

Poem-4 A Roadside Stand

-Robert Frost

Gist of the poem:

- Road side stands are crude constructions by the road side, selling petty things to the commuters.
- The poet speaks of a shed which was constructed by the road side, as an extension of an old house.
- It stood beside a road on which traffic sped at great speed.
- The seller, sitting in the road side stand expected some sympathy from the traffic.
- He did not beg for a loaf of bread, but for some hard cash, which could support his poor life.
- The traffic sped with a single minded focus on some destination which lay ahead.
- The traffic never stopped to express any interest in the items displayed for sale.
- At times a vehicle would stop at the road side stand and the prospective customer would only express disgust at the way the sign boards mar the beauty of the countryside.
- The stand offered wild berries and golden squash for sale.
- At times the commuters behave in a mean manner to the sellers.

- The sellers say that they don't like to promote their business at the cost of humiliation.
- They explain that they have set up their stand at a convenient distance from the city.
- They expect only to get some cash which would expand their lives and enable them to aspire the phenomenal life depicted in films.
- A piece of news claims that these people are expected to be rehabilitated.
- They are to be accommodated near to the theatre and the store in the city.
- The rehabilitators claim that these poor do not have to think for themselves any more.
- The industrial routine will teach them to sleep all day and destroy their sleep all night.
- The poet experiences tremendous pain, looking at the awesome expectation of the sellers.
- They sit at their window, looking out with expectant air for some prospective customers.
- At times a car would stop only to enquire what the prices of the things are.
- Another would stop to turn his car around or to ask for direction.
- Sometimes, a stray traveler would stop to ask for a gallon of fuel.
- The poet wishes that he could put this entire poor out of pain with one stroke.
- The plight of the poor puts the poet out of ease.
- He prays that when his mind comes round, we would help him to ease his pain.

Read the following lines and answer the questions that follow:

1. "The little old house was out with a little shed
In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped
.....sinking and withering faint."

1. Where was the shed put up and for what purpose?
2. Prove that the sellers were men of self respect.
3. What are 'money' and 'cities' compared to?

Answers:

1. The stand was put up as an extension of a house, by the highway. The seller intended to earn some money.
2. The sellers did not demand charities. They asked the travelers to give them some hard cash in return for their produce.
3. Money is compared to the sap that flows through plants and cities are compared to flowers.

That are calculated to soothe them out of their wits.....

.....sleeping at night the ancient way.”

1. What will swarm over whom and why?
2. How did the greedy good-doers plan to exploit the poor people?
3. Why won't the poor people have to think about themselves any more?

Answers:

1. The greedy good-doers would entice the poor to sell their lands with empty promises.
2. The greedy good-doers wanted to encroach into the material and emotional privacy of the poor and settle them in crowded unhealthy places.
3. The sponsors promise abundantly and vouchsafe to take care of all their needs. These are mere snares to lure them into danger.

Exercise: (unsolved)

“To put these people at one stroke out of their pain.

.....out of my pain.”

1. How did the poet plan to remove the pain of the village people?
2. The poem ends on a pessimistic note. Do you agree? If so why?

II. Short answer type questions: (30-40 words)

1.What did the poor folk offer for sale? Did the city dwellers stop to buy them?

Ans.The poor people offered wild berries and golden squash, but the city men were not fascinated.

2.What did the ‘greedy good-doers’ plan to do to the poor people?

Ans.The greedy good-doers planned to cheat the poor of their lands and fling them into unhygienic and congested territory. They would brainwash them and deprive them of their clean habits.

III.Extra questions: (unsolved)

1.What was the aspiration of the poor people?

2.How can the pain of the poet be put an end to?