

Chapter-7 : THE INTERVIEW

By Christopher Silvester

Main Theme

The writer in this piece discusses the merits and demerits of interviews, saying that in today's world anyone who is literate must have at some point or the other read or heard an interview. People have varying opinions on interviews as to some it appears to be the only and most credible source of truth, while some, especially celebrities, regard it as unnecessary intrusion. They feel that an interview somehow reduces their status and the fact that information concerning their lives becomes public makes them feel that they have lost a little part of themselves. Lewis Carol who was the creator of, 'Alice in Wonderland', 'took pride in the fact that he spent time and energy in successfully warding off interviewers. Rudyard Kipling's wife went to the extent of saying that in her opinion interviewing was immoral. H.G. Wells kept interviewers away but ended up being an active interviewer himself on many an occasion. Notable among those he interviewed were Joseph Stalin (A Russian revolutionary) and Saul Bellow (Novelist and playwright) However, the writer opines that despite all the drawbacks, interviewing is a most valuable resource. He quotes Denis Brian who said that most of our information comes from one man asking questions of another and in this respect the interviewer is indeed powerful and influential.

Part II

Part two is an extract from an interview of Umberto Eco. Umberto Eco was a professor at the University of Bologna in Italy. Had the reputation of being a scholar and for his expertise and ideas on, Semiotics, (the study of signs) Literary interpretation, and medieval aesthetics, newspaper articles and also his literary works. His novel, 'The Name of the Rose' sold more than 10 million copies. The interviewer is Mukund Padmanabhan from 'The Hindu' in the interview, Mukund remarks that he finds it hard to understand how Umberto can manage to do all the things that he does. Umberto answers that he has mastered the art of working in what he refers to as interstices- that is the empty spaces. He means that he is able to make productive use of every minute of his day. He also tells Mukund that he has perfected the art of writing in a narrative style, something that he learnt when he was doing his doctorate but adopted very late at the age of fifty. In fact, he felt that he had become a novelist quite by accident as he enjoyed writing in a narrative style. Hence from an essayist he moved on to be a novelist. Mukund asked him how he felt when despite having written so much non-fiction and having produced some valuable work on semiotics. People still talked of him as being a famous novelist. Umberto replied that perhaps as a novelist he reached a larger readership yet, he did consider himself a serious academician and regarded himself as a university professor who wrote novels on a Sunday.

Mukund then asked him whether he was surprised to find that his novel, 'the Name of the Rose' had been appreciated by so many people despite being such a serious novel. The content of the novel was on the surface a detective novel but delved in to theology, metaphysics, and medieval history.

He replied that he was not surprised as the people who had read his novel were people who were not looking for easy experiences. He also said that the success of any novel was difficult to predict as his novel, 'The Name of the Rose' contrary to all predictions made a huge success. He did not attribute the success of the novel merely to the theme of medieval history and said that it was a mystery, as such things often are.

This interview is a perfect example of how information is elicited by an interviewer and how the response of the interviewee is closely linked to the questions put forth. In this way an interview is a valuable and authentic tool for collecting information.

Important Questions based on lesson

Short Answer Type Questions

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Ques-(i) What are some of the positive views on interviews ?

Ans- Following are some of the positive views on interviews:

- (a) The interview has become a commonplace of journalism.
- (b) In its highest form an Interview is a source of truth and in practise it is an art.
- (c) An interview is a supremely serviceable medium of communication.

Ques-(ii) What do you understand by the expression " thumbprints on his windpipe" ?

Ans- It means that it was like somebody strangled his freedom or choked the free flow of his thoughts.

Ques-(iii) When was the interview invented?

Ans- The interview was invented over 130 years ago.

Ques-(iv) Why do the opinions of the interview vary considerably ?

Ans- Thousands of famous persons have been interviewed over the years some of them been repeated So the opinions of the interview vary considerably.

Ques-(v) Which is, according to Mukund, a marked departure from academic style ?

Ans- According to Mukund, Eco's style is a marked departure from academic style. His scholarly work has a certain playful and personal quality about it. Which is a marked departure from a regular academic style.

Ques-(vi) Why is Umberto Eco not satisfied to be only a novelist ?

Ans- Umberto Eco is not satisfied to be only a novelist because he is a university professor. He participates in academic conferences, He identifies himself with the academic community.

Long Answer Type Questions

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Ques-1- Do you think Umberto Eco likes being interviewed ?

Ans- Yes, I think Umberto Eco likes being interviewed. Following are the reasons for my opinion:

- (i) I infer from the way Umberto Eco replied the questions put by Mukund Padmanabhan that he likes being interviewed.
- (ii) Eco seems to be in a relaxed mood and at ease throughout the interaction.
- (iii) Eco replies questions with patience. He never seems to be in a hurry.

(iv) He shows his sense of humour when he says while waiting for Mukund's elevator to come up from the first to the third floor, he has already written an article.

(v) His statement, "I am a professor who writes novels on Sunday's" shows that Eco likes being interviewed.

Ques-2- How does Eco find the time to write so much ?

Ans- Eco finds the time to write so much in the following way.

(i) Umberto Eco himself says that he is a professor who writes novels on Sunday. Thus he utilises his holidays for writing work.

(ii) He also points out that he started writing novels by accident. He had nothing to do one day and so he started. Novels probably satisfied his taste for narration. He writes from his heart. Writing being his passion he finds time anyhow or other to satisfy his passion.

(iii) Eco himself explains how he gets time for writing. We have a lot of empty spaces in our lives. Eco calls these empty spaces. He says to his interviewer, Mukund, "While waiting for your elevator to come up from the first to the third floor, I have already written an article". Thus he works in empty spaces and finds time to write so much. These moments between one action and the other actions provide him time for writing.

Additional Questions

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(1) The writer says that it is hardly surprising that opinions of the interview vary considerably. Elaborate with reference to the essay, "The Interview, By Christopher Silvester.

(2) What were the salient points that emerged about Umberto Eco and his writing through his interview by Mukund Padmanabhan ?

Reference-

1- NCERT Text Books U.K Board

2- Reference Book Rachna Sagar Pvt. Ltd. (Rachana Jain/ H.N. Sharma/Bubbles Bedi)

Poem-5: A ROADSIDE STAND

By Robert Frost

Main Theme

Robert Frost, a highly acclaimed American poet, in his poems usually focused, on the themes of human tragedies and fears and their ultimate acceptance or their solution. In his poem, 'A Roadside Stand' he deals with the lives of poor deprived people of the villages with a clarity that is perceptive and at the same time portrays his deepest sympathies and his feelings of humanity. The poem also brings in to focus the unfortunate fact that progress and development is unequal between the cities and the villages leading to feelings of distress and unhappiness among the dwellers of the latter.

In the poem, the poet describes the feelings of the owners of a roadside shed who seem to wait interminably for those whizzing past, their house in their shiny cars, to stop and buy something from the shack-some fruit, some humble vegetables, or even stop and rest in the beautiful mountainscape. They long for the feel of hard currency that is a symbol of poverty alleviation in their lives of deprivation. It appears to be a vain hope, however, that those who do glance their way are either reproachful of the blot on the landscape, their shed, that seems to mar the beauty of the landscape, or stop to ask for directions. Some use the space to turn their cars around unmindful of the damage to their turf.

The poet is outraged at the callous attitude of the government, the civic authorities and the social service agencies who appear to help them but actually end up harming them, The news says that these poor people are to be relocated to the vicinity of the towns near the theatre and the shops, There they will be well looked after and will have nothing worrisome to think about, The poet, however regards this as a great disservice to the people who will be thus robbed of their voices and their freedom and ability to find solutions to their problems. Lulled in to oblivion by this false and perhaps short-lived sense of security, the villagers will forever lose their abilities to make calculated decisions for themselves and become pawns in the hands of their so called benefactors who are waiting to take over their land. This will finally culminate in a futile sense of dissatisfaction for the villagers.

The poet is filled with sadness to see the almost childish longing that seems to emanate from the roadside shed, for a life that is described in the movies, a life so far removed from their life in the village. The unthink-ing occupants of a car who stop at the shed to buy a gallon of gas, speaks of the disconnect that exists in the perceptions of town people with regard to the villagers. They are unable to comprehend that the lives of the villagers are far removed from theirs, so replete with the comforts that the material world offers. The poet is saddened at the thought that the rural poor have not been able to experience the satisfaction that comes from a feeling of well being and contentment. He feels that it would be easy to still these complaining voices once and for all by changing the lives of the villagers but he questions the wisdom of this rash act.

Solved Extracts for comprehension

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow:-

**1- The little old house was out with a little new shed,
In front at the edge of the road, where the traffic sped,
A roadside stand that too pathetically pled,
It would not be fair to say for a dale of bread,
But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow supports
The following of cities from sinking and withering faint.**

Ques-(i) Why had a new shed put up by the occupants of the little old house?

Ans- The occupatnts of the little old house had put up the new shed to extend their area.

Ques-(ii) Why does the poet refer to the roadside stand as 'Pathetic' ?

Ans- The poet refers to the roadside stand as 'pathetic' because it is not comfortable and attractive.

Ques-(iii) What is the purpose of the shed ?

Ans- The purpose of the shed is that the passengers would stop and buy something from them or even stop and rest in the beautiful mountainscape.

**2- It in the news that all these pitiful kin
Are to be bought out and mercifully gathered in
To live in village, next to the theatre and the store,
Where they won't have to think for themselves anymore.**

Ques-(i) What does the news proclaim ?

Ans- The news proclaims that the land of the villagers will be purchased by some developers, of the city.

Ques-(ii) Who do these pitiful kin refer to ? Why will they be mercifully gathered in ?

Ans- These pitiful kin refers to the villagers who have been deprived of their home and land. they will be mercifully gathered in to live in villages near the theatre and store.

Ques-(iii) Where will one see these poor villagers ?

Ans- One will see these poor villagers near the theatre and the store in the vicinity of the towns.

EXTRACTS FOR PRACTICE

Read the following lines and answer with reference to the context: 04

**The hurt to the scenery wouldn't be my complaint
So much as the trusting sorrow of what is unsaid:
Here far from the city we make our roadside stand
And ask for some city money to feel in hand
To try if it will not make our being expand,
And give us te life of the moving pictures' promise
That the party in power is said to be keeping from us.**

Ques-(i) What do the owners of the shack wish for? **01**

Ques-(ii) How will it help them ? **01**

Ques-(iii) What is the party in power keeping from these rural poor ? 01

Ques-(iv) What do you think the life of the movie pictures implies ? 01

Read the following lines and answer with reference to the context: 04

**No, in country money, the country scale of gain,
The requisite lift of spirit has never been found,
Or so the voice of the country seems to complain,
I can't help owning the great relief it would be
To put these people at one stroke out of their pain,
And then next day as I come back in to the same.**

I wonder how I should like you to come to me

And offer to put me gently out of my pain,

Ques-(i) What does the poet mean by the line, ' the requisite lift of spirit has never been found' 01

Ques-(ii) What does the poet wish he could do for these people ? 02

Ques-(iii) What makes him change his mind ? 01

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS 02

Ques- What was the plea of the folk who had put up the roadside stand ?

Ans- The folk who had put up the roadside stand expected that the city people would stop there to buy something or the other but they considered the owners of the stand as beggars.

Ques- What is the childish longing that poet refers to ? Why is it vain ?

Ans- Waiting for the prospective customers is the childish longing. It is vain because they never turn up.

Ques- Discuss in brief: "The economic well-being of a country depends on a balanced development of the villages and the cities?"

Ans- The statement has its importance. Agriculture growth, cottage Industries and infrastructure and the development in health and education in the villages are as important as the Industrial growth, cottage industries and infrastructure etc. In the cities for the economic well-being of a country.

Ques- 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.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

(i) who are the 'greedy good-doers' and 'the beneficent beasts of prey ? Why does the poet refer to them thus ?

(ii) The poet sympathises with the rural poor. How has this sentiment been expressed in the poem ?

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Reference-

- 1- NCERT Text Books U.K Board
- 2- Reference Book Rachna Sagar Pvt. Ltd. (Rachana Jain/ H.N. Sharma/Bubbles Bedi