

## **7-THE INTERVIEW**

**-Christopher Silvester**

The Interview, written by Christopher Silvester throws light on various aspects of interview in the field of journalism. Interview that was invented over 130 years have become a commonplace journalism. However, opinions of interview- of its functions, methods and merits vary considerably. Part II is an extract from an interview of Umberto Eco, author of the popular novel, 'Name of the Rose' by Mukund Padmanabhan from 'The Hindu'. This interview helps us know many aspects of his writing style and ideas. Though he gives the impression of doing many things at a time, he says he is doing the same thing, pursuing his philosophical interests through his writings and his novels. Through his modest answers, he tells the secret of his success. He utilizes the 'Interstices' - empty spaces to his advantage.

### **PART I**

- Interview has become a commonplace of journalism. Opinions on the functions, methods and merits of Interview vary considerably.
- Some claim it to be the highest form, a source of truth and in its practice, an art.
- Some despise the interview as an unwarranted intrusion into lives, which diminishes their personality.
- S. Naipaul feels that 'some people are wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves.'
- Lewis Carroll never consented to be interviewed for he believed it to be 'a just horror of the interviewer'. Rudyard Kipling considered it 'immoral, a crime, an assault that merits punishment'.
- G. Wells referred interviewing to be an 'ordeal',
- Saul Bellow describes it 'like thumbprints on his windpipe'.
- Despite the drawbacks interview is a supremely serviceable medium of communication. Interviews are the most vivid impression of our contemporaries and the interviewer holds a position of unprecedented power and influence.

## PART II

- An extract from an interview of Umberto Eco interviewed by Mukund Padmanabhan.
- Umberto Eco was a professor with a formidable reputation as a scholar for his ideas on Semiotics, literary interpretation and medieval aesthetics before he turned into writing literary fiction. He attained intellectual superstardom with his publication “The Name of the Rose’.
- In the interview Eco shares his idea of empty spaces in our lives just as they exist in an atom, which he calls ‘Interstices’. He says that he makes use of these empty spaces to work.
- Eco’s essays were scholarly and narrative. He likes to be identified more as a university professor who writes novels.
- Eco’s ‘The Name of the Rose”, a serious novel, which delves into metaphysics, theology and medieval history, enjoyed a mass audience. It dealt with medieval past. He feels that the novel wouldn't have been so well received had it been written ten years earlier or later.
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### Extract Based Questions :

1. Some might make quite extravagant claims for it as being, in its highest form, a source of truth, and, in its practice, an art. Others, usually celebrities who see themselves as its victims, might despise the interview as an unwarranted intrusion into their lives, or feel that it somehow diminishes them, just as in some primitive cultures it is believed that if one takes a photographic portrait of somebody then one

is stealing that person's soul.

- a. Name the lesson.
- b. What are some of the positive views on interviews?
- c. Why do celebrities despise interviews?
- d. What do some primitive cultures believe about being photograph?

2.The creator of Alice in Wonderland, was said to have had 'a just horror of the interviewer' and he never consented to be interviewed- it was his horror of being lionized which made him thus repel would be acquaintances, interviewers, and the persistent petitioners for his autograph and he would afterwards relate the stories of his success in silencing all such people with much satisfaction and amusement.

- a. Who is the creator of Alice in Wonderland
- b. Why didn't he want to be interviewed?
- c. How did the creator of Alice in wonderland amuse himself?
- d. Explain 'horror of being lionized'.

3.His wife, Caroline, writes in her diary for 14 October 1892 that their day was 'wrecked by two reporters from Boston'. She reports her husband as saying to the reporters, "Why do I refuse to be interviewed? Because it is immoral! It is a crime, just as much of a crime as an offence against my person, as an assault, and just as much merits punishment. It is cowardly and vile. No respectable man would ask it, much less give it,"

- a. Who refused to be interviewed?
- b. Why did he refuse to be interviewed?
- c. Give the antonym of 'vile'.
- d. What happened on 14 October, 1892?

4.H. G. Wells in an interview in 1894 referred to 'the interviewing ordeal', but was a fairly frequent interviewee and forty years later found himself interviewing Joseph Stalin. Saul Bellow, who has consented to be interviewed on several occasions, nevertheless once described interviews as being like thumbprints on his windpipe.

- a. What did H G Wells feel about interviews?
- b. How did Saul Bellow describe interviews?
- c. What does the expression, 'thumbprints on windpipe' mean?

d. From the given extract, find the word that means the same as 'trial'.

5. Aah, now that is more difficult to explain. I have some philosophical interests and I pursue them through my academic work and my novels. Even my books for children are about non-violence and peace...you see, the same bunch of ethical, philosophical interests.

- a. Who is the speaker?
- b. What is difficult to explain?
- c. What are the philosophical interests of the speaker?
- d. What do you mean by the word 'ethical'?

6. My American publisher said while she loved my book, she didn't expect to sell more than 3,000 copies in a country where nobody has seen a cathedral or studies Latin. So I was given an advance for 3000 copies, but in the end it sold two or three million in the U.S.

- a. Who is the speaker?
- b. Which novel sold two to three million copies?
- c. Why did the American publisher not expect to sell more than 3000 copies?
- d. Why was the novel successful?

7. Not everyone can do that of course. Your non-fictional writing, your scholarly work has a certain playful and personal quality about it. It is a marked departure from a regular academic style — which is invariably depersonalised and often dry and boring. Have you consciously adopted an informal approach or is it something that just came naturally to you.

- a. Name the lesson.
- b. Who is the speaker?
- c. What are the characteristic traits of regular academic style?
- d. What is the marked quality of the listener's scholarly work?

8. When I presented my first Doctoral dissertation in Italy, one of the Professors said, "Scholars learn a lot of a certain subject, then they make a lot of false hypotheses, then they correct them and at the end, they put the conclusions. You, on the contrary, told the story of your research. Even including your trials and errors." At the same time, he recognized I was right and went on to publish my dissertation as a book, which meant he appreciated it

- a. Who is the speaker?

- b. How do most scholars carry out their research work?
- c. How was the speaker contrary to most scholars?
- d. How do we know that the Professor appreciated the work?

9. Yet despite the drawbacks of the interview, it is a supremely serviceable medium of communication. "These days, more than at any other time, our most vivid impressions of our contemporaries are through interviews," Denis Brian has written. "Almost everything of moment reaches us through one man asking questions of another. Because of this, the interviewer holds a position of unprecedented power and influence."

- a. What are the drawbacks of interviews?
- b. How has interview become a supremely serviceable medium of communication?
- c. What does Denis Brian feel about interviews?
- d. Name the lesson and author.

10. At that point, at the age of 22, I understood scholarly books should be written the way I had done — by telling the story of the research. This is why my essays always have a narrative aspect. And this is why probably I started writing narratives [novels] so late — at the age of 50, more or less.

- a. Who is the Speaker?
- b. How did the speaker understand the way scholarly books should be written?
- c. What aspect did his essays have?
- d. By what age did he start writing narratives?

## **SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (30-40 WORDS ) SOLVED**

### **1.How can the importance of interview be justified in modern journalism?**

The interview is the most serviceable medium of communication today. It has become a commonplace of journalism. We can know about celebrities through interview.

### **2.What are some of the positive points about an interview?**

It is supremely serviceable medium of communication. It provides a vivid impression of our contemporaries. It equips one with the things related to life and progress.

### **3.'Umberto Eco's written output is staggeringly large and wide-ranging? How?**

Umberto Eco is a versatile Genius, a prolific writer. He has written on wide ranging subjects such as literary fiction, academic texts, essays children's books and newspaper articles. He has 5 novels and 40 non-fiction works to his credit.

### **4.How has Umberto Eco become popular among the general public?**

Umberto Eco's novels made him popular among the people in general. Ten to fifteen million copies of the novel 'The Name of the Rose' were sold.

### **5.Why did the American publisher think that the novel 'The Name of the Rose' Won't sell well in America?**

The novel 'The Name of the Rose' Dealt with a period of medieval history. The publisher did not expect very good response in America because the Americans knew nothing about cathedral. People were ignorant about the medieval part.

## **SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (30-40 WORDS ) UNSOLVED**

1. What does V.S. Naipaul feel about interview?
2. What secret does Umberto Eco point out to Mukund Padmanabham?
3. What did Umber to Eco mean by empty spaces? How did he make use of them?

## **LONG ANS. TYPE QUESTIONS**

### **1.What kind of writer is Umberto Eco? What sort of writing does he have to his credit?**

Ans. Umberto Eco is a versatile writer. He had already acquired formidable reputation as a scholar for his ideas on semiotics literary interpretation and medieval aesthetics before he turned to non fiction writing. He had a narrative style of writing. He has writings like literary fiction, academic

texts, essays, children's books, newspaper articles to his credit. He believes in non-violence and peace. He has written five novels and more than forty non-fiction works.

### **LONG ANS. TYPE QUESTIONS (POINTS ONLY)**

**1. Why do some celebrities despise interview? Are they justified? comment.**

**Ans.**

1. Feel unwanted intrusion in their lives.
2. According to Naipaul people are wounded and lose a part of themselves.
3. Lewis Carol is horrified by the name of interviewer.
4. Kipling terms it immoral, criminal.
5. H.G. Wells refers it as an ordeal.
6. To an extent justified - being victims.

### **8-GOING PLACES**

**-A.R.Barton**

Hero worship is the natural phenomenon of adolescent stage but needs guidance and monitoring. Life is to realize our dreams with our potential, possibility and limitation. Since, when reality hits, it may shatter the dreams.

#### **Points to Remember**

Sophie's ambition and unrealistic dreams  
wants to start a boutique  
wants to earn money by becoming a manager, an actress or even a fashion designer  
she comes from a weak socio-economic background  
her friend Jansie - simply wants Sophie to be happy.  
Jansie – realistic can't keep information or secrets to herself.

#### **Sophie's Dad**

is strong, sweaty and hardworking  
loves to watch football matches  
does not believe in Sophie's imaginary stories

#### **Sophie's brother – Geoff**