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## Summary of Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

**Author:** Satyajit Ray

This story revolves around Bepin Choudhury, a man who is confronted by a stranger claiming that Bepin had visited Ranchi in 1958, an event Bepin himself insists never happened. Despite multiple witnesses and detailed accounts, Bepin cannot recall the trip or the injury he supposedly sustained there. The story explores themes of memory, identity, and the fragility of the human mind as Bepin struggles to reconcile his perfect memory with the stranger's claims. Eventually, Bepin visits Ranchi and experiences a faint recollection, leading to a mysterious letter from an old friend, Chunilal, who had orchestrated the situation to teach Bepin a lesson about kindness and memory.

### Key Elements

- **Characters:** Bepin Choudhury, Parimal Ghose (the stranger), Dinesh Mukerji (friend), Chunilal (old friend), Dr. Paresh Chanda (physician)
- **Themes:** Memory and forgetfulness, identity crisis, friendship, human kindness, and the impact of affluence on relationships

- **Setting:** Calcutta and Ranchi, 1958
- **Plot Highlights:** Encounter with Parimal Ghose, denial of Ranchi trip, consultation with friends and doctor, journey to Ranchi, recovery of memory, and the revealing letter from Chunilal

## Textual Evidence

Parimal Ghose's detailed recollections about Bepin's trip to Ranchi, including the injury and the argument about the moon landing, contrast sharply with Bepin's firm denial, highlighting the central conflict.

Bepin's conversation with Chunilal reveals the emotional and psychological depth of the story, especially when Chunilal questions Bepin's memory and behavior.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who is Parimal Ghose and what does he claim?
- Where did Bepin Babu say he spent Puja in 1958?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe Bepin Babu's reaction when Parimal Ghose confronts him.
- Why does Bepin hesitate to visit Dinesh Mukerji in person?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the significance of the letter from Chunilal at the end of the story.
- Discuss the theme of memory and identity as portrayed in the story.

## Answer Key

- Parimal Ghose is a man who claims to have accompanied Bepin Babu on a trip to Ranchi in 1958.
- Bepin Babu said he spent Puja in 1958 with a friend in Kanpur.
- Bepin is confused and denies the trip, showing disbelief and frustration.
- He fears that visiting Dinesh Mukerji might make him appear insane due to his memory loss.
- The letter reveals Chunilal's imaginative retribution for Bepin's unfeeling behavior, highlighting themes of friendship and human kindness.
- The story explores how memory shapes identity and the distress caused by its loss or alteration.

## Quick Reference

- **Memory Loss:** Central conflict involving denial of a past event.
- **Characters:** Bepin Babu, Parimal Ghose, Chunilal, Dinesh Mukerji, Dr. Chanda.
- **Setting:** Calcutta and Ranchi, 1958.
- **Themes:** Memory, identity, friendship, kindness.

## Glossary

- **Idle chat:** Unnecessary, routine conversation.
- **Meek:** Quiet; humble.
- **Utter disbelief:** Complete surprise.
- **Head reeled:** Shocked and confused.
- **Going nuts:** Going mad or crazy.
- **Getting into people's hair:** Interfering and annoying people.
- **Sleuthing:** Investigating an event.
- **Conscientious:** Careful and correct.
- **Tranquilliser:** Medicine to reduce stress and anxiety.

## Character Sketch of Bepin Choudhury

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Bepin Choudhury is a solitary, serious man with a strong memory and a responsible job. He is not sociable and prefers to spend time reading crime and thriller stories. His encounter with Parimal Ghose challenges his self-perception and memory, leading to a crisis. Despite his initial denial, Bepin shows vulnerability and confusion, revealing the human side of someone facing a psychological dilemma. His journey to Ranchi and interactions with friends and doctors show his determination to find the truth and regain his memory.

## Key Traits

- Intelligent and well-read
- Reserved and solitary
- Strong memory but vulnerable to psychological stress
- Responsible and conscientious at work
- Struggles with identity and memory loss

## Textual Evidence

Bepin's habit of buying at least five books every Monday shows his love for reading and solitude.

His confusion and denial when confronted by Parimal Ghose reveal his psychological conflict.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- What kind of books does Bepin Babu like to read?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe Bepin Babu's personality based on his behavior in the story.

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze how Bepin Babu's character changes throughout the story.

### Answer Key

- Bepin Babu likes crime stories, ghost stories, and thrillers.
- He is reserved, serious, and prefers solitude.
- He moves from confident denial to confusion and vulnerability, showing depth and complexity.

### Quick Reference

- **Reserved:** Prefers solitude and reading.
- **Responsible:** Conscientious at work.
- **Conflicted:** Struggles with memory loss.

### Glossary

- **Conscientious:** Careful and diligent.
- **Reserved:** Quiet and withdrawn.

## Themes in Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

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This story explores several important themes:

### Memory and Identity

The central theme is the relationship between memory and identity. Bepin's inability to recall a significant event challenges his sense of self and reality.

## Friendship and Human Kindness

The story highlights the importance of friendship, as seen in Chunilal's actions and the concern shown by others.

## Psychological Conflict

Bepin's internal struggle with his memory loss and the resulting confusion depict the fragility of the human mind.

## Affluence and Change

The letter from Chunilal suggests how wealth and success can change a person's behavior and relationships.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- What is the main theme of the story?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain how friendship is portrayed in the story.

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss the psychological conflict faced by Bepin Babu and its significance.

## Answer Key

- The main theme is memory and its impact on identity.
- Friendship is shown through Chunilal's concern and the letter he sends, reflecting care despite hardships.
- Bepin's conflict shows how memory loss can disrupt one's sense of reality and self, highlighting mental health issues.

## Quick Reference

- **Memory:** Key to identity.
- **Friendship:** Support and concern.
- **Psychological conflict:** Mental struggle.

## Glossary

- **Affluence:** Wealth.
- **Psychological:** Related to the mind.

## Literary Devices in Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

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The story uses several literary devices to enhance its narrative:

### Suspense

The gradual revelation of Bepin's memory loss creates suspense, keeping readers engaged.

## Irony

It is ironic that Bepin, known for his excellent memory, cannot recall a significant event.

## Symbolism

The trip to Ranchi symbolizes a lost part of Bepin's identity and past.

## Characterization

Detailed descriptions of Bepin and other characters help build a realistic and relatable story.

## Dialogue

Conversations between characters reveal key plot points and emotional states.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- What literary device is used to create tension in the story?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Give an example of irony from the story.

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Explain how symbolism is used in the story.

## Answer Key

- Suspense is used to create tension.
- It is ironic that Bepin, with a strong memory, forgets the Ranchi trip.
- The trip to Ranchi symbolizes a lost memory and identity.

## Quick Reference

- **Suspense:** Creates tension.
- **Irony:** Contrast between expectation and reality.
- **Symbolism:** Represents deeper meaning.

## Glossary

- **Suspense:** A state of excited or anxious uncertainty.
- **Irony:** A contrast between expectation and reality.
- **Symbolism:** Use of symbols to represent ideas.

## Important Quotes from Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

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1. *"I don't suppose you recognise me."* – Parimal Ghose, initiating the mystery.

2. *"I've never been to Ranchi."* – Bepin Babu, expressing denial.

3. *"I'm finished. There's no hope left."* – Bepin Babu, showing despair after fainting at Hudroo Falls.

4. *"Bepin, have you taken to drugs or something?"* – Chunilal, expressing concern over Bepin's memory loss.

5. *"I shall certainly write about it in a medical journal."* – Dr. Chanda, remarking on the uniqueness of Bepin's case.

## Explanation of Key Lines

These quotes highlight the progression of the story from mystery and denial to despair and eventual acceptance. They reveal character emotions and the central conflict of memory loss.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who says, "I've never been to Ranchi" and why?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the significance of the quote, "I'm finished. There's no hope left."

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss how the quote by Dr. Chanda reflects the story's theme.

## Answer Key

- Bepin Babu says it to deny the trip to Ranchi.

- The quote shows Bepin's despair and fear of losing his mind.
- Dr. Chanda's quote emphasizes the rarity and complexity of memory and identity issues.

## Quick Reference

- **Denial:** "I've never been to Ranchi."
- **Despair:** "I'm finished. There's no hope left."
- **Medical perspective:** "I shall certainly write about it in a medical journal."

## Glossary

- **Denial:** Refusal to accept reality.
- **Despair:** Complete loss of hope.

## Comprehension Questions on Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

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### Level 1 – Easy

- Why did the man stare at Bepin Babu in disbelief?
- Where did Bepin Babu say he went in October 1958?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Mention three things Parimal Ghose knew about Bepin Babu.
- Why did Bepin Babu hesitate to visit Dinesh Mukerji?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Why was Dr. Chanda puzzled about Bepin Babu's condition?
- What does the letter from Chunilal reveal about their friendship?

## Answer Key

- Because Bepin Babu denied having been to Ranchi, which the man knew he had visited.
- Bepin Babu said he spent Puja in Kanpur in 1958.
- Parimal Ghose knew about Bepin's injury, his preference for home-cooked meals, and his argument about the moon landing.
- He feared that visiting Dinesh Mukerji might make him appear insane.
- Dr. Chanda was puzzled because Bepin remembered everything except the Ranchi trip, which is unusual.
- The letter shows Chunilal's imaginative way of teaching Bepin a lesson about kindness despite his own financial hardship.

## Quick Reference

- **Disbelief:** Reaction to denial of known facts.
- **Memory conflict:** Central to the story.
- **Friendship:** Tested and revealed through actions.

## Glossary

- **Disbelief:** Inability to accept something as true.
- **Imaginative:** Creative and inventive.

## Summary of The Last Bargain (Poem)

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**Poet:** Rabindranath Tagore

The poem "The Last Bargain" describes a speaker who seeks to be hired or accepted by various figures throughout the day. First, a king offers power, then an old man offers money, and finally, a fair maid offers a smile. The speaker rejects all these offers, finding them unsatisfactory. At last, a child offers to hire the speaker with nothing, a simple gesture made in play. This last bargain, free of conditions and material value, makes the speaker feel truly free. The poem explores themes of freedom, value beyond material wealth, and the innocence of childhood.

## Key Elements

- **Speaker:** A person seeking acceptance or employment.
- **The King:** Symbolizes power.
- **The Old Man:** Symbolizes wealth.
- **The Fair Maid:** Symbolizes affection or beauty.
- **The Child:** Symbolizes innocence and freedom.
- **Themes:** True freedom, value beyond material wealth, innocence.

## Textual Evidence

"He held my hand and said, 'I will hire you with my power,' but his power counted for naught."

"He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away."

"He raised his head and seemed to know me and said, 'I hire you with nothing.'"

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who offers the speaker power in the poem?
- What does the child offer the speaker?

## Level 2 – Moderate

- Why does the speaker reject the offers of the king and the old man?

## Level 3 – Challenging

- Explain the significance of the last bargain in the poem.

## Answer Key

- The king offers power.
- The child offers to hire the speaker with nothing.
- The speaker rejects the offers because they are materialistic and do not bring true freedom.
- The last bargain signifies freedom and happiness without conditions or material gain.

## Quick Reference

- **Power:** Offered by the king but rejected.
- **Wealth:** Offered by the old man but rejected.
- **Freedom:** Achieved through the child's offer.

## Glossary

- **Bargain:** An agreement between two parties.
- **Hire:** To employ or engage.
- **Counted for naught:** Was of no value.

## Literary Devices in The Last Bargain (Poem)

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The poem uses several literary devices to convey its message:

## Symbolism

The king, old man, fair maid, and child symbolize power, wealth, affection, and innocence respectively.

## Repetition

The repeated offers to "hire" the speaker emphasize the search for acceptance and value.

## Contrast

The contrast between material offers and the child's offer of "nothing" highlights the theme of true freedom.

## Imagery

Vivid descriptions of the king's chariot, the old man's gold, and the child's play create strong mental pictures.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Identify one symbol used in the poem.

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the contrast between the king's and the child's offers.

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss how symbolism enhances the poem's theme.

### Answer Key

- The king symbolizes power.
- The king offers power, which is material and controlling, while the child offers nothing, symbolizing freedom and innocence.
- Symbolism helps readers understand the deeper meaning of freedom beyond material possessions.

### Quick Reference

- **Symbolism:** Use of symbols to represent ideas.
- **Contrast:** Differences highlighted for effect.

### Glossary

- **Symbolism:** Representation of ideas through symbols.
- **Imagery:** Descriptive language that appeals to the senses.

## Important Quotes from The Last Bargain (Poem)

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1. *"Come and hire me," I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.*
2. *"I will hire you with my power," said the king.*

3. *"I will hire you with my money,"* said the old man.

4. *"I will hire you with a smile,"* said the fair maid.

5. *"I hire you with nothing,"* said the child.

## Explanation of Key Lines

These lines show the progression of offers from power and wealth to simple, unconditional acceptance, emphasizing the poem's theme of true freedom.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who offers the speaker a smile?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- What does the child's offer represent?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the significance of the speaker's rejection of the king's and old man's offers.

## Answer Key

- The fair maid offers a smile.
- The child's offer represents freedom and innocence.
- The rejection shows the speaker's desire for freedom beyond material power and wealth.

## Quick Reference

- **Power:** King's offer.
- **Wealth:** Old man's offer.
- **Freedom:** Child's offer.

## Glossary

- **Hire:** To employ or engage.
- **Unconditional:** Without conditions or limitations.