

## **Poem-5: A ROADSIDE STAND**

**By Robert Frost**

### **Main Theme**

Robert Frost, a highly acclaimed American poet, in his poems usually focused, on the themes of human tragedies and fears and their ultimate acceptance or their solution. In his poem, 'A Roadside Stand' he deals with the lives of poor deprived people of the villages with a clarity that is perceptive and at the same time portrays his deepest sympathies and his feelings of humanity. The poem also brings in to focus the unfortunate fact that progress and development is unequal between the cities and the villages leading to feelings of distress and unhappiness among the dwellers of the latter.

In the poem, the poet describes the feelings of the owners of a roadside shed who seem to wait interminably for those whizzing past, their house in their shiny cars, to stop and buy something from the shack-some fruit, some humble vegetables, or even stop and rest in the beautiful mountainscape. They long for the feel of hard currency that is a symbol of poverty alleviation in their lives of deprivation. It appears to be a vain hope, however, that those who do glance their way are either reproachful of the blot on the landscape, their shed, that seems to mar the beauty of the landscape, or stop to ask for directions. Some use the space to turn their cars around unmindful of the damage to their turf.

The poet is outraged at the callous attitude of the government, the civic authorities and the social service agencies who appear to help them but actually end up harming them, The news says that these poor people are to be relocated to the vicinity of the towns near the theatre and the shops, There they will be well looked after and will have nothing worrisome to think about, The poet, however regards this as a great disservice to the people who will be thus robbed of their voices and their freedom and ability to find solutions to their problems. Lulled in to oblivion by this false and perhaps short-lived sense of security, the villagers will forever lose their abilities to make calculated decisions for themselves and become pawns in the hands of their so called benefactors who are waiting to take over their land. This will finally culminate in a futile sense of dissatisfaction for the villagers.

The poet is filled with sadness to see the almost childish longing that seems to emanate from the roadside shed, for a life that is described in the movies, a life so far removed from their life in the village. The unthinking occupants of a car who stop at the shed to buy a gallon of gas, speaks of the disconnect that exists in the perceptions of town people with regard to the villagers. They are unable to comprehend that the lives of the villagers are far removed from theirs, so replete with the comforts that the material world offers. The poet is saddened at the thought that the rural poor have not been able to experience the satisfaction that comes from a feeling of well being and contentment. He feels that it would be easy to still these complaining voices once and for all by changing the lives of the villagers but he questions the wisdom of this rash act.

### **Solved Extracts for comprehension**

**Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow:-**

**1- The little old house was out with a little new shed,  
In front at the edge of the road, where the traffic sped,  
A roadside stand that too pathetically pled,  
It would not be fair to say for a dale of bread,  
But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow supports  
The following of cities from sinking and withering faint.**

**Ques-(i)** Why had a new shed put up by the occupants of the little old house?

**Ans-** The occupants of the little old house had put up the new shed to extend their area.

**Ques-(ii)** Why does the poet refer to the roadside stand as 'Pathetic' ?

**Ans-** The poet refers to the roadside stand as 'pathetic' because it is not comfortable and attractive.

**Ques-(iii)** What is the purpose of the shed ?

**Ans-** The purpose of the shed is that the passengers would stop and buy something from them or even stop and rest in the beautiful mountainscape.

**2- It in the news that all these pitiful kin**

**Are to be bought out and mercifully gathered in**

**To live in village, next to the theatre and the store,**

**Where they won't have to think for themselves anymore.**

**Ques-(i)** What does the news proclaim ?

**Ans-** The news proclaims that the land of the villagers will be purchased by some developers, of the city.

**Ques-(ii)** Who do these pitiful kin refer to ? Why will they be mercifully gathered in ?

**Ans-** These pitiful kin refers to the villagers who have been deprived of their home and land. they will be mercifully gathered in to live in villages near the theatre and store.

**Ques-(iii)** Where will one see these poor villagers ?

**Ans-** One will see these poor villagers near the theatre and the store in the vicinity of the towns.

### **EXTRACTS FOR PRACTICE**

**Read the following lines and answer with reference to the context:**

**04**

**The hurt to the scenery wouldn't be my complaint**

**So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid:**

**Here far from the city we make our roadside stand**

**And ask for some city money to feel in hand**

**To try if it will not make our being expand,**

**And give us the life of the moving pictures' promise**

**That the party in power is said to be keeping from us.**

**Ques-(i)** What do the owners of the shack wish for?

**01**

**Ques-(ii)** How will it help them ?

**01**

**Ques-(iii)** What is the party in power keeping from these rural poor ?

**01**

**Ques-(iv)** What do you think the life of the movie pictures implies ?

**01**

**Read the following lines and answer with reference to the context:**

**04**

**No, in country money, the country scale of gain,**

**The requisite lift of spirit has never been found,**

**Or so the voice of the country seems to complain,**

**I can't help owning the great relief it would be**

**To put these people at one stroke out of their pain,**

**And then next day as I come back in to the same.**

**I wonder how I should like you to come to me**

**And offer to put me gently out of my pain,**

**Ques-(i)** What does the poet mean by the line, ' the requisite lift of spirit has never been found' ?

**01**

**Ques-(ii)** What does the poet wish he could do for these people ?

**02**

**Ques-(iii)** What makes him change his mind ?

**01**

## SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

02

**Ques-** What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand ?

**Ans-** The folk who had put up the roadside stand expected that the city people would stop there to buy something or the other but they considered the owners of the stand as beggars.

**Ques-** What is the childish longing that poet refers to ? Why is it vain ?

**Ans-** Waiting for the prospective customers is the childish longing. It is vain because they never turn up.

**Ques-** Discuss in brief: “The economic well-being of a country depends on a balanced development of the villages and the cities?”

**Ans-** The statement has its importance. Agriculture growth, cottage Industries and infrastructure and the development in health and education in the villages are as important as the Industrial growth, cottage industries and infrastructure etc. In the cities for the economic well-being of a country.

**Ques-** What should the government do for the rural Poor?

**Ans-** The government should give food, cloth and shelter to the rural poor. Facilities of health, education and opportunities employment are very necessary for their up lift.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

(i) who are the ‘greedy good-doers’ and ‘the beneficent beasts of prey’ ? Why does the poet refer to them thus ?

(ii) The poet sympathises with the rural poor. How has this sentiment been expressed in the poem ?

**By**

**Sanjay Joshi**

**Lec. English G.I.C. Tharkot**

**Pithoragarh**

**Mobile No- 9412127353**

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

