

Chapter- 5(Poem)

Chapter Name- A Roadside Stand

By Robert Frost

About the Poet

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco on 26 March 1874. During his childhood, he was sickly and neurotic. His father died of tuberculosis when he was only eleven years old. Frost and his family went to New England to have his father's remains buried there. They had to settle down at Salem in New Hampshire because they had no money to return. He wrote poetry whenever he found time. In 1912 he made a crucial decision in his life. He chooses poetry for his vocation. He left for England with his wife and four children. Within six months of his arrival in England, Frost decided to publish his earlier poems. His poetic career was studded with honours such as membership in the American Academy and Pulitzer Prize. Robert Frost died in January 1963.

Central Idea

The acclaimed poet Robert Frost is regarded for his realistic depiction of rural life, using which he touched on several complex social themes of the time. In this poem, the poet highlights the plight of the deprived villagers who are aching for some money to lead a prosperous life. The poet is also very critical of how the city folks treat these villagers who are selling their locally produced goods and whizzing past them without a sense of empathy.

Theme

The poem 'A Roadside Stand' is the poet's plea for consideration for the simple people of the countryside whose lives have shown no progress. He expresses his pain at their sadness and sorrow and seeks support and relief for them. He hopes someone would work unselfishly for their rehabilitation and not exploit them. He highlights the vast disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' with pitiless clarity and humanity. He suggests that economic well-being depends on the balanced development of villages and cities.

WORDS/PHRASES AND THEIR CONTEXTUAL MEANINGS

A dole of bread: money or food given in charity at regular intervals

Marred: spoiled

Greedy good doers: the people who help others for their benefit

Selfish cars: people who travel by car and do not purchase anything from farmers

The voice of the country: people as a whole

Come back into the sane: become aware

POETIC DEVICES

Transferred epithet –

1) polished traffic (the traffic is not polished; people are shiny)

2) Selfish cars

Metaphor/ figurative speech-

1) the flower of cities from sinking and withering faint;

2) Swarm over their lives

3) Teaching them to sleep they sleep all-day

Oxymoron and Alliteration -

Greedy good-doers; beneficent beasts of prey

Personification:

Alliteration: A roadside stand that too pathetically pled (also alliteration)

Explanation

A roadside stand is a poem written by the highly-acclaimed poet **Robert Frost**, who is regarded for his realistic depiction of rural life, using which he touched on several complex social themes of the time.

In this poem, the poet highlights the plight of the deprived villagers who are aching for some money to lead a prosperous life. The poet is also very critical of how the city folks treat these villagers who are selling their locally produced goods and whizzing past them without a sense of empathy.

Lines 1-6

The tiny old house occupants have extended the shed in front, where traffic passes by, around the road's edge. Though it would be unfair to state that the shack-owners wanted a charity of bread, they seemed to implore the passers-by to stop and buy something from the shack. These deprived people long for the feel of the currency, the circulation of which flourishes in the city folks.

Lines 7-15

But unfortunately, the refined traffic whizzed past, unmindful of the shack. If by chance stopped, it would be with a feeling of reproach at this blot on the picturesque landscape. They are very anxious to see the unimpressive and toppled signboards. The shack offered wild berries in a wooden quart (a quarter of a gallon). The un-qualitative local produce is highlighted using words like "*crook-necked*", "*squash with silver warts*".

The place also offered a blissful stay in the lap of nature for the ones who had money. Angry at the callous attitude of the so-called '*polished traffic*', the poet commands them to move ahead, oblivious of the roadside stand.

Lines 16-22

The poet's concern is not about the blemish on the landscape but regarding the shed-owners' unvented sorrow. The political party in power deprive them of a prosperous life. Expressing these people's viewpoint, the poet converts their ardent desire to handle some city money, which may perhaps alleviate their sufferings as sometimes promised in movies.

Lines 23-31

The poet quotes the news highlighting the evacuation and relocation of the poor villagers to the theatres and shops' vicinity. Tall promises have been made to take good care of them. Outraged at the negligent attitude of the civic authorities, government and even social service agencies, the poet address them as "*greedy good-doers*", apparently benefactors but actually "*beasts of prey*" who exploit the innocent village folk by giving them a short term sense of security, the villagers are not being helped but harmed.

They pay a heavy price by losing their land. With a calculative strategy, these developers, civic authorities, "soothe" (silence) and befool the unalloyed hearts and minds of these villagers. Ensuring them a better life and sound sleep, they sleep themselves peacefully and destroy their slumber with anxiety. Anciently, people used to work during the day and sleep at night, which has been reversed here where they cannot sleep at night because they haven't worked during the day.

Lines 32-43

The shop window is blanketed with an ambience of sadness that surrounds expectancy. The poet is distressed to note the interminable wait on the part of the shed owners for their prospective buyers, and he calls it almost a "childish longing in vain". It seems these people yearn for the sound of the car brakes near the shack.

One of the "selfish cars" that pass by the shed has perhaps halted to enquire about the "farmer's price", while the other just wanted to use the backyard to turn. It's indeed a satire that one of the car's occupants stops at the shed to get a gallon of gas. It highlights a sense of alienation that exists between rural and urban life. Unaware of the villagers' plights and engrossed with the material world's pleasure, these people cannot gauge the glaring difference between city and rural life.

Lines 43-52

The poet regrets that the yardstick of gain vested in money isn't found in the countryside. The money he feels elevates spirits, and its lack dampens the villagers' perspective on life. They tend to express their grievance about a life bereft of cash. At this point, the poet is overwhelmed with emotions and contemplates their pain at one go by changing their lives. But a later logical thought and a poised state of mind tell him the futility of this rash act. It might compel him to seek purgation of pain from others for his thoughtless decision.

MIND MAP**A ROADSIDE
STAND****BY- ROBERT LEE FROST****About the Poet****Robert Frost**

- An American poet Laureate of Vermont
- His work presents rural life in New England in the early 20th century
- He received four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry.
- Works – A Road Not Taken, Mending Wall, Stopping by the woods on a snowy Evening, Birches & A Roadside Stand etc.

**Figure of
Speech/poetic
device /literary**

- ✓ Transferred epithet
- ✓ Metaphor
- ✓ Oxymoron and Alliteration
- ✓ Personification

**Theme
of the lesson**

- It deals with the lives of poor deprived people of the village with a clarity
- It shows deepest sympathies and his feelings of humanity.

**Lesson
Contents**

- The lives of poor people with sympathy and humanity.
- The roadside stand and the people who are in a pathetic condition.
- The city people were upset at the roadside scene.
- The folk who had put up the roadside stand offered fruits and vegetables
- They want govt. & social service agencies to help.
- They will be treated sympathetically and would be living near theatre and the store.
- Greedy good doers troubled them & destroyed their sleep
- The poet long for the betterment of the poor rural people.