



QUESTION BANK-THE PROPOSAL -by Anton Chekov

Class: X

Subject: ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

‘The Proposal, is a one-act play. Actually, it is a farce written by Anton Chekhov in 1888-89. The play is about the tendency of wealthy families to seek matrimonial ties. The real purpose is to increase their estates and landed properties. Ivan Lomov was a wealthy neighbour of another wealthy farmer Stepan Chubukov. Lomov comes to seek the hand of Chubukov’s twenty-five-year-old daughter, Natalya. Lomov, Chubukov and Natalya -all three are quarrelsome people.

They quarrel over petty or small issues. Each one of them has a claim over a particular piece of land. They also quarrel over their dogs. Amidst this quarrelling, they completely forget the real issue — the marriage proposal. But good sense prevails in the end. Economic good sense ensures that the proposal is made. Chubukov doesn’t want to miss the opportunity. He puts his daughter’s hand into Lomov’s hands and doesn’t waste any time and blesses them. However, old habits die hard. The newly married couple starts their married life with a fresh quarrel.

SUMMARY

The chapter, The Proposal is a comedy drama that is based on the tendency of two wealthy families who seek ties with each other to increase their estates by encouraging marriage that would improve their wealth. The play began with Ivan Lomov who visited Stephan Chubukov, a wealthy neighbour of Lomov. Lomov was a wealthy person himself who was dressed neatly and had come to seek Chubukov’s twenty-five-year-old daughter, Natalya Stepanovna’s hand in marriage. Initially, Chubukov was curious about Lomov’s sudden visit and assumed that the young man had come to ask for money which he might not return.

Lomov was a thirty-five-year-old gentleman who suffered from severe heart-palpitations and became upset easily. He thought that Natalya was an excellent housekeeper, a well-educated and average-looking woman who would be an ideal partner to marry. However, when Chubukov heard about the proposal, he was glad and embraced Lomov. He immediately rushed inside to call his daughter, Natalya.

When Natalya arrived, Lomov began the conversation about how both the families share a cordial relationship. As he spoke about his land Oxen Meadows, that was a disputed property, Natalya objected that the land belonged to her family. Lomov shouted back stating that the land belonged to him. Both of them had a heated argument on this topic until Lomov had a sudden palpitation attack with numbness of his feet. In no time, Natalya’s father Chubukov arrived and the father-daughter duo started abusing Lomov. Feeling insulted, Lomov rushed out of the house. As Chubukov continued to insult the young man, he accidentally mentioned to Natalya about Lomov’s marriage proposal. Hearing this, Natalya immediately regretted insulting Lomov and asked her father to bring him back.

Chubukov rushed out of the house immediately to call Lomov. When the young man returned, Natalya started a conversation about their dogs. In no time, a second round of debate ensued

between her and Lomov where she mentioned that her dog Squeezer was better than Lomov's Guess. Soon, Chubukov entered the scene and the argument worsened. All the three people began quarreling and soon Lomov fainted with another attack of palpitation.

Seeing this, Natalya asked her father to wake up Lomov as she expressed her desire that she loved him. Suddenly when Lomov made a movement, they offered him some water to drink and Chubukov put Natalya's hand over his hand. They agreed to marry but the quarrel persisted as Natalya said that Squeezer was better than Guess. However, Lomov was adamant and refused to accept that his dog, Guess, was worse than Squeezer, Natalya's dog. The curtain went down as the verbal fight continued among the characters.

The Proposal displayed the quarrelsome nature of the characters of the play and how a wealthy family unfeelingly encouraged marriage with another wealthier family as a means to enhance their economic condition.

I. Read the extracts and answer the questions that follow.

1. It's cold... I'm trembling all over, just as if I'd got an examination before me. The great thing is, I must have my mind made up. If I give myself time to think, to hesitate, to talk a lot, to look for an ideal, or for real love, then I'll never get married.

- (a) Who is saying, — "I'm trembling all over as if I had got an examination before me"?
- (b) What is the great thing that the speaker is talking about?
- (c) What state of Lomov's mind does the passage reflect?
- (d) Why did Lomov not want to wait for real love?

Ans. (a) Ivan Vassilevitch Lomov.

- (b) The speaker is talking about real love and marriage.
- (c) His mind reflects that way he would never get married because it is difficult to find real love.
- (d) This was because he 35 years old and was anxious to get married.

2. He is old, but I wouldn't take five Squeezers for him. Why, how can you? Guess is a dog, as for Squeezer; well it's too funny to argue. Anybody you like has a dog as good as Squeezer..... You may find them under every bush almost. Twenty-five roubles would be a handsome price to pay for him.

- (a) Who does 'he' refer to?
- (b) Whom does Squeezer belong to?
- (c) Who is the speaker of these lines?
- (d) What would be a handsome price to pay for Squeezer?

Ans. (a) He refers to 'Guess' the dog.

- (b) Squeezer belongs to Chubukovs.
- (c) Lomov.
- (d) It would be twenty-five roubles.

3. It true, was once the subject of dispute but now everybody knows that they are mine. There's nothing to argue about. You see my aunt's grandmother gave the free use of these Meadows in perpetuity to the peasants of your father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks

for her.

- (a) Who is the speaker of these lines?
- (b) Who is he speaking to?
- (c) What was the subject of dispute?
- (d) What did the peasants do for them?

Ans. (a) Lomov

- (b) Natalya
- (c) The ownership of Oxen Meadows.
- (d) The peasants worked for forty years for them making bricks.

II. Answer the following questions in 30-40 words.

1. What justification did Lomov give to Natalya and Chubukov to prove that he is the rightful owner of Meadows?

Lomov told Natalya and Chubukov that his aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of Chubukov's grandfather's peasants. So he is the rightful owner of the open meadows.

2. Lomov was a quarrelsome person. Justify.

Lomov was a quarrelsome person. He came to Chubukov's house to propose to Natalya. But he started arguing about the meadows and insisted that those meadows belonged to him. Later he kept on proving that his dog Squeezer is better than 'Guess' – the dog of Chubukov's. He did not care for his health or his proposal but kept on fighting for one or the other reason. It proves that he was a quarrelsome person.

3. What did Natalya say about Guess?

Natalya said that Squeezer was superior to Guess —Lomov's dog. Lomov said that his dog Guess was better than Squeezer. Natalya believed that Guess had become old and ought to be shot. She also claimed that Squeezer was a hundred times better than Guess.

4. Describe Lomov's first meeting with Natalya.

Lomov goes to his neighbour Chubukov's house to ask for the hand of his daughter Natalya. He is in a fix how to make the marriage proposal. He talks in a roundabout manner. He makes a mention of his meadows which touch their birchwoods. At this, a quarrel ensues between them over the ownership rights the meadows.

5. What happens when Lomov is thought to be almost dead?

Lomov has come with a proposal of marrying Natalya. When he falls down unconscious in an armchair, both Natalya and Chubukov are unnerved and worried. She starts crying thinking him dead. Chubukov calls for a doctor. He threatens to shoot himself or cut his throat. When Lomov comes to senses, Chubukov grabs the opportunity and blesses them for a happy married life.

6. What is the play "The Proposal" about?

Answer: The play "The Proposal" is about Lomov's visit to his neighbor's Chubukov house.

Lomov is wearing a formal dress. He has come with the intention of making a marriage proposal to Chubukov's daughter, Natalaya.

7. What does Lomov think when he is alone?

Answer: Lomov thinks that Natalaya is an excellent housekeeper, not bad looking, well educated. It is impossible for him not to marry. In the first place, he is already thirty-five. He ought to lead a quiet and regular life. He suffers from palpitations. He is excitable and always getting upset. There are some other problems too which trouble him.

8. Why does Lomov wish to propose to Natalaya?

Answer: Lomov wishes to propose to Natalaya because he feels she is an excellent housekeeper, not bad looking, and is also well-educated. Moreover, he feels that he is already thirty-five, which is a critical age and he ought to lead a regular and settled life.

9. Justify, in brief, the title of the play "The Proposal".

Answer: The title of the play "The Proposal" is apt. Lomov comes to Chubukov's house to propose to his daughter. He talks to Chubukov about his intention and the old man is very happy to have Lomov as the husband of this ageing daughter. When Natalaya comes and there begins an argument. It reminds us of a married couple.

10. Who is Lomov? Why does he visit Chubukov?

Answer: Lomov was a young wealthy landowner and an unmarried man of thirty-five. He was anxious to get married as he had already reached a critical age. So he decided to propose marriage to Natalaya, a girl of twenty-five years old. He visited Chubukov to ask for his daughter Natalaya's hand in marriage.

11. How does Natalaya react when she comes to know that Lomov had come to propose and ask for her hand in marriage?

Answer: When she knows that Lomov came to propose to her, she starts weeping. She calls her father to bring him back at once. He has gone out after the quarrel. She also accuses Chubukov that he drove Lomov out. She becomes hysterical.

12. What makes Chubukov misunderstand the purpose of Lomov's visit?

Answer: Chubukov misunderstands that Lomov has come to borrow money. He does not reveal his purpose of coming directly instead he says that he has come to trouble him with a request for help.

13. What does Chubukov at first suspect that Lomov had come for? Is he sincere when he later says, "And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son"? Find reasons for your answer from the play.

Answer: Chubukov has often helped Lomov with money whenever he requested for it. So he thinks and suspects that Lomov will ask for money. But this time the case is different. He requests a proposal to get Natalaya's hand for marriage. Since long, Chubukov wanted match for

his daughter. Finding fact in his favour, Chubukov changes and uses sweet words and becomes ready for the match.

14. Chubukov says of Natalaya, "... as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat..." Would you agree? Find reasons for your answer.

Answer: In reality Natalaya has got the fittest age for the marriage. She wants a life partner. On the other hand, Chubukov also desires that his daughter should be married. Lomov is the most suitable match in every respect. In order to say something outwardly, Chubukov happens to pour out these words. It is an acceptable fact that Natalaya loves Lomov from the core of her heart.

15. (i) Find all the words and expressions in the play that the characters use to speak about each other, and the accusations and insults they hurl at each other. (For example, Lomov in the end calls Chubukov an intriguer; but earlier, Chubukov has himself called Lomov a "malicious, double-faced intriguer. Again, Lomov begins by describing Natalaya as "an excellent housekeeper, not bad looking, well-educated.)

(ii) Then think of five adjectives or adjectival expressions of your own to describe each character in the play.

Answer:

(i) There are so many words and expressions that the characters use, to accuse and insult each other.

Chubukov calls Lomov: pettifogger, lunatic, drunkard, guzzling gambler, backbiters, villain, scarecrow, blind hen, stuffed-sausage, wizen-faced frump, turnip ghost.

Lomov calls Chubukov and his family members: hump-backed, grabber.

(ii) Adjectival expression: Some of the adjectives can be thought as under: proud, industrious, treasure, darling, love, decent, well-educated, sensible and lovable, etc.

III. Answer the following in detail. (LONG ANSWER TYPE Qs)

1. Neighbours must have a cordial relationship that Lomov and Natalaya do not have. Describe/ Justify/ Explain the first fight between them.

Answer: Neighbours must have a cordial relationship but in the case of Lomov and Natalaya, it was different. Lomov and Natalaya were rich people. They were wealthy people and had a competition between them on the subject of wealth. Both were neighbours. Lomov, at a critical age of thirty-five, thought that he had to marry and found Natalaya not bad looking, an excellent housekeeper. So he decided to propose to her.

Lomov, in a well-dressed manner, wearing coat and gloves, one evening went to Chubukov's house. Chubukov was Natalaya's father. When he came there and said that he wanted a help, the help which could only be done by him. Chubukov, for first time suspected that he had come for asking money. But after a long struggling and shivering, Lomov uncovers his need. He had come to propose to Natalaya. Chubukov was mistaken and he was filled with extreme joy and called Natalaya. Lomov asked then, whether Natalaya would agree for it or not. Then, Chubukov said that, she would be ready to accept it because she was a lovesick cat.

When Natalaya arrived, she actually did not know that Lomov had come to propose marriage to her. They started talking and when they were talking about land, Lomov stated "Our Oxen

Meadows”. Then Natalaya said, “Our Oxen Meadows”, it is not your Oxen Meadows’, it is theirs. Lomov did not agree. But Natalaya initiated a heated argument. By arguing with each other, they did not solve any problem. They got trapped in a long argument just because of their lack of tolerance towards each other and their desire to keep their pride. Neighbours must have a cordial relationship which Lomov and Natalaya do not have.

2. Anton Chekov has used humour and exaggeration in the play to comment on courtship in his times. Illustrate with examples from the lesson, “The Proposal”. Also mention the values, you think, any healthy relationship requires.

OR

The principle ‘forgive and forget’ helps a lot in maintaining cordial relations with our neighbours. Do you think Chubukov conveys this message in the play “The Proposal”.

Answer: Lomov and Natalaya meet for a serious purpose, i.e., to talk about marriage that decides the progress of one’s life as a member of the conventionally established society. But the purpose of their meeting gets lost on two consecutive occasions because Lomov’s faith in the values of his society disrupts his approach to the topic of marriage. He learns that the girl and her father like him, but, instead of proposing to marry her and discussing how their marriage should be organised, he goes on to talk about properties, relations, family histories, and pets, draws them into an unnecessary argument, and antagonises (angers) both of them.

Finally, Chubukov marries Lomov and Natasha by force before another problem comes up. Thus the play ends in a comic note, just because the couple gets together with their father to celebrate their marriage while the dispute over the pets is still continuing. For any healthy relationship there should be mutual understanding and respect. Quarreling over trivial issues like dog cannot guarantee longevity of a relationship.

3. Is Natalaya really a lovesick cat as called by her father? If it is so, why does she quarrel with Lomov?

Answer: Yes, Natalaya is a love-sick cat as mentioned by her father, yet she quarrelled with Lomov because she was not aware that Lomov has actually come to propose her. But soon after she came to know the matter of proposal she yelled at her father to bring him back. This proves that Natalaya was really a love-sick cat.

Natalaya was a young unmarried girl of twenty-five years. She lived in the neighbourhood of Lomov, a young unmarried man. She was an excellent housekeeper and was not bad looking. She wanted love in her life. Her father called her a lovesick cat. Lomov said that she was well educated. She was very quarrelsome and abusive by nature. She began a bitter quarrel with Lomov over a piece of land that had little value. She said that those meadows were not much worth to her but she could not stand unfairness. But when she learnt that Lomov had come to propose to her, she forgot all fairness and unfairness.

She began to wail over the lost chance. She forced her father to call him back. But in no time, she started quarrelling with him again. It was on their dogs. Both claimed their respective dogs to be of a superior breed.

4. What type of person is Natalaya? Give two examples to show her quarrelsome nature.

Answer: Natalaya is also rather hypocritical, and she is stubborn and argumentative. When Natalaya first enters the room, she greets Lomov with warmth and is very gracious as she permits him to smoke and compliments him upon his appearance. However, when Lomov speaks

of “my meadows,” she abruptly interrupts and contradicts him. An argument then ensues over who owns what land.

Even when Lomov offers them to her as a gift, she continues to insist upon her ownership of them in the first place, reigniting the argument until Lomov leaves. When her father finally reveals to Natalaya that Lomov has actually come to propose marriage; she is infuriated, blaming her father for causing the neighbour to depart without making the proposal.

5. The principle ‘Forgive and Forget’ helps a lot in maintaining cordial relations with our neighbours. Do you think the author proves this message in the play “The Proposal”?

Answer: Life is a journey which is often compared to the roller coaster ride. It means life is full of ifs and buts and ups and down. But the path of life can be smoothed by virtues of our actions, attitudes and behaviour. And the principle of forgive and forget comes from these virtues. Letting go of anger and bitterness can work wonders both for our attitude and for our health.

Anger may spoil anything like poison. One cannot afford to remain self-pitying in anger or sad feelings. Life has to move on and if one wants to get ahead one has to imbibe “forgive and forget”. Only sensitive and great people can follow this gospel.

In the present play “The Proposal” we find that Lomov visits the house of Chubukov with a proposal to marry his daughter Natalaya. Chubukov’s joy knows no bound to hear this. But in course of their common talk, they pick up nonsensical issue and stand fighting and abusing each other.

Even Natalaya also enters the verbal quarrel. When after the sudden departure of Lomov, Natalaya comes to know about the proposal, she asks her father to call Lomov back. When he comes back this time he and Natalaya starts abusing each other and have heated oral fight over dogs. But in the end, they compromise, they forget their issue and forgive each other. The proposal changes into marriage. Hence we see that the principle helped them unite.

6. Write a brief character sketch of Lomov.

Lomov is a man who is of marriageable age. He also suffers from a weak heart and sleeplessness. So, he is desperate to settle down in life and lead a quiet and regular life. Despite his ailments, Lomov was a rich and prosperous farmer. This makes Chubukov secretly wish him to marry his daughter Natalya. As for Lomov, he did not love her, though he was desperate to have a life partner, and so marry Natalya. Lomov was however hesitant to ask for her hand from Chubukov. That made him beat around the bush, argue with Natalya and leave without proposing. Thus we can find that Lomov’s conditions overpower the other traits he has. He is an eligible, assertive, rich, bachelor, who will be liked by any girl. However, we also know that he is nervous, lacks confidence and is prone to talk in a long-winded manner.

7. What is the theme of the play ‘The Proposal’?

The One Act play ‘The Proposal’ throws light on the lifestyle of the landlords of Russia in the 19th century. The farm labourers worked on their farms. So these landlords led a life of ease and comfort. In fact, they led an idle life. They were full of vanity and pride. They quarrelled over petty things. In the play, we see that Lomov and Natalya have a dispute over a piece of land. They quarrel again over the qualities of their dogs. Chubukov, Natalya’s father, instead of

pacifying them, joins them. He and Lomov abuse each other. All of them behave in a very funny way. The play also brings to light the social life of the landowners of the 19th century. An unmarried grown-up daughter was considered a great burden by the parents. Chubukov curses himself for being the father of Natalya. An aged bachelor was also looked down upon in society. This theme has been presented nicely through the characters of Lomov and Natalya.

8. Draw a brief character-sketch of Natalya.

Natalya is the heroine of the play 'The Proposal'. She is twenty-five years old. She is still unmarried. It causes great worry to her father. Natalya wishes that somebody should love her and propose to her. Her father calls her 'a love-sick cat'. She is very quarrelsome. She quarrels with others over trifles. Lomov comes to propose to her, but she starts quarrelling with him over the ownership of a piece of land. Lomov leaves her house in a fit of anger. When she comes to know that he had come to propose to her, she starts weeping. She asks her father to bring him back. When Lomov comes back, she tries to please him. But after some time, she starts quarrelling with him on the question of dogs. Lomov faints and she again begins to wail lest she should lose the opportunity for marriage. After some time, Lomov regains consciousness. Her father does not want to lose this opportunity. He at once puts Natalya's hand in the hands of Lomov. He announces that they are engaged with each other. Natalya becomes very happy. But she again starts quarrelling with him. Thus Natalya is an interesting character.