

The Realistic Nature of Robert Frost's Poetry

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Robert Frost is one of few poets in English literature who shall never become outdated because poetry is an echo of every sensitive man's experiences and his limitations. The main theme of his poetry is the despairing state of man in his life. Robert Frost has tried to communicate again and again that man's effort to gather happiness and love of his fellowmen in the universe.

Robert Frost's chief concern is with man. The focus in his poetry is on man's position and attitude and especially on his feelings. Robert Frost reveals a good deal about his conception of universe and external reality in his poetry. But what is important to him? It is man's thought, emotions and behavior as they determine or reflect his relationship with the universe. What does man do, and how does he feel in a universe as dark as this? That is the central question for Robert Frost. The answer is found largely by the fact that man is sharply limited as Robert Frost sees him. Man is limited both in his intellectual power and his awareness and understanding. He has a different way of seeing this universe. He is different in his thought and in his intellectual power.

In several poems, Robert Frost indicates that man fail to understand nature and its relationship with him. Man could not make a balance of nature with his relationship. Directly or indirectly in both agnostic and the puritanical poetry, Robert Frost considers man very much handicapped. He has certain limitations. In some religious poems, Robert Frost represents man's limitations equally. In "The Trial By Existence" the universe which he shows is in different man and his plight.

"Nothing but what we somehow choose;
Thus are we wholly stripped of pride
In the pain that has but one close
Bearing it crushed and mystified."

Robert Frost considers man's rational limitations in "Masque of Reason" and in "The Lesson for Today". These limitations help in explaining the term, why the universe seems incomprehensible and uncontrollable. Man has no control over universe. He is unable to understand the realities of the universe. Man's position thus is permanently difficult in the universe. The universe seems to him empty or meaningless. According to his poem like "Nothing Gold Can Stay" and "Design" man finds himself isolated and alienated and cut off from other men of the universe. And because of alienation from other men of the universe and from the universe he is harmed easily by others. "An Old Man's Winter Night" clears the vulnerability of man in an empty universe. It affects man's feelings very deeply. This aged man can not keep a house. He is isolated, but he does not feel vulnerability in him because of his depersonalization through his age and tiredness. It may be possible that he does not realize, how helpless he is, he seems much more in pitiable condition to us.

The human insecurity is only suggested by Robert Frost in "An Old Man's Winter Night" is clear. It gives continual emphasis on man's isolation. The speaker in the "Storm Fear" feels his isolation and his insecurity in the universe. In this poem he faces natural forces directly. His

poem which can be compared with Wordsworth "Leech Gatherer", the man is determined and independent in the universe. He lives in the mountains and earns money by gathering gum. He is dependent on nature for his livelihood. The emphasis is given mainly and directly on man himself. Robert Frost explains man's liveliness and energy in the beginning of the poem. He invests him with independence in the course of the poem. At the end of the poem Robert Frost makes plain that man must find satisfaction in his life. He must unite his vacation and avocation in his life.

In both poem "The Gum Gatherer" and "Brown Descent", we see a significant general aspect of Robert Frost's humanism. He is conscious of man's limitations. Man cannot exercise much control over his universe, no penetrate it very far. He does not understand what is difficult to understand or hidden in this universe. This being so, Robert Frost's faith in man could be very close and similar. But neither "Gum Gatherer" nor "Brown's Descent" does so because each speaker of the poem controls his existence and environment satisfactorily. The Gum gatherer represents a kind of aesthetic sense. He concerns with appreciation of beauty. Brown embodies human dignity in "Brown's Descent". Critic argued that

"Frost maintained a humanistic faith in man's other resources such as love, courage and humor despite the seriousness of his deficiencies".

"New Hampshire" is similarly focused on human activities and values and finds satisfaction in human activities. He believed that life and man remain essentially the same. In his poetry we find Robert Frost's personal tears, mood of depression and moment of doubt. He was depressed due to the tragedies which took place in his life and in his poetic career. Man in his poetry is left in a very uncertain position and just as important. He suffers life's difficulties and unpleasant situations. These situations make his existence difficult for him especially in the mood of happiness. Robert Frost sees this fearsome universe. He sees man's serious and difficult condition in this fearsome universe, but there are two different points of view. On the one hand he often writes as though the existence of God is irrelevant. He seems to be in a mood of agnosticism. Earthly human life is primary. For earthly human being the external reality is incomprehensible, even meaningless. On the other hand, Robert Frost seems to think that God is harsh and severe. He has no sympathy for human beings. God makes others work hard. The universe and man are fallen. It is clear through Robert Frost's work that God has temporarily withdrawn. It cannot be felt or noticed by human beings or is simply irrelevant to their concerns. Man is virtually helpless. The reason of his helplessness is partly because of his situation in the universe and partly because of his weaknesses.

If one sees from his puritan point of view, one feels that God is directing the course of events and man's place in them. There is little, man can succeed in doing. He seems little helpless and he seems more active. It is another thing that he is no more effective in the long run of success. What does the poet mean by external reality? Robert Frost sees it in nature, in the world and in the universe. Nature is hardly pleasant or encouraging as a great many of Robert's poems point it. Nature has its own ways and concerns. There is Wordsworthian approach as a benevolent nature in some of Robert Frost's optimistic poetry as we find in "The Pasture" from the volume "a Boy's Will".

"I am going to clean the pasture spring;
I will only stop to make the leaves away
And wait to watch the water clear, I may
I shan't be gone long-you come too"

Man and nature are separate and fundamentally different. Nature has its own integrity, which can man hardly understand. Robert Frost's view point reveals that man must learn to live in the natural order. It is the only effective way to live in the universe. He must learn how to live a life with difficulties. He must struggle with difficulties and unpleasant situations. Robert Frost has given his conception of nature. He has told about the nature's independence. He has indicated in his several poems that man can not exercise any influence on nature although he can control it to some extent. Robert Frost has also revealed the secrets of the universe. Human being can not understand this vast universe because their understanding is limited by boundaries. Nitchie has observed –

“Man has no memory of heaven or of his choosing life on earth to
make his “earthly woe” more bearable.

Robert Frost sees the universe, as the most problematic environment. When Robert Frost feels that the universe is really inimical to man, he usually sees it as the instrument of harsh God, or worse as in his best poem” Design” and “Lovely shall be Chooser”. Robert Frost considers man's rational limitations at length in “Masque of Reason”. It is a short verse play. It deals with the biblical story of Job. Robert Frost is in some ways to like John Milton. As John Milton's aim is to justify God's ways to man in ‘Paradise Lost’, Robert Frost's aim is to justify God's ways to man. Man cannot go beyond his limitations. He must submit to the mysterious force. His belief in the limitation of man has profound implications. He sways that there is not only difficulties with the nature and universe but also with man's infinite mind. It may be impossible to measure. According to Robert Frost's vision of man's limitation is something reasonable. Man finds himself amid confusion beyond his control. His position is precarious in the universe and in front of the power of universe man feels himself isolated. He faces difficulties due to alienation in this vast universe.

‘A servant to servants’ is the most powerful account of human alienation in the fearsome universe. A farmer's wife's position is that of all men bin an unfeeling universe as Robert Frost indicates. This poem can be interpreted in many ways. It can be read as the epitome of Godless existential man and condition of a man, expression of fallen man condemned to labor and finally that man condemned to labor and finally that that man has alienated himself from the universe; he has made his position insecure in this vast world. His another poem ‘Once by The Pacific’ emphasizes God's wrath over fallen man. Robert Frost cannot accept complete agnosticism. He can not say that he is certain of nothing, nor he is certain of everything about his position in this universe-

“The shattered water made a misty din
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
The water never did to land before”

Robert Frost suggests one solution to the man's isolation or alienation in the world in the poem ‘Provide Provide’. But it is the most sarcastic poem. The speaker suggests providing for future. A human being can not depend on the memory of the past because these memories will not help in future. Man will have to struggle in another way in future. He should trust experience. It suggests how we should live our lives. According to Robert Frost, the human self centeredness and the pride, fear and loneliness are reflection of man's basic failures. It is due to his position in the universe and his relationship with other people that man feels embroiled. In many of his poems Robert Frost shows that man is dissatisfied. On the one hand, he undertakes futile activities he is unable to understand. He is unable to achieve as much as he would like.

The foolishness of trying to achieve the impossible for human being is revealed in several poems of Robert Frost as in 'The Road Not Taken' and 'The Wood Pile'. In the woodpile he presents the futility of man's achievements and shows us man's limitations. He says that it is the foolishness of man to expand himself on labor which is unimportant. Robert Frost does not always represent man as quite so foolishly unrealistic nor does he represent him as proud and self centered. It is very rare that Robert Frost takes man to task for attacking nature. Man acts as though God is simply not there in the universe. This is the weak position of human being because he is living in a Godless universe. Even in this weak position man reacts to organize his life and experience in social terms. Robert Frost sees this attempt, as futile and ridiculous. He felt on one hand that the universe and man's position is uncontrollable and difficult; on the other hand that the universe and man's relationship to it are manageable. We find the opposition between his dark side and light side. According to Nitchie-

"Individualism is one form of man's reaction to the evil world. Men become too self-centered. He is absorbed in themselves. They can become what he called 'Prudential'

Robert Frost depicts this position that men ignore any wider responsibilities.

Robert Frost often reveals doubt about the nature of reality. He reveals doubt about the man's ability to struggle with the universe. But in 'All Revelation' he assumes that nature of reality depends somewhat on man's own understanding. It is understanding of human being which gives him courage to struggle with this fearsome universe. In other words Robert Frost says that as if reality had a partly independent existence. It is partly created by man's own understanding. Man has to learn his limitations in order to survive in this world. Robert Frost's poetic stance represents one solution which is to escape. But it is clear that he did not generally accept the idea of escape. He always seeks the solution of the problem of man's confusion about existence. Man is facing the confusion of modern existence. Further Robert Frost suggested the way to salvation. On the one hand he is uncertain or even fearful about man's position and on the other hand, he reflects upon the confidence in the poem.

Thus Robert Frost's poems indicate a mixture of certain and uncertain about the position of human beings in the universe.

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