

Robert Frost's Conception of Poetry

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Every poet has his own idea of writing poetry. This paper focuses on the conception and twin purpose in the poetry of Robert Frost. In his concept, poetry displays marriage of mind and emotion. The combination of mind and emotion is deepened in to the poet's mind. In his conception of poetry, there are two purposes of poetry. It is delight and wisdom. His poem begins in delight and end in wisdom Robert Frost's conception deals with his general view of existence. To man, Frost believed that the universe is almost chaotic. The universe is a confusion in which he could find meaningful ideas by facing difficulties. It is shaped in to a poem by Robert Frost. The manner of rural life in his poetry is easily comprehended.

Robert Frost was the most popular, famous and influential American poet. He held the same position in his country as Chaucer had held the 14th century. Every poet has his own concept of writing poetry, Alexander Pope Alfred Tennyson Wordsworth and Emerson produced a genre of poetry which may be said their own. Robert Frost was also a highly conscious artist. He was a poetic theorist and rebel against the poetic creed of the olden times. He wrote to his friend John Barlett-

'I am one of the most notable craftsman of my time.....I am possibly the only person going who works on any but a worn out theory of versification' 1

Robert Frost's conception of poetry and practice are occasional and scattered through letter and public speeches and prose works. If a series of his letter are read it can be defined in many ways. He was always primarily a poet, secondly a critic and prose writer. He did not value his prose highly. His greater emphasis was on poetry. In contrast to Wordsworth, Emerson and other writers Robert Frost thought of himself as a craftsman. He considered the term 'poet' a praise word. Robert Frost thought a good deal about the nature of poetry.

"Poetry is a process
Poetry is the renewal of words.
Poetry is the dawning of an idea.
Poetry is that which tends to evaporate from both
Prose and verse when translated.
Poetry is the liberal arts.

Robert Frost has his conception of poetry. He has offered a good many definitions of poetry. Most are fragmentary.

"A poem is the emotion of having a thought while the readers wait a little anxiously for the success of dawn."

"Every poem is an epitome of great predicament, a figure of the will braving alien entanglement."

"A poem is momentary stay against confusion"

"My definition of literature would be just this words that have become deed."

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view of existence. To man, Frost believed that the universe is almost chaotic. The universe is a confusion in which he could find meaningful ideas by facing difficulties. It is shaped in to a poem by Robert Frost. What is man's problem? According to his poetry man's problems lie in obtaining the right relationship with the confusion of his surroundings in the universe. Man must attain a middle ground of his confusion.

Robert Frost maintained with Wordsworth and Emerson that certain general speech patterns were to be found specially in rural areas. He adopted the many of the principles expressed in Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical ballads' in diction'. Like Wordsworth he chose incidents and situations from common life .he described them in a language used by men. He preferred people in low and rustic life, because they speak in a plain language. According to Robert Frost, the manner of rural life is easily comprehended. The people in 'North of Boston' he himself, included in his role of rural thinker. He included their way of talking and their natural speech rhythms.

For Robert Frost, poetry was life. He made perpetual efforts to relate poetry to life and life to poetry. He refers to poetry as beginning in delight and ending in wisdom. He has in his mind the balance of sensibility and substance ,of emotion and thought. According to him, a poem must not be merely a trick , but a performance. He mixed his conception of poetry the sense of emotion and the mind. He wrote-

“Enthusiasm passed through an idea” is what poetry must become if it
aspires to the height”

Robert Frost remarked that modern poets forget that poetry must include, the mind as includes the emotions. They only emphasized on emotions of the speaker in their poetry. They did not include mind in their poetry on this basis that mind is dangerous. To include the mind in poetry is not good for poetry because it dominates emotions of human being. So mind must not be included. But Robert Frost thinks that mind must be included in poetry. Poetry displays the mixture of mind and emotions. In Robert Frost's poetry mind is kept with fact and emotion with fancy. Fact and fancy constitute to major place in the world of Robert Frost's poetry. He considers that Fact deals with practical life and fancy deals with imagination. In the mind of Robert Frost, there is a delightful interplay of fact and fancy.

Robert Frost's poems express his personal thought and feeling. In one of his poems 'Home Burial' from the volume 'North of Boston' the lines from the husband's first speech display the combination of mind and emotion. Wife is emotionally hurt by the death of her child, but the husband is practical in his life.

“The little graveyard where my people are!
So small the window frames the whole of it....
But I understand; it is not the stones
But the child's mound”

It does not mean that husband is not hurt by the death of his child but his emotion do not find place over his mind. He felt towards his child like his wife but he accepted the fact of life that if there is life in the universe, there will also be the cold hands of death in the universe.

In his another poem 'Birches' from the volume 'Mountain Interval' there is a mingling of fact and fancy throughout the poem. A mingling of wisdom and fancy makes it a delightful poem which consists of a combination of mind and feeling. In this poem the speaker's emotion compel him to escape from the difficulties of the world and the universe. He will have to face many difficulties in his life. The poet would like to climb a birch tree, which is directed towards

heaven. The climbing is partly escaped from the difficulties of his life. But in spite of this earth is the right place for love for him. In this poem the poet adopts an intellectual attitude to live on the earth. He gives up the idea of escaping from the difficulties of the universe. His intellectual attitude dominates his emotional attitude. In this poem again there is the unity of feeling and mind in his poetry.

There are two major constituents in the world of Robert Frost's poetry. In this connection Robert Frost can be compared with T S Eliot. For T S Eliot, emotion recollected in tranquility is in an inexact formula. He regarded the poet's mind as a medium rather than a personality. He feels his thought as immediately as the odor of the rose. Thought is transformed in to feeling to steal its way in to the reader's heart. If there is no union of thought and feeling, the result is dissociation of sensibility means bad poetry. In Robert Frost the state of poet's mind is notable. He gives importance to the unity of v mind and emotion in his poetry. For him, poetry is not recollection in tranquility. He was a supporter of combining mind and feeling.

After reading his poem it can be said that must be aware of his delight in clarifying thought,, in play of mind and poetry displays the marriage of mind and emotion in his conception of poetry. Poetry is an art of imitation. It is representing counterfeiting of figuring both. As regards the function and purpose of poetry, it should both teach and delight. The poetry is superior to all other branches of learning. Science like Astronomy, Mathematics are subordinate sciences because they do not serve the true end of all learning which is self knowledge. The end of all learning is virtuous action, and poetry serves this end.

Poetry is superior both to history and philosophy. Philosophy presents merely abstract precepts, which can be understood by the young poet. History deals with concrete fact or example of virtue but from these fact the reader must themselves derive universal and general truth. But poetry combines both these advantages. Its general truth can be easily understood because they are conveyed through examples and its examples are drawn from an ideal world. These are more vivid and effective. It teaches virtue in a way which is effective even to ordinary men.

In his conception of poetry, there are two purposes of poetry. It is delight and wisdom. His poem begins in delight and end in wisdom. Robert Frost wrote-

“No tears in the write, no tears in the reader”

Robert Frost's volume ' A Further Range is totally an expression of delight and wisdom. It solves his purpose of poetry. He has expressed his view in this volume in a moralizing tone. He spent much of his time in teaching so made his purpose of poetry to delight and to teach. His best poem “Two tramps in Mud Time” from the volume “A Further Range” expressed the writer's delight. It is a delight in the skill which he has acquired through his experience of life.

“Good block of Oak it was I split.

As large around us the chopping block.

And every piece I squarely hit

Felt splinter less as a cloven rock.”

Poetry imitates like the other fine arts, but it is not mere mimicry, a mere slavish representation of surface reality. It imitates imaginatively and so gives us a higher truth, and a higher reality. In his conception of poetry he emphasizes also on the contact with reality. In his century and country Robert Frost saw the reality consisted of the condition of the people who are living in America and in the universe. Robert Frost in his conception of poetry insisted on the poet's faithfulness to reality. He did not insist that all true poets should choose as their subject

matter biology and politics etc. He should know about the reality of life. The poet who are not very good or if they are mediocre, they will mirror the surface of reality. The great poet will discover the interior or spiritual life. Robert Frost again and again emphasizes on the contact with reality in poetry. In real life also there is a mingling of the good and evil, joy and sorrow, tears and smile. So his poetry is a mixture of these emotions which deal with real life. Tragic-comedy is nearer to life and so it combines within itself the pleasure as well as the instruction of both.

Poetry does not merely give us knowledge of virtue. It also motivates for virtual action. This is so because its truth is conveyed in a delightful manner. The purpose of poetry is primarily to delight. It gives the readers aesthetic pleasure and instruction is only a secondary function. These qualities of Robert Frost give him a touch of reality in his poetry.

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