

## Grade VIII

### Lesson 4. Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

#### PROSE

#### Soul of the chapter

#### **Bepin Choudhury Meets Stranger who Recalls about Ranchi Visit**

Like every Monday, after work Bepin Choudhury directly headed to Kalicharan's book shop to buy books. While he was looking at the books, he had a feeling that someone was perhaps closely observing him. The man claimed that he knew Bepin and in fact, Bepin Babu knew him too. He informed Bepin Babu, much to his surprise, that both of them were good acquaintances. The stranger told him that they met daily for a week when Bepin Choudhury had come to Ranchi. His name was Parimal Ghose.

When Parimal tries to remind Bepin about his visit to Ranchi in the year 1958, Bepin thinks that the stranger is confusing him with someone else. Bepin did not remember having gone to Ranchi, though he had greatly wished to. To prove his point, Parimal supplies a number of intimate details, which put Bepin Choudhury in a fix. The death of Bepin's wife, brother, his being childless and his dislike for hotel food were all known to Parimal.

#### **The Cut in the Right Knee**

On realising the presence of the mark of a cut on the right knee, another detail supplied by the stranger, Bepin begins to investigate the case. He remembered that he spent the puja of October 1958, with a friend, Haridas Bagachi. But, in order to relieve himself of the doubts that had emerged, he thinks of calling up Haridas Bagachi and later Dinesh Mukherji. The stranger had mentioned that Dinesh Mukherji had accompanied him during this visit. Dinesh Mukherji, further confirms this piece of fact.

#### **Bepin Choudhury Meets Chunilal Amidst all the Mental Problems**

Bepin Choudhury in utter disbelief begins to evaluate his life. He thinks that excessive work and labour that he had put into his job for all these years was responsible for his current state. He begins to think of himself as mentally unwell, at having forgotten an entire incident of his life that had occurred just a couple of years ago.



Bepin Choudhury reconfirms the details of his Ranchi visit from an old school friend, Chunilal, who had come to meet him in order to seek Bepin's help at finding a new job. Chuni doesn't just confirm the visit, but also informs Bepin that he was the one who got Bepin Babu's train bookings done, as he was then a travel agent.

### **Bepin Choudhury Sees the Doctor and his Leaving for Hudroo Falls**

By now Bepin Choudhury was convinced that something was wrong with him. He, therefore, decides to meet Dr Paresh Chanda a young Physician. "You must cure me of this horrible illness. I can't tell you how it's affecting my work." Dr. Chanda was only too surprised to know the symptoms. He recommends Bepin Babu to go to Ranchi once again in order to recollect the forgotten parts of his memory. Bepin Choudhury does exactly what the doctor had suggested and the very next evening he starts for Ranchi.

As was expected, he remembers nothing on revisiting Ranchi. Unable to bear the burden of this illness and having lost this lost hope, he collapses at Hudroo Falls, where two Gujarati gentlemen find him lying unconscious.

### **Bepin Choudhury Receives a Letter and Talks to Dr Chanda**

After his return from Ranchi, he was lying in a depressed state when he receives a letter from Chunilal. Chunilal reveals the secret and tells Bepin Babu that he had fooled him by playing a trick. This trick was Chunilal's revenge on Bepin Babu at having forgotten their old friendship and not helping a friend in need.

Bepin Choudhury is only too embarrassed. He informs Dr Chanda that he had recollected everything after the second Ranchi trip and that the doctor may come to treat his injured hip.

**NCERT Corner**

### **Comprehension Check - 1**

#### **1. Why did the men stare at Bepin Babu in disbelief?**

The men stared at Bepin Babu in disbelief because Bepin Babu refused to recognise him. The stranger mentioned that they had met each other for an entire week while Bepin



Choudhury had visited Ranchi and have had conversation on various personal matters. Yet, Bepin Choudhury's amusement at such a visit left him staring at Bepin Babu in sheer disbelief.

**2. Where did Bepin Babu say he went in October, 1958?**

Bepin Babu said that in October, 1958 he had gone to Kanpur to celebrate 'Puja'. He was with his friend, Haridas Bagchi, during that time.

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

Parimal Ghose knew quite a few things about Bepin Choudhury and his life.

- (i) He knew that Bepin Choudhury's wife had died about ten years ago.
- (ii) Parimal Ghose was also aware that Bepin Babu had no children.
- (iii) Parimal Ghose could also tell that Bepin Babu's brother had died of insanity and for this reason Bepin Babu's did not like visiting mental hospitals.
- (iv) He had a fair idea about Bepin Babu's likes and dislikes and therefore, knew that Bepin Babu was not fond of hotel food.
- (v) The cut on Bepin Babu's right knee during Ranchi visit was also known to Parimal Ghose.

**Comprehension Check - 2**

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

Bepin Babu was worried about the things Parimal Ghose had shared with him because these were all intimate details of his life, not known to strangers. Parimal Ghose was correct about everything, except for Bepin being to Ranchi in 1958. Bepin Babu began to worry if there was something wrong with his mental health.

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

Bepin Choudhury decided to call his friend, Haridas Bagchi, with whom he had spent the 'Puja' of 1958.

Since Bagchi was away to Japan, he rolled up his trousers to see for himself the cut on his knee. He, later, decided to call up Dinesh Mukherji and Chunilal, to get a confirmation.



**3. Why did BepinBabu hesitate to visit Mr. Mukherji? Why did he finally decide to phone him?**

BepinBabu was a little hesitant to visit Mr. Mukherji because he thought that it would be quite embarrassing for him to ask details of his life from his friend.

Also, if Dinesh Mukherji would confirm their Ranchi visit, Mukherji would get to know about his state of mind. Therefore, Bepin Babu decided to phone him.

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

Mr. Mukherji confirmed that both of them had been to Ranchi in the year 1958. This quite obviously added on to Bepin Babu's worries.

**Comprehension Check - 3**

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

Chunila was a very old friend of Bepin Babu. They had been together at school. Chunila was going through a very rough time as he didn't have a job at present. He had been coming to meet Bepin Babu over and over again for job prospects.

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

Dr Chanda was puzzled because Bepin Babu seemed to remember everything about his life, except this one episode.

The peculiarity of Bepi Babu's case was that unlike patients who seem to forget parts of their memory, Bepin Babu had forgotten just this one episode of his life.

**Comprehension Check - 4**

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

No, BepinBabu had not lost his memory or forgotten anything. He had been fooled to believe so by Chunilal that he had made a trip to Ranchi and then he was unable to remember it.

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

Chunilal had been a very old friend of Bepin Choudhury. He was claiming help from Bepin Babu on account of this age old friendship. According to Chunilal, the privileged circumstances



of Bepin Babu seemed to make him overlook the ill condition of his friend. This deeply hurt Chunilal. As his revenge, he played this trick upon Bepin Babu. Chunilal wrote in his letter that he had no money, but what he did have was his imagination. He was using his imagination now to write a novel which was being reviewed by a good publisher.

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### Working with the Text

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

The author describes Bepin Babu as a hard and a responsible worker. He took his job quite seriously and did all his work with great dedication. The proof for this is the fact that even while Bepin Choudhury was quite unwell because of the Ranchi episode and when Dr Chanda recommended him to go to Ranchi once again, he called up at his office, gave a set of instructions before setting on this journey. This clearly proves that even in condition of ill health, he placed his office work at priority.

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

Chunilal had been coming over and over again to meet Bepin Babu to make appeal for a job. Bepin Babu, therefore, asked him to leave. Immediately, however, Bepin Babu changed his mind because he thought Chunilal might have a fair idea about his Ranchi visit in 1958. After this meeting, however, Bepin Babu was left further troubled, since Chunilal confirmed Bepin Babu's Ranch visit.

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

Bepin Babu lost consciousness at Hudroo Falls perhaps because that was his lost hope at regaining the lost part of his memory.

He was already in bad health, worrying too much about his lapse of memory and at Hudroo Falls when he fails to recollect that episode, he probably got overburdened by his thought and lost consciousness.



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

Bepin Babu was shocked, dumbfounded and embarrassed when he found out that Chunilal had tricked him. He didn't wish to share his embarrassment with anyone and therefore, in keeping with Chunilal's lie told Dr Chanda that on visiting Ranchi he had recollected everything.

### Working with Language

#### 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.

(i) have to	(ii) had to	(iii) had to	(iv) had to	(v) had to	(vi) has to	(vii) Had to
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#### 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 words under which you must look for the idioms in the dictionary.

- (i) at / from **close** quarters (**close**: adjective)
- (i) **break** into a smile (**break**: verb; look under 'break into something')
- (ii) **carry** on (**carry**: verb)





- (iii) have a **clean record** (you may find related meanings under both these words)
- (iv) **beat** about the bush (verb)

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

**Ans. The dictionary order**

- (i) beat about the bush
- (ii) break into a
- (ii) carry on
- (iv) from close quarters
- (v) have a clean record of

**Meaning**

- (i) Not to talk in a straight forward manner.
- (ii) Smile abruptly or suddenly
- (iii) To continue.
- (iv) Nearby or close by
- (v) Without any blemish.

**3. Study the sentences in the columns A and B below.**

Column A	Column B
I saw this movie yesterday.	I have seen this movie
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 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 suggest 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 B-Bepin Babu has worked here since 2003.

(ii) Column A-Chunilal wrote to a publisher last week.



(iii) Column B-I have seen this movie already.

(iv) Column B-1 have visited Ranchi once before.

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
- (ii) Don't pay/ if you/ attention/ you might/ the wrong train/ to the announcement/ board
- (iii) The villagers/ tried the crime/ on the young woman/ to pin
- (iv) Bepin Babu/ orders to/ telling people/ under/ loved/ doctor's/ eat early/ that he was
- (v) The students / The teacher/ his eyebrows/ when/ said that/ all their lesson/ raised/ they had revised

**Ans.**

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

**Idioms:** **beating about the bush** to talk about something directly.

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

**Idiom:** **Pay attention** to be attentive

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

**Idiom:** **To pin the crime** to accuse someone for any crime.

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

**Idiom:** **Under orders** to follow the instructions.

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

**Idiom:** **raised his eyebrows** was shocked or surprise mildly.



## Speaking and Writing

### 1. What do you think happened after BepinBabu 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?**

When BepinBabu discovered the truth, he was completely shocked. He could never imagine in his wildest dreams that he would be fooled in this manner. Initially, he became quite upset with Chunilal and could not understand how Chunilal could play such a serious prank on a friend. He was also disturbed by the lie of Dinesh Mukherji, who had made him believe in the gravity of the situation.

However, he soon realised that what disturbed him most was that his friend were responsible for his present condition, his mental misbalance and ill health.

Bepin Choudhury did not then take very long in understand how he was responsible for Chunilal's poor economic condition. As a friend how he had failed to be a pillar of strength and help his friend in the hour of need.

He, therefore, decided to help his friend in whatever ways possible and do so without any delay. He also wrote an apology letter to his friend and went to see his friend in person and sought forgiveness from him.

### 2. I 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.**

**Ans.**

XYZ Street

Calcutta

Date-25th January, 1965

Dear -Chunilal,



*Next Generation School*

Yesterday evening I received your letter. I had just been back from Ranchi and was in poor health when I was shocked by the revelation your letter made. I was dumbfounded and went numb for a considerable time. I did not know how to react. The way I had suffered in the



past week, I should have been very angry with you. But realising how you might have been suffering for past two months on my account left me speechless. I am really ashamed of how I handled your case. I could have put in a little effort and helped you gain a position or helped you otherwise. But my unfeeling attitude has not just hurt you, but has also left me in pain today. My friend, I beg you for the sake of our old friendship to forgive me and I promise to help you out in the best possible way. I wish to meet you soon, but I am too embarrassed to come and face you. Do let me know that you have forgiven me and I will make all things better.

Looking forward to your reply.

Yours truly

Bepin Choudhury

Or

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

**Ans.**

When I was young, I was very scared of lizards. One day, one of my cousins threw a plastic lizard on me. I was scared to death, thinking it to be a real one. I was so scared that I wanted to have revenge on my cousin.

So, I called him from another phone and pretended to be his teacher and asked him to pass the phone to his father so that I could complain about his mischievous behaviour in class. Thinking of me as his teacher, my cousin was so apologetic for all his unruly acts that it gave me a lot of pleasure.

## Chapter Practice

### Very Short Answer Type Questions

**1. Discuss a regular feature of Bepin Choudhury's Monday evenings.**

Every Monday, after work, Bepin Choudhury used to go to Kalicharan's book shop in new market to buy at least five books that would last him the entire week.

**2. According to Parimal Ghose he had arranged a car for Bepin Babu to travel to which place?**

Parimal Ghose had arranged a car for Bepin Babu to travel to Hudroo Falls and Netarhat.



### **3. Why was Bepin Choudhury unable to consult his friend, Haridas Bagachi?**

Bepin Choudhury was unable to call Haridas Bagachi because Haridas Bagachi and his wife had gone to Japan.

### **4. What was the nature of Chunilal's last job?**

In his previous job, Chunilal worked at a travel agency.

### **5. Is Dr Chanda successful in diagnosing BepinBabu's problem?**

No, Dr Chanda was unable to diagnose Bepin Choudhury's problem. He thinks that it was quite a peculiar case.

### **6. Where did Bepin Choudhury spend the October of 1958?**

During October 1958, Bepin Choudhury was in Kanpur with his friend, Haridas Bagachi and his family.

### **7. Did Parimal Ghose know Bepin Choudhury?**

No, Parimal Ghose was not familiar with Bepin Choudhury. He was merely acting in accordance with Chunilal's instructions.

## **Short Answer Type Questions**

### **1. Why does Dr Chanda call BepinBabu's case a peculiar case?**

Dr Chanda had never heard of any such case partial of lapse of memory. He had heard of people losing their partial memory. But he had never known someone forgetting only a particular incident of his life and remembering everything else without any difficulty.

### **2. What role does Dinesh Mukherji play in the story?**

Dinesh Mukherji's confirmation of Bepin Choudhury's Ranchi visit is a turning point in the story. Only after receiving this piece of information, he gets convinced that something was the matter with him and he begins to consider Parimal Ghose's claims seriously.

### **3. What were Bepin Choudhury's biggest fears concerning his present condition?**

Bepin Choudhury begins to believe that he was losing his sanity and was going mad. His biggest fear was that he might end up in a lunatic asylum.

His brother had died of insanity and he hated going to a mental hospital, but he feared that his fate might be the same. He also feared losing his job and reputation.

### **4. With what intention does Chunilal reveal the truth in the end?**

Chunilal reveals the truth in the end and showcases himself as the mastermind of the entire game to teach Bepin Choudhury a lesson. He lets Bepin Babu know that he had played this



prank on him to seek revenge and reduce Bepin Choudhury to as pitiable a situation as he himself was in.

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### Long Answer Type Questions

#### 1. Discuss the theme of revenge as it emerges in this story.

The treatment of the revenge theme in this story is fairly unusual. The revenge in this case is neither murdering the opponent nor robbing his valuables or in any way physically abusing him, but trapping him in a way, that his escape becomes difficult. The revenge is executed in a very subtle way. Chunilal manages to take his revenge long with teaching a lesson to Bepin Choudhury for not having tried enough to help his age old friend.

#### 2. Discuss the significance of these phrase, "Lapse of memory", in the title of the story.

The chapter looks at memory and its power to integrate the past, present and future as a crucial part of human existence. The phrase, "Lapse of Memory" Becomes crucial in two ways. The "Lapse of Memory" on one hand could refer to Chunilal's central plot in tricking Bepin Babu. On the other hand, "Bepin Babu's lapse of Memory" was actually a reality as he was unconfident about the events of his life and believes that there was a 'Lapse of Memory' in reality.

#### 3. Write a character sketch of Bepin Babu on the basis of your reading of the story.

Bepin Choudhury was a hard working and sincere person at work. He was very fond of reading and buying books was a regular feature of his existence. However, the story shows that he was not a very helpful person. His friend, Chunilal, suffered on that account. He perhaps, was not a socially likeable person too. His friend, Dinesh Mukherji, became an ally of Chunilal to play the prank on him.

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### Value Based Question

**The story makes certain comments about the changing faces of friends. Discuss.**

The story makes serious comments about the changing faces of friends and their friendships. Chunilal approaches Bepin Choudhury for seeking help to find a job on the strength of their age old friendship. Bepin Choudhury on the other hand proves to be unhelpful and inconsiderate, something that greatly disturbs Chunilal.



Bepin Choudhury is aware of Dinesh Mukherji's sarcasm, yet Dinesh Mukherji comes across as a good acquaintance of Bepin Choudhury. However, by the end of the story, it is amply clear that Dinesh Mukherji functioned more as an ally of Chunilal, than as a friend of Bepin Babu. Chunilal also mirrors Bepin Choudhury's coldness by playing a prank on Bepin Babu that unnerves him completely.

Unlike a friend, Chunilal too becomes inconsiderate of the effect that his prank was having on Bepin Babu's health.

### Extract Based Questions

#### Extract 1

**Directions (Q.Nos.1- 6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.**

"Bepin, have you taken to drugs or something? As far as I know, you had a clean record where such things were concerned.

I know that old friendships don't mean much to you, but at least you had a good memory. You can't really mean that you have forgotten about the Ranchi trip."

**1. Who is the speaker of these lines?**

- (a) Bepin Choudhury (b) Chunilal (c) Parimal Ghose (d) Dinesh Mukherji

**Ans. (b) Chunilal**

**2. What was the purpose of his visit at Bepin Babu's residence?**

- (a) To seek medical help (b) To seek help to find a job  
(c) To seek an investment policy (d) To lend him books

**Ans. (b) To seek help to find a job.**

**3. What was the nature of his last job?**

- (a) Teacher (b) Tourist guide (c) Travel agent (d) Investment banker

**Ans. (c) Travel agent**

**4. Discuss the theme of friendship as it emerges in the story.**

The friendship between Chunilal and Bepin Choudhury witnesses changing dynamics. Bepin Choudhury refuses to help his friend in need and Chunilal almost proves his friend to have gone mad.

**5. Describe the tone of the speaker.**



In the above lines, the tone of the speaker has mixed reactions like anger, frustration, pity and sarcasm.

#### 6. Why was the speaker alarmed?

The speaker gets alarmed because he thinks that Bepin Choudhury had started taking drugs.

### Extract 2

**Directions (Q.Nos. 1- 6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.**

When Dr Chanda came, Bepin Babu said, "I 'm fine.

I t all came back as soon as I got off the train at Ranchi."

'A unique case', said Dr Chanda. "I shall certainly write about it in a medical journal,"

"The reason why I sent for you,' said Bepin Babu, is that I have a pain in the hip from a fall in Ranchi. If you could prescribe a painkiller."

#### 1. Why was Dr Chanda surprised?

- (a) Because Bepin Babu's case was a unique one
- (b) Because Bepin Babu had become well without medication
- (c) Because Bepin Babu needed a painkiller
- (d) Because Bepin Babu had hurt his hip

**Ans. Because Bepin Babu's case was a unique one.**

#### 2. Why does Bepin Babu choose to tell a lie to Dr Chanda?

- (a) Bepin Babu was too embarrassed to tell Dr Chanda the truth
- (b) Bepin Babu thought Dr Chanda was an ally of Chuni Lal
- (c) Bepin Babu wanted to confuse Dr Chanda
- (d) Bepin Babu had lost it completely

**Ans. (a) Bepin Babu was too embarrassed to tell Dr Chanda the truth.**

#### 3. Dr Chanda thinks of writing about Bepin Babu's case in a...

- (a) Newspaper
- (b) health magazine
- (c) Medical journal
- (d) anthology

**Ans. (c) medical journal**

#### 4. Did Bepin Babu need a painkiller?

No, Bepin Babu did not need the painkiller. He was asking Dr Chanda to treat his hip since, prior to his reading Chuni Lal's letter he had sent for the doctor.





**5. Does Bepin Babu share details of this incident with anyone?**

No, Bepin Babu would not have shared the details of this incident with anybody. He did not wish to make himself an object of humiliation.

**6. What had happened to Bepin Babu?**

Nothing was wrong with Bepin Babu. He had merely been tricked by Chunilal. There was no lapse of memory to Bepin Babu.

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