

1. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:

‘I hope the part calls for some dialogue?’

‘Certainly. It’s speaking part...’

- Each of the above statements is made by a different speaker. Identify both of them. Sitalakanto Ray (Patol Babu) and Naresh Dutt are the speakers of these lines respectively.
- What part does the first speaker talk about? Why does he want to know if it is a speaking part?
Here the speaker is talking about a small film role he had been offered. Being a renowned and a versatile theatre artist he would not like to perform a role without any dialogues, hence he wishes to know if it is a speaking part.
- What did the first speaker get to speak in his part? Is he happy with it? Why/Why not?
The first speaker (Patol Babu) gets to speak a monosyllabic exclamation ‘oh’ in his role. Initially he is not happy with the brevity of the dialogue but eventually he comes to see immense possibilities in it.

2. Short answer questions:

- Why had Patol Babu lost his first job in Calcutta?
- How does Patol Babu reconcile to the dialogue given to him?
- What were the special touches that Patol Babu gave to his role to make it more authentic?
- Why does Patol Babu walk away before he could be paid for his role? What does this reveal about his character?

Ans. a) Patol Babu used to work as clerk with Hudson and Kimberley in Calcutta. The war forced the company to retrench some of its staff in the Calcutta office. Unfortunately, Patol Babu became a victim to this retrenchment and lost his nine years old job.

b) Truly dejected to learn that he had just one word ‘Oh’! to speak in his part, Patol Babu felt that the unit had taken him for a ride. However, he reconciled himself to the dialogue by recalling how his mentor Gogon Pakrashi used to advise him never to consider it beneath his dignity to accept however small a part. Moreover he woke up to the immense acting possibilities in the monosyllable exclamation and reconciled to it.

c) Being a meticulous actor who had penchant for detail, Patol Babu made his small little role a very special one by adding some special touches of his own to it. First, he decided to be lost in reading a newspaper to bring out the character’s absent-mindedness. Then he carefully planned how he would walk to the point of collision and bring out the emotions of irritation, anguish and pain on impact.

d) Patol Babu came from a theatre tradition of the time. when film making was still very new in India and therefore had strong amateur incline. He lacked the professional and materialistic outlook that most people in the film industry had. He walked away without bothering to be paid for his role because for him performing his role to the best of his ability was more important than earning money. Money was nothing against the intense satisfaction of a small job done with perfection and dedication.

3. Essay Question:

Patol Babu is a man of destiny. Justify.

Ans. It is destiny that prevents him from continuing his career in theatre. Who knows he might have forayed into films, had he continued with theatre. Then it is his destiny again that he left his job with a railway company and joined Hudson and Kimberley in the hope of earning more but got retrenched nine years later due to war just as he was considering starting a club in his neighbourhood. He had to struggle even after for a comfortable living. It is destiny that he is offered a role in a film but then it is too small and insignificant to make such impact as an actor.

4. Extrapolative Question:

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

Ans. Yes, Patol Babu is really a practical man who comes to terms with whatever life has to offer. He has taken ups and downs of his life in his stride.

In his heydays in his youth he used to be a theatre artist. What popularity he enjoyed! He was in great demand as an actor. In fact he would appear in advertising handbills of theatre clubs and people would buy tickets to his shows. He enjoyed so much popularity and fan following, yet he did not go overboard. He continued to be the man he was – simple, humble and respectable.

Then the demands of life took him away from theatre and he got busy in his railway company job. He switched his job for higher salary. He joined Hudson and Kimberley where he had a smooth sailing for nine years. But then the World War II broke out and he lost his job in retrenchment – then a long struggle began for him. He tried everything he could – opened up a variety store, did odd jobs in companies, sold insurance but success eluded him everywhere. He kept trying like every practical man ought to. When the film role was offered to him, he was trying to take up a job with scrap iron dealer.

In performing the film role too, he was out rightly practical. He demanded his dialogue well in time so that he could rehearse it and do full justice to it.

Perhaps the only impractical thing he does is not accept his remuneration for his role. On the whole, Patol Babu was a practical man who comes to terms with whatever life has to offer.