

GREEN READING OF ROBERT FROST'S SELECTED POEMS

Mita Shah

HOD, Dept. of English,
Uma Arts & Nathiba Commerce Mahila College,
Gandhinagar, Gujarath, India.

Abstract

The word green study reminds environment. Eco criticism is the latest developed theory which got recognition in 1996 only. The other names of eco criticism like ecology, ecological literature, green reading, green theory, green cultural studies etc. are modified words of nature study and they are stepping stones for the development of eco criticism theory. Eco criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together. Robert Frost is the famous American poet of 20th century. Through textual illustrations, the researcher will interpret the green study of Frost's select poems. The research paper will study eco criticism theory, enrichment of Frost as a poet and evaluate Robert Frost as an eco critical poet through his selected poems named Birches, Acceptance, A Girl's Garden, Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter Morning, Mowing and To the Thawing Wind.

Key Words: Green study, eco criticism, Robert Frost, culture, ecology

GREEN READING OF ROBERT FROST'S SELECTED POEMS

- Mita Shah

Green Study of Robert Frost's Select Poems

The word green study reminds environment. Eco criticism is the latest developed theory which got recognition in 1996 only. The other names of eco criticism like ecology, ecological literature, green reading, green theory, green cultural studies etc. are modified words of nature study and they are stepping stones for the development of eco criticism theory. Eco criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together. "Eco criticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire eco sphere" (Glotfelty and Fromm Introduction xix). Eco criticism theory D ADD HISTORY AND QUOTATION 1PAGE THI LESS.

Eco criticism looks closely at the human, culture, nature interaction in texts. Eco criticism often presents the scene of an interplay that stresses the cultural aspects of various concepts of nature. Timothy Clark observes "Eco criticism is varied and fast changing set of practices which challenges inherited thinking and practice in the reading of literature and culture" (Clark Cover page 256). Thus, eco criticism functions to evaluate literature and culture: "Eco criticism is a theoretical movement, examining cultural constructions of Nature in their social and political contexts" (Egan Cover page 204). Thus, "Eco criticism there might be a means of moving from monoculture view of nature to multi cultural one from a world of self isolating societies to a world of unified and unifying cultures" (Nichols xxiii).

It is very interesting and important to peep into the origin of the eco criticism theory. The earlier history of the term reflects the contribution of three persons. The first item in Mazel's anthology of "early eco criticism" dates from 1864 (Buell 152 lines 31-32). The German zoologist named Ernest Haeckel used the term ecology in 1869. Joseph Meeker introduced the term 'literary ecology' in 1972. (V. and Jana 3lines 15-17). The term 'eco criticism' was first introduced in 1978 by Willian Rueckert in his essay named Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Eco criticism. The writer gives signal to mankind. ".....the idea that nature should also be protected by human laws, that trees (dolphins and whales hawks and whooping cranes) should have lawyers to articulate and defend their rights is one of the marvellous and characteristic parts of the ecological vision" (Glotfelty and Fromm 108 lines 14-17). He declares that in literature energy comes from the creative imagination and language is the vehicle for storing the creative energy. In 1996, there is an official announcement of eco criticism theory through the publication of the two seminal works:

J
H
E
R
S

O
C
T
2
0
2
0

'The Eco Criticism Reader' edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm and 'The Environmental Imagination' by Lawrence Buell.

Robert Frost is the famous American poet of 20th century. The paper focuses on the green study of select poems of Robert Frost.

Environment is the natural phenomena which affects human life. The seeds of protection of environment are inherent in the glorious treasure of Vedic literature. For example "Do not cut trees because they remove pollution" (Rigveda- 6.48:17) (Kumar viii). There are some references which show that without joining in the group of environmentalists, the few persons of India work for protection of India. 'Chipko movement' (Kumar 85) of India at 1970 shows protest of women of Tihari Garhwal region and these women played instrumental role for protection of environment and trees (Kumar 85). Sunderlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Megha Patkar revolted for saving environment.

Nature has remained the matter of attraction for all the writers of different languages and literatures. Oxford English Dictionary defines nature as "the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals and landscape as opposed to humans or human creation" (Pearsall 950). Eco criticism has broadened the scope from nature writing to the study of literature, society and science, all under one head. The word 'eco criticism' is the combination of two words – eco and criticism. 'Eco' means earth, the whole universe and 'criticism' means study. So eco criticism means study of nature. However, eco criticism is more than nature studies. It widens and gives more comprehensive approach to the study of literature. It includes the study of nature, culture and geography and thus is interdisciplinary in its approach. The other names of eco criticism like ecology, ecological literature, green reading, green theory, green cultural studies etc. are modified words of nature study and they are stepping stones for the development of eco criticism theory.

Literature is the medium to reflect the current problems of society. The development of science and technology put the world in summit of progress. But the lives of humans are in danger. "Current environment problems are largely of our own making, are in other words, a bio product of culture" (Glotfelty and Fromme xxi lines 6-7). If the person is alive then he/she can enjoy the comforts of technology and scientific progress. Eco criticism alerts the persons of society through literary works to sensitize with all problems. So theory of eco criticism is most appropriate and useful in 21st century. "If mortals dwell in that, they save the earth and if poetry is the original admission of dwelling, the poetry is the place where we save the earth" (Bate 283 lines 10-12).

Robert Lee Frost is very popular poet of not only American literature but of the world literature of 20th century. Robert Frost earns name and fame at international level. "He was one of the first writers born on the West coast to attain international fame" (Wager 205). He is the poet of New England region and enriches the American literature with volumes of poetry. His poetic works are in big volumes, nine in numbers. They contain short lyrics and long poems. He is the winner of prestigious Pulitzer prizes for poetry, four times in his career. His poems study human life, human relations, and way of living of persons in the background of nature.

The very famous poem of Frost, *Birches* is full of ecological allusions. Birches are a common sight in New England. The poem colours with ecology. It consists of a series of beautiful pictures of nature and of a man. It is among Frost's best known pieces and has acquired a wide popularity. The opening lines of the poem show poet's observation of bending of birches to left and right to remain straight in darker trees. The poet delineates the swinging movement of this tree. The icy sunny morning after rain add the beauty of birches. The poet has narrated the effect of part of nature on birches nicely. "As the breeze rises and turn many coloured" (www.PoemHunter.com – Robert Frost - Poems 47 line -8) and " Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells" (www.PoemHunter.com – Robert Frost - Poems 47 line -10) express the beauty of birches due to the effect of breeze and the sun. The poet compares aspects of tree with way of living of persons. Birches have supplemented the feeling of the poet. The poem contains around birches and also shows how the poet, boys, girls enjoy the same trees. The swinging movement of birches reminds the poet as if some boys have been swinging on the tree. The falling leaves of birches are compared with girls. It reminds the inter tuning between nature and human being. The poem proceeds and it also delineates the mischievous boy who enjoys the riding in trees and swinging on them. In this way the poet depicts the pleasurable moments of childhood period through the character of a boy. The poet also shares his attachment to the same tree through climbing a birch tree and how he climbs back branches up to a snow-white trunk. Thus, the poem studies a series of beautiful pictures of nature and of human being. It appears to the humanity in true and broad sense. He climbs carefully and reaches to top branches of a tree up to the brim (edge) and above the brim. So, the poem reflects harmonious tuning between nature and human being which is the part of eco criticism. Through realistic description, the poem presents the relationship between the real and ideal world through symbolism. Life is full of struggle and combination of happiness and unhappiness. The poet also prays that fate may not misunderstand him and may his wishes be half granted. The climbing, ascending and bending of the birches stand for the obstacles in the path of soul's union with God. Thus, the poem strengthens its faith in goodness of life. The poet gives the golden message of harmonious tuning among human being and world peace. "... Earth's the right place for love: / I don't know where it's likely to go better" (www.PoemHunter.com – Robert Frost - Poems 48, lines 13- 14). So, above lines suggest ethics and value system which are the part

of eco criticism. The poem shows eco sensitivity. The poet's anxiety of harming the trees is also suggested in the poem. So, in this way, *Birches* is the best example of Frost's ecological aspects.

The researcher also aspires to study such green poems of Frost which are less famous. Some of them are small poems but they are full of eco criticism.

A Girl's Garden pen pictures the character of a girl. She is a neighbour of a poet. Through her character, the poet wants to show eco sensitivity and also shows the importance of plantation. The girl asks her father to give her a garden plot. The father agrees happily. The girl has tilled the farm with hard labour and has taken care for planting the seeds of various vegetables like potatoes, radishes, lettuce, peas, tomatoes, beets, beans, pumpkins, corn and even fruit trees. Thus, the poem gives a live experience of a girl's plantation. To show eco sensitivity is the part of Green literature which is well presented here. The eco sensitivity of father and girl are well reflected here. The poem is in the background of nature. Through the characters of the girl and father, the poem shows the positive effect of nature to the human being. The poem guides the society for novel thought connected with nature. In this way, the poem well reflects eco criticism as the components of it are there in the poem.

Acceptance tells about the law of nature and its acceptance by birds and animals. Eco criticism studies the effect of nature about the bird and animal which are well expressed here. The routine of nature do not disturb birds and animals. They do not complain but accept the situation. The poem gives indirect message to human beings that accept the law of nature and follow them. The sun is same but its sunlight is different in clouds and in gulf. The birds are familiar with understanding nature and that is change of darkness in the sky. The poem notices different observation by different birds to nature during darkness. To study bird life is the part of green literature which is well presented here. One bird has closed his faded eye, some of them have swooped and some of them have spoken softly:

"...Safe! / Now let the night be dark for all of me./ Let the night be too dark for me to see/ Into the future, Let what will be, be" (www.PoemHunter.com – Robert Frost - Poems 36 lines 11-14). Thus, the poem ends with indirect advice given by birds to human being to accept the rule of nature and enjoy the life. Thus, in this poem, the feeling of birds is predominating. It reminds Carson's *Silent Spring*. Through the social discourse, ecology also describes ethical principles as in Rachael Carson's outstanding fable named *Silent Spring*. It presents a serious threat both to wild life and to human health. It shows loss of a bird song.

Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter expresses eco critical ideas in which nature, its effect on human being and bird are studied with suggestion of eco alertness. The poem opens with the sunset depiction of winter. "The west was getting out of gold, / The breath of air had died of cold (www.PoemHunter.com – Robert Frost - Poems 115, lines1-2). The poem is

divided into five couplets of lines. The poem describes a way of living of a bird during sunset time. The poet narrator has shared his experiences. The western evening make the atmosphere golden mingled with cold. The second couplets of lines express the observation of a bird which is singing in sweet voice. Gradually cold night falls. So, in third couplet, the poet says that no voice of bird is singing. The chilled cold affects a tree. And so, there is a single leaf on a branch of a tree. The poet's judgement is that such a crystal chill adds frost to snow. So, the cold becomes unbearable. The poem ends with demonstration of parts of nature like cloud, smoke, a little star etc. have pierced from north to south. So, the poem focuses on the movement of bird and cold evening which are the part of eco criticism.

In *Mowing*, the poet has imagined the lawn- mowing as live character which can feel. The lawn feels heat of the sun. The whole forest is silent but the poet listens the voice of mowing as his ears are very sensitive to nature.

October colours ecology and its effect. The poet praises October morning. The poet's mastery to narrate the smallest parts of nature in different situation is the beauty of Frost's poems. The beauty of warm sunrays of the October morning is narrated here. The poet's noticing art is shown as the poet tells that ripe leaves may fall on tomorrow due to blowing of wide wind. The process of falling of tree is less. The whole process of October morning is slow. The sunrise is delayed in the same month. So, in this way the poem expresses the fact of life.

To the Thawing Wind is small poem but reflects poet's affection to nature. The poet invites wind and addresses him as 'Southwester'. This warm wind gives life to buried flowers that are chilled due to coldness. The birds from nest are also unable to come due to cold. The poem invites them to sing in the warm atmosphere. He invites chilled stream to flow freely. The melting of ice of glass of window will also vanished due to warm wind. "Burst into my narrow stall; / Swing the picture on the wall;... (www.PoemHunter.com – Robert Frost - *Poems* 294 lines11-12). The running of wind makes the rattling of pages of the book and so the pages fall down on the floor. Such a warm atmosphere motivates the poet to go outside and enjoy the beauty of nature. So, this poem studies the tuning between nature and human being.

After reading Frost's poems, the researcher agrees with the remark of John Frost Lynen: " Frost has so many and such excellent poems about natural scenery and wild life that one can hardly avoid thinking of him as a nature poet...Frost's nature poetry is so excellent and so characteristic that it must be given a prominent place in any account of his art" (Tilak 24). Really, Robert Frost's nature poems are excellent.

At present the world suffers from the problems like global warming, climate change, natural calamities like unbearable heat, icy cold, earthquake, cyclone, flood and so on. The

changed atmosphere affects human beings, birds, animals etc. Through his poems, Robert Frost has given golden message for the protection of environment, preservation of it and also enjoyment of the parts of nature.

Works Cited:

Bate, Jonathan. *The Song of the Earth*. Harward Uni. Press: Cambridge. 2002. Print.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Blackwell Pvt. Malden: USA. 2005. Print.

Clark, Timothy. *Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Environment*. Cambridge Uni. Press: Cambridge. 3rd ed. 2013. Print.

Egan, Gabriel. *Green Shakespeare*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: London and New York. 2006. Print.

Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Fromm Harold, editors. *The Eco Criticism Reader*.

The Uni. Of Georgia Press: Athens Georgia. 1996. Print

Kumar, Satendra. *Ecological Consciousness in Literature*. Yking

Books: Jaipur. 2013. Print.

Nichols, Asthon. *Beyond Romantic Eco criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan:

New York. 2011. Print.

Pearsall, Judy editor. *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford Uni. Press: New Delhi. 10thed. ,1999. Print.

Tilak, Raghukul. *Robert Frost – Select Poems*, 15th ed., Rama Brothers, New Delhi, 1994, Print.

V., Rajakrishnan, and Jana Ujjwal ed.s. *The Green Symphony*. Sarup

Book Pub.s: New Delhi. 2011. Print.

Wager, Willis. *American Literature A World View*. New York University Press, 1968, Print

www.PoemHunter.com – *Robert Frost - Poems* ,The World's Poetry Archive, Classical Series, 2004.