

A study of home in Robert Frost's poetry

Dr.Mamata Rath

Associate Prof. of English Gandhi Institute of Engg. & Tech Gunupur, Rayagada, Odisha India. Pin:765022

Abstract: *An attempt has been made in this article to give a background of the "homebound vision" in American poetry as reflected in some of the American poets of the twentieth century. In this paper a research has been done in related to family values. The family behaviours are always shaped by the culture and values. Social changes in the society have taken place as suddenly as an earthquake, and, no wonder, the Americans speak the language of loss and moral crisis. They have lost all the values fit to a family. So, they must try to re-establish those values in the family they live in. In this present scenario it is necessary to reconstruct the home with values associated with it, which have been denuded by other forces. So, the literary figures of America took the responsibility to set an ideal picture of home through their work. Their literary works (poetry) focus on family values to re-establish the American culture to overcome violence and establish peace and values in the society. The goal of this article is to understand the present and the which is the centre of learning morality, The family behaviours are always shaped by the culture and values. Social changes in the society have taken place as suddenly as an earthquake, and, no wonder, the Americans speak the language of loss and moral crisis. They have lost all the values fit to a family. So, they must try to re-establish those values in the family they live in. In this present scenario it is necessary to reconstruct the home with values associated with it, which have been denuded by other forces.*

Keywords: *Culture and tradition, Home bound vision, Moral values, American Poetry, Exploring harmony*

I. Introduction:

The family behaviours are always shaped by the culture and values. Social changes in the society have taken place as suddenly as an earthquake, and, no wonder, the Americans speak the language of loss and moral crisis. They have lost all the values fit to a family. So, they must try to re-establish those values in the family they live in. In this present scenario it is necessary to reconstruct the home with values associated with it, which have been denuded by other forces. So, the literary figures of America took the responsibility to set an ideal picture of home through their work. Their literary works (poetry) focus on family values to re-establish the American culture to overcome violence and establish peace and values in the society. The goal of this article is to understand the present and the potential future role of family in their life perspective, family importance and societal values, such as motivation, empathy, morality, duty and a familial bond. Through this one will learn the basic concepts of values associated with family and society and also his/her role how to stop the 'violence' and cultural imbalance which are the obstacles in a societal progress. This will develop the ability to critically evaluate the cultural, traditional values associates with family and how these things diminishing in this modern and technically booming era.

II. The Study Of Frost's Poetry:

An attempt has been made in this article to give a background of the "homebound vision" in American poetry as reflected in some of the American poets of the twentieth century. The poets whom I have been identified for the purpose are Robert Frost and Tess Gallagher a mixture of the mainstream American and black American poets. The poets referred above are devoted much of their poetry to bring out the intricate relationship between father-mother, grandfather, grand children, wife and husband. A discussion of these poets has thrown light on the different nuances of the familial relationship in the United States. The sufferings and horrors of World war-I&II had created both physical and psychological wound in the entire youth mass. Youth in Frost's poetry symbolizes enthusiasm, isolation and lost innocence. In the same time Frost also depicts youth as an idealised, endemic state full of dreams, opportunities and possibilities. His youth is a solitary wonderer who searches peace in Nature and found another individual in her. In such a condition Nature plays a very vital role to restructure the life and thinking capacity through a moment of interaction or encounter between her and the human speaker(like Frost). As a result he explored self-knowledge, deeper understanding of the metaphysical world and a solitary bond between him and Nature. Frost believes that nature has a healing power, so, whenever he was away from home he spent few moments with nature enjoying the mysterious beauty and forgets his duty which he wrote in "Stopping by Woods in a Snowy Evening."

Robert Frost, America's "the most beloved poet", describes poetry as "an act of clarification" and, through his verse expresses nature as the most revealing mirror of human personality. Nature is the metaphoric home for Frost, where he finds for himself a sense of harmony and peace. This conviction led him to explore the darkest forces of both nature and humanity. Frost, four time winner of Pulitzer Prize celebrates the complementarities of the natural world and the familial world. While doing so, he intends to strengthen the bond between the two worlds by discovering the deep connections existing in them. He deliberately attaches the human qualities to them so as to integrate the two—the human and the natural to celebrate the zest for creativity available in them. In the poem, "Dust of Snow" he narrates how the beauty of nature changes his mood and how he becomes tension free:

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued. (138)

In this poem the poet reveals the healing and mysterious powers of Nature and explains how the magical touch enlightens his soul and mind.

Frost recollects his own childhood in the poem "The Birches," when he himself was a swinger of birches. As a child, he enjoys the swing and also the natural beauty when the wind blows. When the birches swing up and down and the ice on them shines, they take on many coloured hues owing to the reflection of sun the rays. The beauty of nature steals away all his sufferings. Thus, he accepts nature as his 'home' and wants to live here forever:

So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood... (78)

The childhood memories represent a sense of bonding, an attachment with the place and love for a passive relationship with nature. In "The Death of the Hired Man" Frost gives the definition of home and its importance in human life. According to Frost, "home" is a shield that protects us from the piercing arrows of chill outside and from the fierce blows of death:

'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in.'
'I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve.' (28-29)

The poem is symbolic of the emotional stress and strain, isolation and alienation which are a part of Modern age and the suffering is inexpressible. In this poem Frost is able to embody vast concepts of home and infinite depths with in little space. Frost focuses on the natural rhythms of the human experience. In "Mending Wall," he criticizes the human beings, who separate themselves from each other through a stone wall. The poet is against the concept that fences create good neighbours. To him wall is the symbol of destruction of relationships. As a poet he treats the whole earth as a home for all living beings. So, he wants to break the wall that exists between him and his neighbour to develop a fellow feeling in between them:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was wailing in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence,
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down. (24)

The fence here symbolizes a division of relations on the basis of race, religion, politics and economical status which hampers the mutual understandings and harmonious relationships in between man and man. The dispute between two neighbours shows a short of clash between tradition and modernity. The poem is an example of lost of traditional values in the face of modernity.

In "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" Frost describes the beauty of the woods with which he is simply mesmerised, so much so that he forgets his duty. The poem is a symbol of life's journey which the poet temporarily forgets, and his horse makes him remember:

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep. (140)

In the final three lines, the speaker offers a reason why he should get going and stop delaying here by these woods. The speaker here speaks of the eternal home to which he must eventually return and to enjoy the home-coming, he must fulfil all his responsibilities on his way home. The word 'promise' clearly indicates his duty and responsibility towards his family/society. The beauty of the woods makes him conscious that his journey has a purpose to wipe out the conflict, the terror and horror existing in our mind. He has to dissolve the conflict between practical life and the family values to re-establish the soft beauty of the snowy woods where he tempted to stay on and lost his mind in the enchanted grove. In this poem Frost used 'wood' as a symbol of aesthetic enjoyment, the darkness of ignorance, the dark inner self of man and 'white snow' the beauty, the positive aspect of human life. So, at last the poet reconcile with the beauties of Nature.

Frost's love for nature is reflected in the poem, "Tree at my Window," where he narrates the tree as his companion. He loves the natural world for its virtues. Frost compares his fate with the tree:

But tree, I have seen you taken and tossed,
And if you have seen me when I slept,
You have seen me when I was taken and swept And all but lost. (158)

Frost through his poems reveals a strong bond between man and nature, which is invisible and inseparable. For Frost, nature has the magical power which heals our wounds and fills our lives with pleasure. He gives more stress to human relationships in general and the relationships within home in particular, which he believes help to develop the self.

In "The Death of the Hired Man" the poet describes about the emotional stress and strain, isolation and alienation, pain and suffering of a servant. He narrates the helplessness of a man with an individualistic approach. He wrote:

At his age for the little he can do?
What help he is there's no depending on.
Off he goes always when I need him most.
He thinks he ought to earn a little pay,
Enough at least to buy tobacco with,
So he won't have to beg and be beholden. (25)

Frost's love for family and companionship reflects in the poem, "An Old Man's Winter Night". The poem narrates the experience and feelings of profound isolation. The poet describes the plight of an old man, his loneliness and helplessness, which is standing alone in a winter night and unable to go to the window to see outside. These lines narrate the sorrow of the old man in that winter night:

The log that shifted with a jolt
Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.
One aged man—one man—can't keep a house
A farm, a countryside, or if he can,
It's thus he does it of a winter night. (75)

The poem is an example of diminishing of values from our society and shows how the old people struggle to exist in this technically booming society. The poem "Acquainted with the Night" reveal the truth and the sad picture of human life. Frost here deals with the theme of isolation and at the same time focussed on solitude exploring how the human community is only responsible for heightening isolation and loneliness. He writes:

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,
But not to call me back or say good bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky... (161)

The word 'cry' suggests a sense of loss, helplessness and mental agony, which the poet experienced in the lonely night. Here Frost as a solitary individual wander through a night and encounter with another individual's plight and finally realizes his isolation from the society. This realization pours an essence of values basically companionship in his mind.

Robert Frost's poetic eye honestly captured the motherly love of a cow for her calf in "The Pasture". He was very much delighted by seeing the love and affection of the mother cow. He wrote:

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too. (5)

The poem communicates a sense of delight and pleasure and an ideal picture of a mother in the form of a cow. As a poet Frost always tries to connect the inner world of the human being with the outer world of Nature. In his poems he treats nature as a mother, a guide and a preacher of peace. She transcends his sufferings to pleasure through her magical power. Frost narrates a sensitive matter in his poem "Out, Out—" which describes the death of a boy who worked as a child labour. The poem is in the form of a protest against exploitation of children in our society. Through this narrative poem he highlights the diminishing of social values and wants to request us to safe guard the child hood of children by exempting them from difficult labour which goes against humanity. The poem ends with a tragic death of the boy. The lines are:

No one believed. They listened at his heart.
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs. (90)

The inhuman act reflects an artificial society with artificial individuals who lost their morality, love, caring, sympathy and above all humanity. Frost implies that a connection with the society/earth and with one's self can only be achieved by actively communicating with each other through work (serving the society). The poem "A Prayer in Spring" represents a melodious mood of the speaker which he attains in association with nature. Return back to the laps of nature gives a short of mental bliss and pleasure and this ecstatic moment is expressed in the following lines:

Oh give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year. (11)

The poem is about the reunion of mind and external beauty which Frost expresses through blending of thoughts and landscapes. These beautiful expressions arise, a sense of morality and ethical values among us when the interaction takes place between the image of nature and human spirit. Frost as a skilled versifier used good poetic technique to express the relation between him and nature and how the healing touch of her diminishes all his mental agony.

III. Conclusion

In Robert Frost's poem the speaker actively chooses solitude and isolation in order to learn more about themselves by not interacting with nature but by observing and meditating. They find solitude among trees, besides running water or under the moon and in Nature, which help them to rediscover 'the self' and creativity. They feel the warmth of home in the laps of nature and find new insights which provides relax from mental stress and physical labour. So, Frost gives more stress to human relationships in general and the relationships within home in particular, which he believes help to develop the self. He agrees that 'home' is the epicentre of the universe which guides its inmates in right direction. The learning process of a learner (from the child-hood) begins from his/her own family which plays a very significant role in his/her personality development and outlook. The values which s/he learns from his/her family helps him/her to grow in the present competitive world. The present study shows that emotional intelligence (a skill) is a part of requirement process which defines one's control over emotions and handling skilfully cohllique's emotion to achieve the target. If such are the requirements of corporate sectors then I can definitely conclude that Home plays a very vital role to guide and teach a child these values. So, home (may be in the form of Nature) is the fist school, where we human beings are well trained to face the challenges of personal and professional life.

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