


Puspa Shrestha

Best Quality Resource Site for Class 11 And 12 Students
(Based on Updated Curriculum 2077)

Puspa Shrestha

Best Quality Resource Site for Class 11 And 12
Students (Based on Updated Curriculum 2077)

 puspas.com.np



PDF Collections

Notes

Books

Model Questions

This PDF was downloaded from
puspas.com.np

Visit our website for more
materials.



puspas.com.np

Follow us on:



AR Dinesh



puspas.com.np



Puspa Shrestha

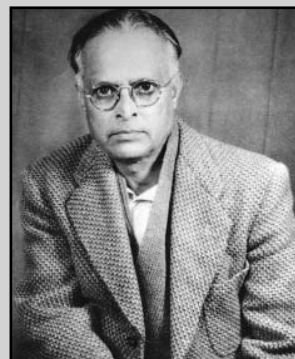
R. K. Narayan

Before Reading**Answer these questions.**

- Have you ever shown your palm to a fortune teller? Do you believe in fortune telling?
- Why do you think people want to know their futures?
- Look at this picture. Can you name each of the zodiac signs? What is your zodiac sign?



R. K. Narayan (1906-2001) was an Indian writer known for his works set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He was born in Madras, South India. He wrote many novels including *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*, along with short stories and other works. He was among the best known and most widely read Indian novelists who wrote in English. He highlighted the social context and everyday life of his characters.



Astrology is a form of fortune telling, originated in ancient Babylonia. It has been practised in many cultures, including ancient Rome, Greece, India, and China. '*An Astrologer's Day*' is a thriller, suspense story describing a day in the life of an astrologer who makes his living by selling cosmic insights to gullible villagers, though he has no knowledge of the cosmos or actual spiritual insight.

Reading

Punctually at midday he opened his bag and spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook and a bundle of palmyra writing. His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced by their position—placed as they were between the painted

forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks: even a half-wit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting. To crown the effect, he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine-sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians and, above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnuts, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it Bombay Ice-Cream one day, and on the next Delhi Almond, and on the third Raja's Delicacy, and so on and so forth, and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd dallied before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which crackled and smoked up above the groundnut heap nearby. Half the enchantment of the place was due to the fact that it did not have the benefit of municipal lighting. The place was lit up by shop lights. One or two had hissing gaslights, some had naked flares stuck on poles, some were lit up by old cycle lamps and one or two, like the astrologer's, managed without lights of their own. It was a bewildering crisscross of light rays and moving shadows. This suited the astrologer very well, for the simple reason that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life; and he knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute. He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice and shrewd guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man's labour as any other, and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of a day.

He had left his village without any previous thought or plan. If he had continued there he would have carried on the work of his forefathers—namely, tilling the land, living, marrying and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But that was not to be. He had to leave home without telling anyone, and he could not rest till he left it behind a couple of hundred miles. To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between.

He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles: marriage, money and the tangles of human ties. Long practice had sharpened his perception. Within five minutes he understood what was wrong. He charged three pies per question and never opened his

mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes, which provided him enough stuff for a dozen answers and advices. When he told the person before him, gazing at his palm, 'In many ways you are not getting the fullest results for your efforts,' nine out of ten were disposed to agree with him. Or he questioned: 'Is there any woman in your family, maybe even a distant relative, who is not well disposed towards you?' Or he gave an analysis of character: 'Most of your troubles are due to your nature. How can you be otherwise with Saturn where he is? You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior.' This endeared him to their hearts immediately, for even the mildest of us loves to think that he has a forbidding exterior.

The nuts-vendor blew out his flare and rose to go home. This was a signal for the astrologer to bundle up too, since it left him in darkness except for a little shaft of green light which strayed in from somewhere and touched the ground before him. He picked up his cowrie shells and paraphernalia and was putting them back into his bag when the green shaft of light was blotted out; he looked up and saw a man standing before him. He sensed a possible client and said: 'You look so careworn. It will do you good to sit down for a while and chat with me.' The other grumbled some vague reply. The astrologer pressed his invitation; whereupon the other thrust his palm under his nose, saying: 'You call yourself an astrologer?' The astrologer felt challenged and said, tilting the other's palm towards the green shaft of light: 'Yours is a nature . . .' 'Oh, stop that,' the other said. 'Tell me something worthwhile . . .'

Our friend felt piqued. 'I charge only three pies per question, and what you get ought to be good enough for your money . . .' At this the other withdrew his arm, took out an anna and flung it out to him, saying, 'I have some questions to ask. If I prove you are bluffing, you must return that anna to me with interest.'

'If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees?' 'No.' 'Or will you give me eight annas?'

'All right, provided you give me twice as much if you are wrong,' said the stranger. This pact was accepted after a little further argument. The astrologer sent up a prayer to heaven as the other lit a cheroot. The astrologer caught a glimpse of his face by the match-light. There was a pause as cars hooted on the road, jutka-drivers swore at their horses and the babble of the crowd agitated the semi-darkness of the park. The other sat down, sucking his cheroot, puffing out, sat there ruthlessly. The astrologer felt very uncomfortable. 'Here, take your anna back. I am not used to such challenges. It is late for me today . . .' He made preparations to bundle up. The other held his wrist and said,

‘You can’t get out of it now. You dragged me in while I was passing.’ The astrologer shivered in his grip; and his voice shook and became faint. ‘Leave me today. I will speak to you tomorrow.’ The other thrust his palm in his face and said, ‘Challenge is challenge. Go on.’ The astrologer proceeded with his throat drying up. ‘There is a woman . . .’

‘Stop,’ said the other. ‘I don’t want all that. Shall I succeed in my present search or not? Answer this and go. Otherwise I will not let you go till you disgorge all your coins.’ The astrologer muttered a few incantations and replied, ‘All right. I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like.’ After a good deal of haggling the other agreed. The astrologer said, ‘You were left for dead. Am I right?’

‘Ah, tell me more.’ ‘A knife has passed through you once?’ said the astrologer. ‘Good fellow!’ He bared his chest to show the scar. ‘What else?’ ‘And then you were pushed into a well nearby in the field. You were left for dead.’ ‘I should have been dead if some passer-by had not chanced to peep into the well,’ exclaimed the other, overwhelmed by enthusiasm. ‘When shall I get at him?’ he asked, clenching his fist.

‘In the next world,’ answered the astrologer. ‘He died four months ago in a far-off town. You will never see any more of him.’ The other groaned on hearing it. The astrologer proceeded. ‘Guru Nayak—’ ‘You know my name!’ the other said, taken aback.

‘As I know all other things. Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two days’ journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see once again great danger to your life if you go from home.’ He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it out to him. ‘Rub it on your forehead and go home. Never travel southward again, and you will live to be a hundred.’

‘Why should I leave home again?’ the other said reflectively. ‘I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him.’ He shook his head regretfully. ‘He has escaped my hands. I hope at least he died as he deserved.’ ‘Yes,’ said the astrologer. ‘He was crushed under a lorry.’ The other looked gratified to hear it.

The place was deserted by the time the astrologer picked up his articles and put them into his bag. The green shaft was also gone, leaving the place in darkness and silence. The stranger had gone off into the night, after giving the astrologer a handful of coins.

It was nearly midnight when the astrologer reached home. His wife was waiting for him at the door and demanded an explanation. He flung the coins at her and said, 'Count them. One man gave all that.'

'Twelve and a half annas,' she said, counting. She was overjoyed. 'I can buy some jaggery and coconut tomorrow. The child has been asking for sweets for so many days now. I will prepare some nice stuff for her.'

'The swine has cheated me! He promised me a rupee,' said the astrologer. She looked up at him. 'You look worried. What is wrong?' 'Nothing.'

After dinner, sitting on the pyol, he told her, 'Do you know a great load is gone from me today? I thought I had the blood of a man on my hands all these years. That was the reason why I ran away from home, settled here and married you. He is alive.' She gasped. 'You tried to kill!'

'Yes, in our village, when I was a silly youngster. We drank, gambled and quarrelled badly one day—why think of it now? Time to sleep,' he said, yawning, and stretched himself on the pyol.

Glossary

cheroot (n.): a cigar cut square at both ends

jutka (n.): a two-wheeled, horse-drawn vehicle

disgorge (v.): to give up or hand over

cowrie (n.): a small snail commonly found in warm, shallow waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans

impetuous (adj.): done quickly without thought; hasty

incantation (n.): words spoken in a magic spell or charm

jaggery (n.): solid dark brown sugar made from sugarcane

pyol (n.): a low bench

palmyra (n.): paper made from the leaves of the palmyra tree

paraphernalia (n.): things used in a particular activity; equipment

piqued (adj.): aroused in anger or resentment; offended

saffron (n.): an orange-yellow colour

vociferousness (n.): noisy outcrying

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

- a. How does the astrologer's appearance help him attract customers? How does he help the customers satisfy their needs?
- b. How do you characterise the astrologer's attitude toward the stranger?
- c. What details does the astrologer give the stranger about his past?
- d. Why does he advise the stranger to go home immediately?
- e. What is your reaction to the conversation between the astrologer and his wife?

Reference to the context

- a. Suspense is the feeling of anticipation you may have as you read. In this story, what details contributed to your feelings of suspense and surprise? Explain.
- b. Analyze the conflicts in "An Astrologer's Day." Explain how the conflicts are resolved and what they reveal about the characters involved in the story.
- c. "All right. I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like."
 - i. Who is the speaker?
 - ii. Who is he speaking to?
 - iii. What does the expression 'open my mouth' mean?
- d. Description helps readers visualize what is happening in a story. What details and techniques does the author use to describe the astrologer?
- e. Irony is a contrast between appearances and reality. What is ironic about Guru Nayak's meeting with the astrologer?
- f. How does the astrologer's manner of dress suit his character?

Reference beyond the text

- a. The astrologer attracts many customers in the street who are pleased and astonished by what he tells them. What does this tell you about the people of the town walking in the street?
- b. Why do most people want to know their future? Do you think astrologers can really help them know their future?
- c. Is astrology a good practice of fortune telling or is it just a blind faith? Give reasons.