



## Robert Frost's images of supreme Awareness

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**Abstract :** *It is an attempt to show that the presence of high poetic quality is latent in a poet's supreme awareness of the reality apprehended in terms of God realization. As a puritan of New England, Frost believed in a world that was ardent by God, but governed by his decree. So, he has glimpses of the ultimate realities like life, food, work, death etc. There is enough evidence in his poems to his anxiety for establishing a relationship between humans and God through various images. In his meditative poems, Frost's exploration and speculative spirit is witnessed.*

**Key Words:** *Supreme Awareness, God realization, the beatific vision, salvation, providence, God and eternity.*

### Narration

The presence of high poetic quality is latent in a poet's supreme awareness of the reality apprehended in terms of God realization. Such a realization may appear directly or obliquely, but some glimpse of beatitude is a precondition to it. A superb example of it is Dante's vision in the third book of The Divine Comedy, Paradiso:

"In la sua volontade e nostra  
pace." (Paradiso, iii.85)

(In his will is our peace")

This is an example of God realization pointing to Dante's innate spirituality. It is not possible for a poet severely shaken by the social developments of the World War, I and II era to have such a vision, when we turn to Frost's poetry for his beatific vision, we must remember that he was born in the Puritan tradition of New England. The Puritans of New England believed in a world that was ardent by God, but governed by his decree that was more or less arbitrary. Most of the Puritan Sermons concentrated on the confrontation of man with a hostile universe. The Puritan

tenant of self-reliance had its source in man's desire to resist an in different universe to man's aspirations. Frost's world of nature, having no sentimentality "is a continuation of the same age old tradition of man finding himself face to face with an indifferent cosmic order, insensitive to human existence, and of which the buck, with its muscular animality and vigour is the embodiment in Frost's poem, "The Most of It". Frost has glimpses of the ultimate realities: life, death, food, work, hatred and friendship, sex and rhythm of nature.

The poet for Frost is someone who will not 'come in' even if he is asked to do so, who 'has promises to keep' which inspires him to do more than 'stopping by'. There is enough evidence in his poems to show his anxiety for establishing a relationship between humans and God. This relationship appears to him in flashes without any calculated effort. In this context it seems true that an intense exercise of "human creative powers" in Frost is apt to touch some larger creative force in the universe. In his meditative poems Frost's exploratory and speculative spirit is witnessed. In these



poems, he ponders on the central problem of existence; "man's identity and freedom, his relation to the natural world and the flux of time, his defences against an engulfing chaos, the place of human suffering, and the possibility of salvation.

Frost is torn between affirmation and negation. But he is able to find out a resolution of the conflict. His quest of the spirit is seen for the first time in "The Trial by Existence" (1913). The poem is set in state of pre-existence and it recalls the theme of William Blake's Book of Thale. It is hinged on two main ideas: first, the soul is about to be born prefer an earthly existence and before choosing it, they know earthly joys and sorrows; and second, God obliterates the lasting memory in order that the soul could comfort itself with the realization that it had enjoyed Free Will. The first sign of supreme awareness in this poem is found in the second stanza of the poem:

The light of heaven falls whole and white  
And is not shattered into dyes,  
The light forever is morning light;  
The hills are verdured pasture-wise;  
The angel hosts with freshness go,  
And seek with laughter what to brave.

The last two lines of this stanza point to the difficulties of life on earth through the images of 'the hushed snow' and the far distant breaking wave'. The souls have knowledge of the trials and tribulations on earth:

And from a cliff-top is proclaimed  
The gathering of the souls for birth,

The trial by existence named,  
The obscuration upon earth.

It is followed by visions of Providence, showing God's interest in his creation.

And a white shimmering concourse rolls  
Toward the throne to witness there  
The speeding of devoted souls  
Which God makes his especial care

In these lines, the image of 'a white shimmering concourse rolls' suggests the movement of the devoted souls toward the throne of God. The souls, as is suggested by the 'colour image' are in a state of purity and this invariably recalls Wordsworth's idea of how souls descend to the earth in his poem, "Intimations of Immortality" from "Recollections of Early Childhood":

But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

This is not to suggest that Frost follows Wordsworth's philosophy of childhood: it is only to point out that like Wordsworth, Frost is also conscious of a superior force sustaining and shaping life on earth. Life on earth is a daring act and God makes it beautiful by His brush strokes. The image of God as a painter emerges from "God Limns":

And very beautifully God limns,  
And tenderly, live's little dream,  
But naught extenuates or dims,  
Setting the thing that is supreme



Undoubtedly, this is a glimpse of God and eternity. Frost's belief is the goodness of God is as conspicuous in the images of His benevolence as Wordsworth's belief in Christianity is half-hearted. As far as the significance of this vision is concerned it makes life worth-living, as man is found to be gifted with a heroic will, as well as a conscious choice. These happen to be the concepts through which Frost finds support for his pragmatism, his acceptance of life as it is. This vision is also significant in view of the vogue of naturalism, "with its philosophy pessimistic determinism" which had strong foothold in American literature. Frost is doubt but that "the fate of man can be determined by such factors as heredity or environment. The artist must have full faith in God. The poet's belief, according to Frost, is above all the elements of creativity, as he points out in "Education by Poetry", and then finally the relationship we enter into with God to believe the future in --- to believe the here after in".

Supreme awareness is no doubt an awareness of God and a realization of the creative force operative in the cosmos. Such awareness is also connected with the glimpses of creative fulfilment of life. Through a set of sexual images, the idea of a new born child is made a primatic experience. When the seed is put into the soil, it sheds the earth crumbs to see the light of the day:

How love burns through the  
putting in the seed

On through the watching for that  
early birth

When, just as the soil, tarnishes  
with weed,

The sturdy seedling with arched  
body comes

Shouldering its way and shedding  
the earth crumbs.

Nature partly reveals the way it works through the human beings, who are engaged in creativity. Love is a powerful motif in all human activities, if they are turned towards creativity. Sometimes nature appears terrible, but this aspect, if experienced with sincerity, stimulates the faith in God, and in this sense terror and panic are also creative. Frost experiences the terror and panic of nature in the following lines of "Bereft":

Where had I heard this wind before  
Change like this to a deeper roar?

What would it take my standing  
there for

Holding open a restive door,

Looking downhill to a frothy shore?

And soon after this, the poet has his moment of his supreme awareness:

Word I was in the house alone

Somehow must have gotten  
abroad,

Word I was in my life alone,

Word I had no one left but God

Nature, in its threatening spectacle appears in the images like "a deeper roar' of the wind; 'the frothy shore' and 'the sombre clouds in the West' were massed". Frost's views of the cloud imagery before the moment of God realization reminds us of Eliot's "What The Thunder Said" in The Waste Land (1922) with a difference that Frost has got the vision of the sinister face of nature and this vision forces him to turn



to God. "Bereft" suggests the abandoned self of man and this condition is necessary for God realization.

The imagery in a large number of Frost's poems picturises the poet's anguish in his isolation and loneliness. But there are other images which point to his determination to sing in order to save himself from suffering, defeat and death. To some extent, Frost supports Nietzsche's idea of 'ewigkeit', i.e. 'the power to reject the past and ignore the future—both as unrealities – and to live only in the eternal present, satisfying to its profoundest depths, the drive toward reality.

This belief occurs in Frost a serious artistic purpose to promote faith in man and in the nature of men, bringing everything that happens in man's life within the scope of Providence. If we look into the secret of a tragic vision of life, it is revealed to us that the pity and fear that this vision arouses are purged by the poet's firm faith in the Grace of God. Frost is all the time interested in the rationality of the man. And it should enable him to see meaning of the things

that exist in the universe. Frost goes on shifting the stress from faith in man to faith in God, since faith in man's ability to outlive and survive the tragedies of life comes from God.

It is evident that Frost does not support the view that life is meaningless. Even if it is meaningless, there is "the ever present need to affirm the greatness of the human spirit that can face up to its destiny whatever it may be". Moreover, the tragic vision refers to "a subject's psychology, his view and version of reality. It is because of Frost's faith in God that lends his vision of life grace, as there is no end of the human spirit filled

with optimism. This eternity is obvious in the image "the brook runs down in sending up our life":

It has this throwing backward on itself

So that the fall of most of it is always

Raising a little, sending up a little.

Our life runs down in sending up the clock.

The brook runs down in sending up our life.

The sun runs down in sending up the brook.

And there is something sending up the sun.

It is almost a summary of Frost's faith in the benevolence of God. It is also a vision of the eternal chain of creativity, which binds 'the brook', the 'sun', and their creator together. To know the secret of the running brook or the ever shining sun, one must have the experience of the creative force that exists in the universe and this force is identified with God in most religions of the world.

A tragic view of life can only be redeemed by the artist's visions of reality both from philosophical and theological points of view. Frost's universe as it emerges from his images and unadorned utterances is a theistic one and it is irreparably related to human destiny. Between man and God the force that makes life worth-living is love in its varying moods and colours. Finally, Frost's visions of reality and his supreme awareness established him not as an escapist or 'a spiritual drifter' but as an artist who has filled the hearts of his



readers with enthusiasm, inspiration and hope for a better world.

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