

Poem - Chapter 5

A Roadside Stand

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1. Have you ever stopped at a roadside stand? What have you observed there?

Answer: The poet believes that when we encounter a beautiful thing, even for a small moment, the pleasure remains with us forever. It leaves a lasting impression that inspires us to live life with hope and optimism.

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1. The city folk who drove through the countryside hardly paid any heed to the roadside stand or to the people who ran it. If at all they did, it was to complain. Which lines bring this out? What was their complaint about?

Answer: “The polished traffic passed with a mind ahead,
Or if ever aside a moment, then out of sorts
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint
Of signs that with N turned wrong and S turned wrong”
According to the city folk, these stalls with inartistic signboards blemish the scenic beauty of



the landscape.

2. What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand?

Answer: The rural folks pleaded pathetically for some customers to stop by and buy some of their goods. City folks used to pass by on this road and hence the rural folk set up the roadside stand to attract their attention and sell their goods.

3. The government and other social service agencies appear to help the poor rural people, but actually do them no good. Pick out the words and phrases that the poet uses to show their double standards.

Answer: The poet criticizes the double standards of the government and other social service agencies who promise to improve the standard of living of the poor farmers and show them the rosy side of life. Yet, when the time comes to deliver their promise, they either forget them or fulfill them keeping in view their own benefits. The poet calls them “greedy gooddoers” and “beneficent beasts of prey”, who “swarm over their lives”. The poet says that these greedy people make calculated and well thought-out shrewd moves, to which the innocent, unaware farmers fall prey. These humble and simple



farmers are robbed of their peace of mind by these clever people. The poet says, “.....enforcing benefits
That are calculated to soothe them out of their wits,
And by teaching them how to sleep they sleep all day,
Destroy their sleeping at night the ancient way.”

4. What is the ‘childish longing’ that the poet refers to? Why is it ‘vain’?

Answer: The poet thinks that the persons who are running the roadside stand, suffer from a childish longing. They are always expecting customers and waiting for their prospective customers. They keep their windows open to attract them. They become sad when no one turns up. They are always waiting to hear the squeal of brakes, the sound of a stopping car. But all their efforts go in vain.

5. Which lines tell us about the insufferable pain that the poet feels at the thought of the plight of the rural poor?

Answer: Filled with empathy, the poet is unable to bear the plight of the unassuming and innocent rural people. The lines below show his insufferable pain:
“Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear The thought of
so much childish longing in vain, The sadness that lurks



near the open window there, That waits all day in almost
open prayer”