

Patol Babu, Film Star

by Satyajit Ray

Central theme of the story

Personal satisfaction is more important than financial rewards, as depicted in Satyajit Ray's short story "Patol Babu, Film Star." The main character Patol Babu realized that personal satisfaction could not be measured and weighed by money, and so he acted in the film out of passion he felt toward the job more than because of the money he would make from the job. In Patol Babu Film Star, Satyajit Ray has highlighted the idea that personal satisfaction is more important than financial rewards. According to him, one does a job because he is interested in it rather than because he can get reward from it.

EXERCISE – 4 – TEXT BOOK - Long answer questions:

A) "I hope the part calls for some dialogue?" who says this? Why does he/she ask this question?

Ans: The above query is made by Patol Babu to Naresh Dutt the asst director of the movie . Patol Babu only wished to act out a speaking part and so out of curiosity he asked this question.

B) Were these people pulling his legs...

Ans: Patol Babu had gone to the faraday house with lot of aspirations and desires. After 52 yrs of waiting a role had come his way and he had already confirmed from Naresh Dutt, the director that he had a speaking role. He had not come all the way to be a part of the crowd scene when he told that that he just had to speak syllable "oh" his hopes are shattered and he feels humiliated and insulted he was modest, ordinary , but why did the film people choose to make a fool of him. He is disappointed and frustrated and wishes to go back home.

C) Patol Babu is an amateur actor for whom walk – on part in a movie turns into an ultimate challenge. Discuss.

Ans: Patol Babu was blessed with an artistic temperament and meticulous nature. In his walk –on role, he was just required to speak "Oh!". After initial disappointment, Patol Babu remembered the words of his mentor, "however small a part you're offered, never consider it beneath your dignity to accept it.....make the most of your opportunity". He geared for a superlative performance. He uttered "Oh!" with different inflections, tried to say it differently in different situations. He believed that a true actor could make a mark with one single syllable and set out to achieve this aim. Patol Babu went near a side-street and practiced all the steps – how would he react physically, how his features would twist in pain, and how he would fling his arms and resume his walk.

When the time for the shoot arrived, Patol Babu suggested a rehearsal. This suggestion was declined but he was allowed to walk with a newspaper, during the collision with the lead actor.

So, Patol Babu's unfulfilled aspirations were ignited when he was already 52 years old. Who knows maybe a success would follow. Truly, a true artist believed in perfection and not in remuneration.

D) Do you agree with the statement that Patol Babu is a practical man who comes to terms with whatever life has to offer?

Patol Babu had an artist's mind and heart. He was very emotional and the moment he realised that he was supposed to utter just one syllable 'Oh!', he wanted to quit. He felt he had been taken for a ride and didn't wish to look like a fool. But then the advice of his mentor makes him stay and do the job perfectly. Patol Babu does complete the assignment but he cannot be called practical. He works hard and sweats too much for fraction of a scene and then walks away without taking the money. He felt his perfection and dedication couldn't be measured by fifteen or twenty rupees.

E) Why does Patol Babu walk away before he can be paid for his role? What does this reveal about his character?

Patol Babu is very pleased with his performance and felt he had made his mentor, Prakash, proud. But he felt that the film people could never appreciate how hard he had laboured for that one shot. They were mechanical and even if they paid him hardly money, could that ever compensate for the great effort he had put in. That was not befitting remuneration for such a perfect and dedicated work.

F) Do you think making a movie is an easy job? Discuss with reference to the story?

Movie-making is extremely tiring, painful and a long process. Locations have to be fixed and lived, proper characters who fit the roles have to be scouted, called. Moreover there is heavy equipment that is needed and has to be carted along. During the shooting, they've to look into minute details and also the crowds become uncontrollable. The director and other spot boys like have to sweat it out in the open. Moreover the director is always on tenterhooks to finish the shooting. When Patol Babu wanted a rehearsal, the director declined it because that particular shot had to be carved in broad daylight.

Summary:

In the story Patol Babu was given only a minor role in the film, as a pedestrian who was only needed to collide into the main actor Chanchal Kumar and utter a monosyllable sound "oh". Nevertheless, his passion to the job drove him to work hard to give the best performance by rehearsing himself. Eventually, he had done a terrific job and received praises from Chanchal Kumar, "You timed it so well that I nearly passed out."; and Barren Mullick "Jolly good! Why, you're quite an actor!" He felt very pleased with his performance and "a total satisfaction swept over him." He thought that it did not matter whether he received any payment or not. "What were twenty rupees when measured against the intense satisfaction of a small job done with perfection and dedication?" Thus, he did not wait to collect his payment.

Patol Babu realized that personal satisfaction could not be measured and weighed by money. To him, personal satisfaction is more crucial than material rewards. Ever since the beginning, Patol Babu did not act in the film because of the money merely. In contrast, it was because of his passion towards the job that drove him to act in the film. "I'll be paid, of course, but that's not the main thing." He also knew that nobody would appreciate his performance as he is only a minor actor in the film. Even though Baren

Mullick praised him, he would soon forget about it. "But all his labour and imagination he had put into this one shot--were these people able to appreciate that?" However, Patol Babu thought that his own satisfaction was more salient. He had proven his ability and talent in acting and these worked as a sort of motivation to him.

In the nutshell, personal satisfaction was more important than financial rewards and this idea work as one of the main issues in the story.

SHORT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 1. What for was Patol Babu wanted by the film production company? Why did Nishikanto Babu suggest his name?**

Patol Babu was wanted by the film production company to do the role of an absent-minded pedestrian in his fifties who clashes with the hero of the film while the latter crossing a road. Nishikanto Babu suggested Patol Babu's name because Patol was in his fifties and had a lot of acting experience years ago.

- 2. How did Patol Babu react? Why?**

Patol Babu was greatly excited to hear the offer. He felt that his long forgotten dreams were taking wings once again and that this small role would mark the beginning of a great actor.

- 3. Why did Patol Babu abandon his factory job in Kanchrapara and settle down in Calcutta?**

While in Kanchrapara, Patol Babu had a job in a factory along with his stage programs and a little popularity as a stage actor. With an offer from a British company, Hudson and Kimberley, Patol and his family came to Calcutta and settled down there.

- 4. Why had Patol Babu lost his first job in Calcutta?**

Patol Babu lost his job in the Calcutta Company because the company suffered retrenchment due to World War and the heavy loss that Britain suffered in the war.

- 5. What do you know about Patol Babu's days as a stage performer?**

During his stay in Kanchrapara, outside Calcutta, Patol Babu was a well known stage actor. He could not think of anything but acting. He was a known actor in jattras, amateur theatricals and in plays put up by the club in his neighborhood. On countless occasions his name appeared in handbills. If not exaggerating, people used to buy tickets to see Patol Babu.

- 6. Why was Patol Babu very curious to know about his role in the movie?**

Patol Babu was a meticulous man and actor. For him was his role than the fact that he got a chance in the movie. He was curious to know what his role was because he could prepare for the shooting.

- 7. Even at the age of 52 Patol Babu cherished dreams. What were his dreams?**

Patol Babu cherished his fondest dreams of rising to a known actor in films. He wanted to bring back his foregone glory as an actor that he used to be before coming to Calcutta and his name to be the talk of the town once again.

- 8. Was Patol's wife very excited about his getting a chance in a film? Give reasons?**

It seems that Patol's wife wasn't as much excited about his chance in a movie as he was. It was because she had lost trust in his promises of rising to a star, long before. It was his habit to count his chickens before they hatched and she knew from previous experiences.

- 9. How did Patol feel when he was misnamed Atul Babu by Naresh Dutt?**

For Patol Babu his name was much more than just a name. This was once a well known name associated with acting and drama in Kanchrapara. When Naresh Dutt, the only one Patol Babu knew on the shooting location, the one who had visited him at his residence a day before and offered him his role, the one who was supposed to know him unmistakably as Patol Babu, called him Atul Babu, Patol felt a bit of awkwardness.

10. While waiting for his part, Patol Babu didn't notice many things. What were they? Why didn't he notice them?

For Patol Babu, a shooting location was new experience, a camera was just an instrument on three legs, a hero was just a 'boy' whom his friends used to talk and a director worth nothing more than a name. Patol Babu didn't notice any of these around him while on the location, waiting for his dialogue and his turn. He didn't notice any of these attractions because he was an actor, not a curious spectator.

11. When and why did Patol feel that the film unit was pulling his legs?

While waiting for his shots, Patol Babu began to suspect Naresh Dutt and the entire film set. He saw that none of them seemed to have taken any notice of the once great actor Patol Babu of Kanchrapara. For some time he thought that he had been brought to the location to be fooled with just a "Ha!" to speak in a single shot, to be called grandpa and to wait for hours for his turn.

12. Why did Sosanko, script in charge, say that Patol was the luckiest of actors?

Sosanko said Patol Babu was the luckiest of all the actors to be shot that day because Patol Babu's was the only scene that had any dialogue. There had been over hundred actors in that film who played their roles without any dialogue. Most actors had their roles played without having to walk or show their faces.

13. How does Patol Babu reconcile with the dialogue given to him? Or, Who was Mr. Pakrashi? How did his words help Patol Babu in enacting his role?

Patol Babu's dialogue in the scene was nothing but a, "Oh!" When he was told of this, Patol felt belittled and his legs being pulled. But later, remembering the words of his guru Gogon Pakrashi who advised him to accept any small role, however insignificant it is. Mr. Pakrashi believed that the actor's success is in squeezing the maximum out of the role he does. Mr. Pakrashi's words gave him the inspiration to reconcile with the short role he was to do in the film.

14. How do we know that Patol Babu was a meticulous man?

Patol Babu's success in acting was that he was a meticulous man. He was a perfectionist in every field of his life, especially in acting. He went to any extent to make his role perfect. His role of the pedestrian clashing with the hero in Baren Mullick's film is a perfect example for this. While doing his scene, Patol Babu didn't see the hero Chanchal Kumar, but another man playing his role against him in the film.

15. Why did Mr. Mullick turn down Patol Babu's request for a rehearsal?

Baren Mullick refused Patol Babu a rehearsal because he wanted Patol's scene to be shot before clouds gathered in the sky and obstructed a smooth shooting.

16. What were the special touches that Patol Babu gave to his role to make it more authentic?

The meticulous Patol Babu did his own rehearsals over and over. He mixed...

17. Why did Patol Babu refuse his reward?

Patol Babu was a true actor, par excellence. He was tailor made for acting, drama and even for films. He was an amateur actor, so money was secondary important for him. He loved acting, not money. He was ready to take any pain for acting but not for money. Having acted his scene with great precision, Patol's mind was brimming with satisfaction, so there was no space for of greed. He thought that it did not matter whether he received any payment or not. For him the twenty rupees of reward, when measured against the intense satisfaction of a small job done with perfection and dedication, was too small.

18. What was the greatest reward that Patol Babu received for his role in the film?

Patol Babu did an amazing job and received praises from Chanchal Kumar who praised his amazing timing that nearly passed him out. Baren Mullick, the director exclaimed his performance jolly good and went on to say that Patol was quite an actor! He felt very pleased with his performance and a total satisfaction swept over him.

LONG QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **Patol Babu was a real star, unknown to the world. Discuss.**

Patol Babu may be known as a stage actor or an unknown actor who did a twenty second role in an unknown Bengali movie but his real worth is beyond ordinary sense. His early days were the days of stage and acting. He had once risen to a local hero. His audience used to consider him like a sensation. People watched dramas only to see him perform. The real greatness of Patol Babu can be understood from the point that he was a man of wonderful precision and dedication for acting. For him any role was a role. Any role was a drama. Any role was a film, no matter he plays it short or long. With his little scene with an insignificant "Oh!" as the only dialogue, Patol dug his long abandoned brilliance and found a dozen meanings and definition of an exclamation, "oh!" He invented different "ohs" with varying degrees of emotions attached to them. Thus, Patol Babu was a great actor, the real star who performs his short scene with great dedication and accuracy.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

1. Patol Babu reached home and was overcome with mixed feelings of happiness for a good performance, but disappointment for being sidelined with such a speaking role. Write a diary entry imagining you in that situation.
2. Patol Babu writes a letter to his friend regarding the hardwork some insignificant people put in and yet their contribution goes unacknowledged. Write the letter for him.
3. Give a character sketch of Patol Babu giving evidence from the text.