excited at the prospect of playing role in a movie which he has never attempted in his life even though he had worked as stage artist during his younger days.

The prospect of playing a movie role makes him nostalgic and he goes down the memory lanes and recalls his past life.

He remembers of his past when he had shifted from Kanchrapara to Calcutta in 1934 to join Hudson & Kimberley where he had worked smoothly till 1943. He also remembers the fact that he had lost his job in the company because of sudden retrenchment due to world war. Since then his life has become challenging and he has to struggle for survival.

The present offer of the role reminds him of his theatre days when he was appreciated and acknowledged as a legendary stage actor but he hasn't acted for many years which makes him feel a bit apprehensive of accepting the present offer.

Finally he agrees to work in the movie when a formal offer is made to him by Naresh Dutt, who also gives him a brief idea of the role- the role of a pedestrian.

Excited PatolBabu shares the breaking news to his wife who shows no sense of excitement and even blames him to be a day dreamer.

On the next day PatolBabu reaches the shooting site – Faraday House, and gets the first hand feel of film shooting and gets the detail of others associated with movie- the hero of the movie, the director etc. but he is more curious about his scene and role.

After many requests, he is detailed about his scene and dialogue, which make him feel humiliated. He feels himself to be cheated as he comes to know that his dialogue is merely a single word – 'Oh'.

Sosanko, the person who tells him about his dialogue, tries to convince him by claiming that his role is very significant as per the scene and situation in the film but PatolBabu remains undeterred. He makes up his mind to leave the place but at this very moment he is reminded of his acting mentor & guru Gogon Pakarshi and his preaching that no role is big or small. The actor makes a role the way he sees it.

Now, he gets convinced of his role and then he puts his best effort to make his role and performance a memorable one. He works upon his expression, body language, accent etc. so that the scene becomes a perfect one. He rehearses his dialogue many a time to meet with the required expression as per the scene.

Finally, he performs his scene/role with precision and gets appreciation from all. After performing his role with satisfaction, he does something very unusual which surprises everyone. He decides to leave the place without getting paid as he believes that his performance and satisfaction can't be valued in monetary term as these are invaluable.

And thus he proves himself to be a real film star.

CHARACTER SKETCH OF THE MAIN CHARACTER(S)

PATOL BABU

PatolBabu carries so many wonderful human traits in him. His ordinary appearance is a deceptive one as we find him to be an extraordinary human being and more so an extraordinary actor. He is kind hearted, committed, friendly, punctual, dedicated, meticulous and to certain extent a perfectionist. He is very passionate of acting and his involvement and preparation for his small role is an evidence of it. For him personal satisfaction holds more importance than money and that's why he leaves the shooting place without getting paid.

EXTRACT BASED COMPREHENSION QUESTION EXERCISES

[A] "Buying provisions in the market, PatolBabu mixed up his wife's orders and bought red chillies instead of onion seeds and he quite forgot about aubergines. This was not surprising. At one time PatolBabu had a real passion for the stage.'

- (a) Why does PatolBabumix up his wife's order?
- (b) Why did PatolBabu stop acting on the stage?
- (c) What is the meaning of the word 'provision' in the given context?

Answers:

- (a) He does so because his mind is pre-occupied with the thought of the offer of a film role to be made to him after a few hours.
- (b) He did so because he had to make his both ends meet as he was jobless and thus he could not focus upon his acting.
- (c) food items, here it refers to vegetables.

[B] "This is only the first step on the ladder, my dear better half! Yes.....the first step that would.. God willing.....mark the rise to fame and fortune of your beloved husband."

- (a) What does PatolBabu mean by 'first step on the ladder'?
- (b) What do we come to know about him?
- (c) What is the contextual meaning of 'fame and fortune'?

Answers:

- (a) He means that even though his film role is a small one but it will pave the way for his grand success.
- (b) We come to know that he has the habit of counting his chickens even before the eggs are hatched.
- (c) success as an actor

[C] "Oh, oh, oh, oh.... PatolBabu began giving the exclamation a different inflection each time he uttered it. After doing it for a number of times he made an astonishing discovery."

- (a) Why does PatolBabu repeat the word Oh, over and over again?
- (b) What does he discover after repeating the dialogue again and again?
- (c) What is the meaning of the word- 'inflection'?

Answers:

- (a) PatolBabu repeats the word so that he can give exact expression required for his scene.
- (b) PatolBabu discovers that the same word Oh, can be performed with different expressions carrying different meaning.
- (c) change in the tone or pitch of voice.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

Q.1. How does PatolBabureact at the prospect of a movie role?

Answer. When Nishikanto Ghosh informs him about the role he feels both excited and nervous. Excited because he will have the opportunity to relive his golden past and nervous because he hasn't acted for years and film acting will be a new experience for him.

Q.2. 'PatolBabu had acted in many a play but still he felt nervous because he hadn't got his dialogues to rehearse'. What does this suggest about him?

Answer. It suggests that he is a well-planned actor who needs every bit of detail to make his performance satisfying and that's why he insists for his dialogue so that he can go into the skin of his character.

Q.3. How does PatolBabureact on knowing his dialogue?

Answer. PatolBabuf feels cheated/duped when gets to know of his dialogue. He concludes that everyone is making fool of him, he curses them and wishes to leave the site.

Q.4. How does PatolBabu convince himself for the role?

Answer. PatolBabu convinces himself for the role by remembering the inspiring words of his mentor GogonPakrashi who had told him not to measure the importance of the role on the basis of its length as no role was small or big. It was up to the actor to make it small or big.

VALUE BASED QUESTION WITH ANSWER

Q.5 Through the character of PatolBabu, Satyajit Ray has portrayed that personal satisfaction is more important than financial rewards. Explain the statement with reference to the story.

Answer. PatolBabu gets the opportunity of acting after many years. The opportunity makes him feel both elated and nervous but once he makes up his mind to act, he moves ahead. When he comes to know about his dialogue, he initially feels disappointed but very soon he regains his spirit and gives more than 100% for his role. The performance gives him immense satisfaction and then he decides to move away from the place without getting his payment even though he suffers from immense financial crisis. This goes to show that for him personal satisfaction of performing his task with perfection and dedication is invaluable. We also need to

understand that life means going beyond materialistic achievements. Money should be given importance but not at the cost of quality and no compromise should be made in this regard.

ADDITIONAL SHORT ANSWER/VALUE BASED QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Q.1. How does PatolBabu prepare himself for the role?
- Q.2. How does his wife react when he shares the news with her?
- Q.3. Why does PatolBabu give up stage acting?
- Q.4. Why is PatolBabu so eager to know every detail about his role from Naresh Dutt?
- Q.5. How does Sosanko try to convince him about his role?
- Q.6. What changes PatolBabu's outlook about his role?
- Q.7. Why does PatolBabu choose to rehearse his part many a times?
- Q.8. PatolBabu leaves the shooting place without getting his payment. Why?

VALUE BASED QUESTIONS

- Q.1. The story tells us about the importance of taking every task seriously irrespective of its grandness or smallness. Comment upon the statement.
- Q.2. 'The memory of his guru made PatolBabubow his head in obeisance.' In the light of the statement reflect upon the importance of teachers in grooming up the children.
- Q.3. 'In the modern materialistic world where everyone seems to be running after money, characters like PatolBabu reflect the true meaning of human life.' In the context of the story comment upon the statement.