



Robert Frost and his Poetic World of Nature

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Abstract:

Nature has been the prime delight of Robert Frost who went on experimenting with the multiple facet of nature throughout his creative output. Like the English Romantics he seems to be fascinated by the natural world and its inevitable connection with human beings. It is always an inspiration for him to find the harmony of this pious relationship between man and nature. Robert Frost dwells upon the thematic explorations in the world of nature for understanding the human psychology. He also observes the dichotomy and contrastive nature of human existence. The present paper intends to probe into all these features of Robert Frost's poetry that makes him so distinct from the rest of the poets in English literature.

Keywords: Inspiration, inevitable, harmony, relationship, dichotomy, contrastive, experimenting, distinct.

Robert Frost was one of the greatest poets of America. He is best known for his realistic depiction of rural life and his command of American Colloquial speech. He was the leading modern American poet of nature and rural life. He is the only poet to receive four Pulitzer Prizes for poetry. He became one of America's rare "public literary figures, almost an artistic institution. (P. 110). He also got congressional Gold medal in 1960 for his poetic works. He became poet Laureate of Vermont in the next year. He was invited to read his poem at a Presidential inauguration. He is the only poet who was invited by the President in inauguration.

He uses the element of nature in his many poems like *Stopping by Woods on Snowy Evening*, *The Road Not Taken*, *Mending wall* and *Birches*. He loves natural things and finds beauty in common place. He presents human psychological condition by using the natural

scenery and charming rural life. He compares the human emotions with the natural object. Nature is employed as a metaphor in the poetry of Frost. He himself said.

“Some people call me poet for nature because of the natural setting. But I am not a poet for nature, there is also something else in my poems” (3)

His poems begin with an observation on nature and proceed to the connection to human situation such as loneliness, helplessness, confusion and indifferent human relationship. John F. Lynen rightly says, “Frost has such excellent poems about natural scenery and wild life that one can hardly avoid thinking of him as a natural poet” (32). He is also famous for his lyrical genius because of his use of pure lyric as personal and subjective. Austin Warren also praises him for the natural symbolism which is used in most of his poems;

“There are some natural symbols which are quite difficult for readers to grasp and is for his natural symbolism that he has drawn a wide audience all over the world” (190)

The treatment of nature is different from the Romantic poets i.e. Wordsworth, Keats and Shelly in the poetry of Robert Frost. Wordsworth glorifies nature but Frost utilizes nature as symbol of man’s relation to the world he lives in. He used the element of nature as a background of his poems and as an analogy to a complex human issue. He tries to illustrate a more complex situation or problem that we face in our life.

According to Frost man and nature are closely related to each other. We cannot imagine the life without nature. We are the part of nature. Nature governs us like the other creature by the same rule. In his poetry nature and man are counter parts of each other. He uses nature as a medium to describe the problems of man and solution of this problem in human psychology.

We encounter the all shades of nature in his poetry. He has an equally keen eye for the sensuous and the beautiful in nature as well as for the harsher and the unpleasant. His love for nature is local and regional. It is the North of Boston region that forms the background to his poetry. The rivers, tress, forests, flowers and plants, hills and dales, animal, birds and insects, seasons and seasonal changes of this particular reason have been described in many poems of Frost. He wrote many poems at different periods of life that are devoted to the description of the various objects of nature.



Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is one of the finest poems of Frost. The poem is very simple in language but certain words of the poem give deeper meanings. The poem begins like a journey of life. It is just like an allegory of the life journey and spiritual journey besides being connotative of other more philosophical issues of life. The poem presents man's life journey symbolically.

The theme and subject of the poem seems to be romantic. The speaker is crossing lovely woods on a pleasing evening while returning home. He wants to stop here to enjoy the beauty and quiet of the place. But he feels regret because he has to go ahead. The speaker romanticizes what are passing by: both time and pleasure. He seems to be a romantic person who enjoys what the owner of the woods does not. It can be easily felt that the poem is romantic because of the speaker's love for nature.

We can interpret the poem symbolically. The journey in the poem symbolises the journey of man in his life. In reality, one cannot stop to enjoy what he likes because life goes on. The speaker is going ahead and his 'sleep' may be the end of life. Robert D. Richardson also says, "when he writes something about nature he doesn't describe nature purely instead he uses natural objects or events as symbols to reveal and express something more profound." (62)

The last four lines of the stanza have very deep meaning "The words are lovely dark and deep" the poet connects the word woods with life and tries to make us understand that life is lovely, dark and deep. Life is full of risk and difficulties. It is deep also because we are not able to understand what will happen with us through out our life. It is very complex. One should accept the truth or reality of one's life and try to live it freely.

The last line, "And miles to go before I sleep", is also very important. Here the poet wants to make us aware that Death is the ultimate reality of life. We have some important duty which we have to perform before death. "And miles to go" suggests that an individual has so many works and responsibility and he has to do it before the end of his life.

The next poem '*Birches*' also presents the themes of natural beauty, memory and childhood. The poem moves around the beautiful birches tree that are bent toward the ground. The speaker's past experiences is associated with those trees. The widespread bends of the



branches remind him of his beautiful past days. He feels that how natural calamities transforms the actual appearances of the objects.

When the poet sees those birches bending left to right in the forest, he thinks that “some boys bend them. As he went out and into fetch the cows”(21). He again thinks that these bends might also be caused by ice-storm. The weight of ice forces them to bend toward the ground due to the pressure.

The poet imagines his childhood memory when he used to swing on the trees from side to side and from the earth up to heaven. He compares his life with a pathless wood and wants to get an escape into those carefree days of childhood. Birch swinging is a common sport of the village boys in America. But it has been used as a metaphor in the poem. The poet wants to swing away from the difficulties and pains of reality into the comforts of fancy or imagination. He wants to escape from the earth for a while because he is fed up with various problems and difficulties of life. He prays to God to provide him spiritual power from heaven and send him back to the earth again to start a new life with great energy and power. The imagination of getting free from the earth is appealing and wonderful but the poet cannot avoid returning to ‘Truth’ and his responsibilities on the ground. The escape is temporary not permanent.

The adjective ‘dark’ consistently grows as a symbol in Frost’s poetry. Lionel Trilling observes the fact that Frost portrays a ‘terrifying universe’ (7) The poet in his poem ‘Into my own’ declares his wish for, “those dark trees so old and firm they scarcely show the breeze, were not, as ‘it were the merest mask of gloom, But stretched away unto the edge of doom”. The same image turns into ‘Dark woods’ in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*

Obviously the mystery of nature and the supernatural elements lead to pessimistic attitude which is very much there in the dark aspect of nature. However, nature to Frost means both hope and despair brightness and darkness. It is in the same dark woods that he listens to the fascinating singing birds.

We find the bright side of nature in his poetry also. His characters are full of happiness. His nature is filled with beauty and benevolence, we can see the beauty of nature in his next poem “A winter Eden”.In this poem Robert Frost shows that the snow of winter is much more beautiful than the bare ground;

“A winter garden in an elder swamp,
Where Conies now comeout to sun and romp.
As near a paradise as it can be,
And not melt snow or start a dormant tree” (14).

The winter season is the symbol of death and decay, dullness and despair but Frost finds beauty, delight and life in winter. In the second stanza the snow is pure because of its white colour and how it lifts you closer to heaven. The animals are active in the garden and the birds flock as friends.

In another poem ‘*The Pasture*’, the protagonist is a village farmer who enjoys the sight of pasture spring’ and ‘a little calf’ just behind its mother. Here, the farmer is enjoying the simple innocent rustic life and expressing the limitations of human life. Here, Robert Frost refers to the simple wisdom required for a balance life inspired by nature. The narratology of the poem is a stark simplicity;

“I am going out to clean the pasture spring,
“I’ll only stop to rake the leaves away.
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sha’ n’t be gone long... you come too.
I ‘m going out to fetch the little calf.
That’s standing by the mother.
It’s so young”. (22)

Here, Frost presents himself as a farmer sage, a shrewd poet, a powerful observer and a man of insight who sees what others don’t see. We can probably understand that his wisdom comes largely from his communication with nature.

At last, we can say that Robert Frost is a unique poet beyond doubt. The use of nature in his poetry makes him unique and great. He employed natural element for different purposes. It is used some times for the theme and sometimes as a metaphor for a certain human condition. Frost accepts the close relationship of man and nature. Like the other creatures, we are also governed by nature. He believes in the symbolic quality of nature also. He knows well how to study the pages of nature, what is to be learnt from it and how to share what we learn from nature. We



should read and analyze nature as a book because it is a source of wisdom for us. Frost himself says;

“There is a wealth in natures, and nature is always hinting at us” (2).

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