

POEM – 4

A ROADSIDE STAND

About the poet

Robert Frost (1874-1963) is a highly acclaimed American poet of the twentieth century. Robert Frost wrote about characters, people and landscapes. His poems are concerned with human tragedies and fears, his reaction to the complexities of life and his ultimate acceptance of his burdens. Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening, Birches, Mending walls are a few of his well-known poems. In the poem A Roadside Stand, Frost presents the lives of poor deprived people with pitiless clarity and with the deepest sympathy and humanity.



Enrich your vocabulary

Out with	:	Extended
Traffic	:	Vehicles
Sped	:	Passed in great haste and speed
Roadside stand	:	A little shed that sells cheap essentials for the passersby
Dole	:	Piece, City money: Big amount of money
Feel in hand	:	The poor people do not want promises. They want the promises To be fulfilled. Feel money in hand is different from having money between the giver and the taker
Being	:	Life
Expand	:	Improve
Crossly	:	Angrily
They had none	:	They had no gas to sell
Didn't it see	:	Haven't you seen?
Requisite lift of spirit	:	The most important thing to make one feel confident and safe (money)
The voice of the country	:	Cry of the poor villagers
I can't help owning the great relief it would be	:	I keep on feeling an unreal relief of the villagers
At one stroke	:	Instantly
As I come back into the sane	:	As I come back to my senses/reality
My pain	:	My pain is the sufferings/plight of the poor people
Put me out of my pain	:	I hope you the rich promise to open your hands for these poor people

GIST OF THE POEM

- The rural folk have erected a roadside stand by adding a shed to an old house by the side of the road.
- They sell berries, squash, etc.
- The 'polished' city people feel irritated at the shabby stand which is clumsily painted and the signs turned into wrong direction.
- The roadside people have self-respect, their aim is not to beg but to earn some cash to improve their living standard.
- The rural folk are promised a better life by re-locating them near cities and rehabilitating them.
- But the 'greedy good doers' and 'beneficent beasts of prey'(politicians, etc.) exploit and cheat these honest, hardworking rural people.
- The stand owners suffer a 'childish longing' i.e. a desire that city people would stop and purchase a few items, thus helping them to earn hard cash.
- But this longing is 'vain'(useless) as the car owners stop only to enquire about fuel, where the road was leading to and for taking a U-turn.
- The poet feels the pain and disappointment of the people at 'roadside stand'.

THEME OF THE POEM

The poem A Roadside Stand depicts the lives of the rural poor. Robert Frost is critical of the contemptuous way in which the city dwellers look at the villagers who yearn to sell their vegetables by setting up a roadside stand by the side of the high way. He reminds us that the economic well-being of a country depends on a balanced development of the villages and the cities.

CENTRAL IDEA OF THE POEM

'A roadside Stand' highlights the stark reality of class difference between the city rich and the rural poor and calls for deepest sympathy and concern for the latter. The roadside stand owner, representing the rural poor, complains of the indifferent attitude of the city folk as represented by the city motorists and appeals to them to come forward to relieve the rural poor of their want and poverty.

MESSAGE OF THE POEM

There is a universal appeal to the rich and the government for the upliftment of the poor rural folk. The poor rural folk can make progress only when the rich do not exploit them. The government and the big money magnets should take the responsibility to improve the condition of the poor. Instead of promises grass root action should be taken the right direction for their betterment. Let their hopes not shatter in this materialistic and dazzling world.

TITLE OF THE POEM

The poem "A Roadside Stand" is an apt title. It highlights the poignant picture of the deprived section of the society who are born in misery, spend their life in misery and die in misery. Their wish to live a life of dignity is a just a dream never to be fulfilled. On the one hand the affluent city dwellers enjoy the dazzle of the world to the fullest of their desire. But on the other hand the poor rural folk want their fresh and pure goods to sell to earn some gold (money) for the betterment of their life. They also want to give good education to their wards to change their lot. But their dreams shatter when the city dwellers do not bother to have even a look to their goods. They even hate thinking that their sheds mar the natural beauty. They just make enquiry about their direction and move on. Thus this title describes the gap between haves and have not. So, the title is quite apt.

Answer the following questions in 30 to 40 words.

1. 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.

2. What do you mean by 'polished traffic'?

Ans. Polished traffic refers to the rich city dwellers travelling in big, luxurious cars. They appear to be 'polished' outside but their minds do not understand the sufferings of the poor people.

3. Explain, 'passed with a mind ahead.'

Ans. The city people who passed by the roadside stand were self-centred and their minds were restless with greed for money and ambitions for great profits in their business.

4. What are the usual complaints made by the city men when they stop at the roadside stand?

Ans. The rich people to and from the cities usually have the same sets of complaints. Having failed to see the wretchedness of the poor, they complain that the roadside stand, with the tasteless way in which it is painted, ruined the beauty of the nature. Another complaint is that direction boards are wrongly written.

5. State the reasons for which the cars from the city halt at the roadside stand?

Ans. Some cars stop at the roadside stand to take a reverse and some of them ask for directions to their destinations. A few of them demand fuel.

6. Why and where was the roadside stand set up?

Ans. The road side stand was set up at one edge on a busy road in countryside. It was set up to attract the city folk who passed from there. It was hoped that the stand would fetch some cash to the rural poor.

7. What is the 'childish longing 'that the poet refers to? Why is it 'in vain'?

Ans. The poet refers to intense and futile desires of owners of roadside stand to sell goods to the passers- by. It is vain because not many people stop by things from them.

8. Which things irritated those passers-by who stopped at the Roadside stand?

Ans. If at all the passers- by stopped, they were upset with the artless paint of the roadside stand. They complained that the stand marred the scenic beauty of the landscape. They also complained about the wrong signs put up on the board.

9. What is "the party in power" keeping away from these rural poor?

Ans. The party in power is indifferent towards the pathetic condition of these rural folk. It is depriving these villagers of a luxurious/comfortable lifestyle.

10. What does the life of the 'moving pictures' imply?

Ans. The life of moving pictures implies the glamorous life style of the rich people- full of luxuries and comforts, unlike the life of the poor village folk who are leading a miserable life, struggling hard for their existence.