

Class – U.G Sem IV

Paper – MJC 05 (English)

Robert Frost as a Poet

Robert Frost is one of the most popular and honoured poets of America. He has been called by Robert Craves , “The Voice of America”. He has received numerous prizes and awards for his outstanding work as a poet. His central themes are men and women, humanity, loneliness, isolation and nature. He fought against the existing traditions of poetry. He wanted poetry to be as free and natural as love. His poetry touches the heart of his countrymen and his readers because of the strength of his lyricism, his impulsive utterance, his simple poetic diction, his love of democracy, his patriotism and modernity. He is a great poet of nature. His poetry has cropped out of his farmer’s background.

Collections of poems :

Robert Frost produced a number of poetic volumes , such as A Boy’s Will , Mountain Interval, Selected Poems, New Hampshire, A Further Range, A Witness Tree , Tree and Collected Poems (1949). Though Frost has not published any serious literary criticism, he has expressed on several occasions his views on poetry. “The figure A Poem makes” is his preface to the collected poems (1949). It is an interesting document on Frost views on poetry and it contains his view that poetry “begins in delight and ends in wisdom.”

Clarity and Simplicity :

The first thing that strikes the reader of Frost’s poetry is its clarity. At a time when poets were inclined to showoff their erudition , and when poetry was full of esoteric references, Frost’s poetry is clear and specific . Unlike many modern writers like T.S.Eliot, Frost’s verse is free from ambiguity. His lucidity is such that he who runs may read ; there is always an easily grasped meaning or image for the reader – some perception of nature, some comment about birches, blue berry patches or deep woods filling up with snow. There is something below the surface, as in the poem, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” The poem is full of deeper meanings as for example –

“ The Woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I’ve promised to keep,
Miles to go before I sleep

Miles to go before I sleep”

Depiction of Rural life :

Frost’s poetry celebrates the countryside of New Hampshire, but he is not a regional poet. He may begin with the familiar landmark of New Hampshire, but he is not restricted by it. He portrays a variety of rural New England responses to the human predicament not for the purpose of recording local colour, but to evoke universal extensions of meanings. Frost’s love of a new England countryside is coupled with his love of the simple rustics. The tramps, the farmers the hired men are all, according to Frost, fit subjects for poetry. His characters are distinctly real and their speech is real. He is not like the romantic poets interested in extraordinary and remote things. Almost all his poems deal with familiar native scenes. It is only in “The Bearer of Evil Tidings” that the action takes place in the remote Himalayas.

Dramatic Quality :

A very important feature of Frost’s poetry is its dramatic quality. Poems like ‘Home Burial’, ‘Blue Berries’, ‘The Witch Coos’ and ‘The Death of a Hired Man’ afford the best examples of Frost’s genius in writing dramatic poems. In ‘Home Burial’ we have a man and his wife facing the death of their child. Depth of anguish is presented through the words of the woman answering her husband’s query:

“Can’t a man speak of his own child he’s lost ?

Not you ! where’s my hat! Oh! I don’t need it!

I must get out of here. I must get air

I don’t know rightly whether any man can.”

His Language and Diction :

Frost uses simple words and the actual tones of common speech. His words come from the plain language of everyday talk, for example, in ‘Mending Walls’ Frost makes use of the actual tone of the countrymen in these lines :

“He is all pine and I am apple orchard

My apple trees will never get across

And eat the comes under his pines, I tell him.”

Conclusion :

Frost is a poet of democracy. His poetry brings out his rich and ripe philosophy and observations of human life and conduct. In the poem ‘Birches’ the poet says :

“Earth’s the right place for love

I don't know where its likely to go better.”

There is a note of humour in some of his poems, such as ‘A Masque of Reason’ and ‘A Masque of Mercy’. Critics have pointed out that Frost is a spiritual drifter His didacticism becomes offensive. Some of his views are conservative and displays Victorian prudery, especially in matter of sex. But these charges become insignificant when placed side by side with the positive merits of the poets.

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