**QUESTION BANK: PROSE 8 THE BET**

**1. What was the old banker remembering while walking up and down in his study on a dark autumn night? (3)**

**Ans:** While walking up and down in his study on a dark autumn night, the old banker remembered how fifteen years earlier he had given a party one autumn evening. There had been clever men there indulging in interesting conversations. Among other things they talked of capital punishment amongst which most of the intellectual men and journalists gave their opinions.

**2. Why were majority of the guests in the party against capital punishment? (2)**

**Ans:** Majority of the guests in the party considered capital punishment out of date, immoral and unsuitable for Christian States. Some of them opined that death penalty ought to be replaced everywhere by imprisonment for life.

**3. What contrary view did the banker present about capital punishment? (3)**

**Ans:** Contrary to the majority of the opinion, the banker supported capital punishment. He said that he had neither tried the death penalty nor imprisonment for life but death penalty is more moral and humane compared to imprisonment for life. Capital punishment kills a man at once but lifelong imprisonment kills a man slowly.

**4. How does one of the guests justify that both punishments are equally immoral? (3)**

**Ans:** One of the guests observes that both punishments are equally immoral as they have the same object- to take away life. The State is not God. It has no right to take away what it cannot restore what it wants to.

**5. What was the young lawyer’s age? What opinion did he give about death penalty? (2)**

**Ans:** The lawyer was twenty-five years old. His opinion was that life sentence and death sentence are equally immoral but if he was to choose between death penalty and imprisonment for life, he would choose the second one.

**6. Who was carried away by the excitement of the lively discussion? What did he do? (3)**

**Ans:** The banker was carried away by the excitement of the lively discussion. He turned to the lawyer and shouted at him that he was ready to bet two million that the lawyer would not want to stay in a solitary confinement for five years.

**7. How did the young lawyer respond to the challenge of the banker? What was finally decided? (3)**

**Ans:** The young lawyer told the banker if he was earnest about the bet he was willing to stay fifteen years in confinement instead of five. Finally, it was decided that the lawyer would stay in solitary confinement for fifteen years and if he was able to do it, the banker would give him two million.

**8. What was the banker reflecting upon while walking to and fro and thinking about the bet? (4)**

**Ans:** The banker asked himself what the object of the bet had been. He also thought if it was good of the lawyer losing fifteen years of his life and he himself throwing away two million. He knew that it had not proven if death penalty was better or worse than any imprisonment for life. He concludes that it was nonsensical and meaningless and on his part the caprice of a pampered man and on lawyer’s part simple greed for money.

**9. Under what terms and conditions was the bet agreed upon? (4)**

**Ans:** It was decided that the young man should spend years of his captivity under the strictest supervision in a room in the banker’s garden. For fifteen years he would not leave the room , see any person, hear human voice or to receive letters or newspapers. He could eat and drink whatever he pleased , have a musical instrument , read books and write. He could communicate his needs by means of written notes passed through a window specially constructed for this purpose. The period of confinement was exactly fifteen years . Any attempt on the lawyer’s part to violate the conditions freed the banker form the obligation to pay him the two millions.

**10. Briefly right about the confinement about the lawyer in his first year. (4)**

**Ans:** In the first year, the lawyer suffered severely from loneliness and boredom. He played the piano day and night and asked for romantic novels , stories of crime and fantasy, comedies.

**11. Map the confinement of the prisoner from the second to the fifth year. (4)**

**Ans:** In second year the piano felt silent and the prisoner asked only for classics. In the fifth year the music was audible again and the prisoner asked for wine. He was seen through the window doing nothing but eating, drinking, lying on his bed and angrily talking to himself. He did not read books. More than once he was heard crying.

**12. What change can be noticed in the second half of the sixth year? What did he do over the next four years? (3)**

**Ans:** In the second half of the sixth year, the prisoner began zealously studying languages, philosophy and history. Over the next four years about six hundred volumes were bought at his request.

**13. What were the contents of the first letter written by the prisoner to the banker? (4)**

**Ans:** The prisoner addresses the banker as a ‘jailor’ in the letter and states that he had written those lines in six languages and wrote that the geniuses of all ages and countries speak different languages but in them all burns the same flame.

**14. What was the nature of the prisoner’s confinement after the tenth year? What did the banker find strange? (3)**

**Ans:** After the tenth year, the prisoner sat immovably at the table and read nothing but the ‘New Testament’.. It seemed strange to the banker that a man who had mastered six hundred learned volumes in four years should waste nearly a year over one book easy to understand and by no means thick.

**15. How did the prisoner spend the last two years of his confinement? (3)**

**Ans:** In the last two years the prisoner read an immense quantity of books quite haphazard. He asked to be sent at the same time a book on chemistry, a textbook of medicine, a novel and some treatise on philosophy or theology.

**16. What was the difference of the financial condition of the banker fifteen years after placing the bet? (4)**

**Ans:** When the banker placed this bet, he had many millions to count. Now he had as many debts as money. Gambling on the Stock Exchange had gradually ruined hi business; the once self-confident, proud man of business now trembled at every rise and fall in the market.

**17. What, according to the banker, would the lawyer do with the two million that he will win and how would he appear? (3)**

**Ans:** According to the banker, the lawyer would take his last penny from him. As he was only forty, he would marry and enjoy life . The banker would look at him with envy like a beggar.

**18. What, according to the banker, was the only way to escape bankruptcy and disgrace? (2)**

**Ans:** According to the banker, the only way in which he could escape bankruptcy and disgrace was the death of the lawyer. Therefore he decided to murder the lawyer in the middle of the night.

**19. What did the banker notice about the weather while going towards the lodge? (3)**

**Ans:** The banker noticed that it was dark and cold and a damp penetrating wind howled among the trees.

**20. With what intention did the banker approach the room in the garden? What would happen if he was successful in his intention? (2)**

**Ans:** The banker approached the lodge with the intention of killing the prisoner. If he would be successful in his intention his two millions would be saved.

**21. What did the banker do on reaching the room? What did he notice?**

**Ans:**  When the banker reached the room, he struck a match and peeped into the little window. He was a candle burning dimly. The prisoner sat by the table, open books strewn about on the table , the two chairs , and on the carpet near the table .

**22. What did the banker notice about the prisoner on reaching his room? What action did he take? (3)**

**Ans:** The banker noticed that time passed and the prisoner had not stirred at all. He thought that fifteen years’ imprisonment had taught the prisoner to sit still. The banker cautiously put the key into the lock. The rusty lock creaked and he entered.

**23. What did the banker notice about the prisoner on entering the room? (4)**

**Ans:** On entering the room, the banker noticed that a man unlike ordinary people was sitting motionless at the table. He was a skeleton with the skin drawn tight over his bones, his long curls like a woman’s and a shaggy beard. His face was yellow with an earthy tint in it, cheeks were hollow and back was long and narrow. The hand on which his shaggy head was propped was so thin and delicate that it was dreadful to look at it. His hair was already streaked with silver and seeing his emaciated aged looking face no one would have believed that he was only forty.

**24. What were the initial words written in the letter of the prisoner? (4)**

**Ans:** The initial words written in the letter of the prisoner were about his regaining his freedom and the right to associate other men the next day at twelve o’clock. He added that before he left that room and saw the sunshine, it was necessary that he communicated a few words to the banker. Keeping God as a witness he claimed that he despised freedom and life and health and all things which are called in the books as the good things of the world.

**25. Why does the prisoner make the ironical statement about him despising the books which have given him the wisdom? (4)**

**Ans:** The prisoner claims that he has reached a level of wisdom because of books. That wisdom has convinced him that it is fruitless to acquire wisdom. It is worthless, fleeting, illusory and deceptive like a mirage. Even if one is proud, wise and fine, death will wipe him off the face of earth like a mice burrowing under the floor.

**26. What does the prisoner want to do to prove that he despises all those things that people live for? (3)**

**Ans:** To prove that he despises all those things that people live for, the prisoner wants to renounce the two million of which he had dreamt as paradise. To deprive himself of the right to the money he would go out from the room five hours before the time that was fixed. That would break the contract and free the banker from the obligation of paying him.

**27. What did the banker do after he had read the letter? (2)**

**Ans:** After the banker had read the letter, he laid the page on the table and kissed the strange man on the head. He then went out of the room weeping.

**28. What shows us that the banker was really touched by the letter of the prisoner? (3)**

**Ans:** The banker left the room after reading the letter weeping. At no other time in the past even when he had lost heavily on the Stock Exchange, he felt so great a contempt for himself. After reaching home, he lay on his bed but his tears and emotion kept him for hours from sleeping. This shows that he was really touched by the letter of the prisoner.

**29. What did the watchman inform the banker ? What did the banker do? (4)**

**Ans:** The watchmen ran and told the banker that he had seen the prisoner who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate and disappear. The banker at once went with his servants to the room and made sure of the flight of his prisoner. To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the letter in which his millions were renounced and locked it up in the fireproof safe in his house.

**30. Do you agree with the banker that capital punishment is better than imprisonment for life? (3)**

**Ans:** Yes, I agree with the banker that capital punishment is better than imprisonment for life. Capital punishment gives a momentary pain followed by the death of the prisoner. Life imprisonment on the other hand kills the prisoner slowly.

**31. What is your take on solitary confinement as compared to normal one? (4)**

**Ans:** I believe that solitary confinement is much more difficult than normal imprisonment. Man, being a social animal, has a basic necessity to talk and interact with people. When that is completely snatched away from him and he has no interaction with any human being at all, it becomes almost impossible to pass time. The imprisonment will seem much longer due to this.

**32. Why, according to you, did the banker put the prisoner’s letter in the fireproof safe? (3)**

**Ans:** The banker was indeed touched by the prisoner’s letter. He realised that he had lived a fruitless existence. His tears did not even allow him to sleep. He put the prisoner’s letter in the fireproof safe as it had taught him those lessons in life which he would cherish forever.