



Research Paper

A Study on the Human Values Embedded In the Poems of Robert Frost

Irene Thamizhnagai Alexander

ABSTRACT

This study draws light upon the human values embedded or hidden in the words and lines used by the poet Robert Frost in his poems, "The Road Not Taken", "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", "Carpe Diem" and "The Sound of the Trees". The study delves deep into the poems and highlights the lines which carry the values and describes the values to be inculcated. Values like, value of apologising, aesthetic value, value of planning, value of decision making, value of courage, value of friendship, value of adoring nature, value of responsibility and accountability, value of endurance and hard work, value of happiness, value of protecting oneself and others and the value of preparedness to face death are derived from the poems. They are vividly and elaborately discussed in the study.

Keywords: Values, Human values, Moral values, Imbibe, Inculcate.

Received 25 Jan., 2023; Revised 07 Feb., 2023; Accepted 09 Feb., 2023 © The author(s) 2023.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Human values

According to the dictionary, values are "things that have a fundamental worth in utility or importance to the one who possesses". However, value is always something good. All values are related to one's morality. Life is a universally objective value. People always value their own life and the lives of others. To lead a respectful life, one has to imbibe good human values. The great moral values such as truth, freedom, charity, patriotism, etc. are good when they function correctly. They are all life protecting and life enhancing. A person who knows to discern right from wrong is a morally upright person.

Different views of values

From philosophical point of view, moral behaviour is conditioned by one's cultural tenets and guarded by conscience. A human being should conduct himself accordingly and modify his life to build his behavioural patterns.

From psychological point of view, valuing falls under affective domain which has five major categories like Receiving, Responding, Valuing, Organisation and Characterization.

Types of values

Values are classified as Moral values, Social values, Recreational values, Personal values, Aesthetic values, Spiritual values, Intellectual values and Economic values.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is usually said that values are caught. But if experimented, values are not only caught, values are also taught initially. There is a saying in English, "To nip in the bud". A child is taught to do good things and avoid bad things. This is usually done by the parents, the family and the educational institutions. A child is taught not to lie or take away others things. This is what is called, to nip in the bud.

Moral values are taught directly and indirectly by the happenings and incidents around the world. Such one indirect method of learning values is through literature. Human values are embedded in each and every literary work.

In this study Robert Frost's four poems are taken to draw out the hidden values embedded in the poems.

Values or beliefs that have an inherent worth to the one who imbibes the values. The values are documented intricately in the language taught and behavioural patterns.

Kluckhohn (1951) defined value as a conception; that influences the selection from varied available means.

Human values are necessary in today's society. Human values show interconnectedness between people and help the human beings to thrive. The human values are the positive feelings which bring attachment, relationship and spirituality. These are the underlying factors to lead a normal life.

It is human nature to derive good thoughts and ideas from stories, movies and from other form of art. Poetry is one such fascinating element from where aesthetic values, spiritual values, recreational values and other values can be absorbed and procured.

Hence the study has been done on Robert Frost's work to highlight the values, to impart them, to be imbibed by the readers and literature lovers.

THE AMERICAN POET ROBERT FROST

The American poet Robert Frost was born on March 26th, 1874, in San Francisco, California. His first two books of poetry were published near the beginning of the first World War. He was then considered as talented word-smith. He received four Pulitzer Prizes. Frost died when he was 88.

II. DISCUSSION

Elizabeth Jennings (1964) observes that, "what is most noticeable in all Frost's reflective poems is an almost total absence of despair or pessimism; it is not that he shuns darkness or difficulties... quite the reverse... but rather than something in his mind and imagination makes him eager to accept, to examine and sometimes to reconcile opposites."

John Lynen (1962) says: "For Frost, nature is really an image of the whole world of circumstances within which man finds himself. It represents what one might call 'the human situation.'"

TABLE 1

TITLE OF THE POEM	LINES OF THE POEM	VALUES EMBEDDED
The Road Not Taken	Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,	Aesthetic value
	And sorry I could not travel both	Value of apologising
	Oh, I kept the first for another day!	Value of planning.
	I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.	Value of decision making and courage.

The expression of 'yellow wood' shows the poet's observation of nature and his delight in the colour. Human beings should take time to look around the environment and enjoy the beauty of nature created by God the Almighty.

The word 'sorry' denotes the apologising value. One has to stoop down to ask for apology and express through the word sorry whenever it is warranted.

The line "Oh, I kept the first for another day!", tells about the poet's plan for future. The poet wants to try all the avenues open before him. This talks about his endurance to experiment every opening he had before him. One should have such futuristic plan and execute it to achieve the goal. One also should have the courage to experiment every option placed before him/her.

The lines

"I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference".

claim that the poet has taken wise decision in taking the road less travelled by. Usually, people try to follow others in taking up a task to move on, to be easily successful, they copy and follow others to achieve something great. But it is always greater to stand apart, and follow one's instinct to achieve greater things in life to be grandly successful. Such kind of decision always needs courage and boldness. Here, the poet Robert Frost was quite emboldened to take the path which is not used by many.

According to Rizka Elfira (2009) in, "The Moral Values in some of Robert Frost's Poems" explains there are some words in the poem that we must explain in order to make it clearly understandable. The first one is 'wood', this word is appropriately interpreted as "human life in general." The second one is 'road' which maybe interpreted as "a way of life." While the third one is 'difference' which may be interpreted as "of great value".

In such a way the present study also states the explanation for the lines from the poem "The Road Not Taken."

TABLE 2

TITLE OF THE POEM	LINES OF THE POEM	VALUES EMBEDDED
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening	Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village, though; To watch his woods fill up with snow. My little horse must think it queer He gives his harness bells a shake To ask if there is some mistake. Between the woods and frozen lake The darkest evening of the year. The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep.	Respecting and recognizing the neighbours and friendship. Admiring nature. Understanding the feelings of mute animals even. Adoration of nature. Value of responsibility and accountability. Value of endurance and hardship. Value of trust, confidence, hardworking and aspiration.

These two lines,

“Whose woods these are I think I know.
 His house is in the village, though;”

indicate the respect, the poet had for his neighbours and neighbourhood. His value for recognition of the villager is of high value. All human beings should maintain cordial relationship and friendship with neighbours around. One should also respect their well-being.

“To watch his woods fill up with snow”.

“Between the woods and frozen lake
 The darkest evening of the year”.

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,”

The poet adores and admires the beauty of nature in the above lines.

The poet is able to recognise the feelings and the thoughts of his horse and expresses the word ‘queer’ in the line “My little horse must think it queer”. This value of empathy need not be expressed with the human beings alone but also with other creatures.

“But I have promises to keep,”

Here, the poet has the urge to keep his promise for the family, society and the world. This line vividly talks about his responsibility and accountability to fulfil his duty as a man.

“And miles to go before I sleep”.

Before the end of his life, he musters courage and confidence to fulfil his duty on this earth. This line emphasizes his yearning to undergo hardship, to work hard and to achieve his aspiration.

As per Reni Sari (2010), in her thesis “An Analysis of Moral Values found in Robert Frost’s Selected Poems” interprets that she found the moral value in the poem is responsibility. Reni Sari also further adds; the two last sentences not only warn the author but also it goes to all human beings. It is also stated that the poem actually gives the moral value about attitude towards life and life is a duty.

TABLE 3

TITLE OF THE POEM	LINES OF THE POEM	VALUES EMBEDDED
Carpe Diem	“Be happy, happy, happy, And seize the day of pleasure.” To warn against the danger From being overflooded With happiness should have it It lives less in the present	Value of happiness and enjoying pleasure. Value of protecting oneself and others. Value of understanding. Limitation of enjoyment. Experimenting, enjoying and the experiencing the present times of life.

	Too crowding, too confusing- Too present to imagine.	Value of clarity in thinking and avoiding wild imagination.
--	---	---

The lines

“Be happy, happy, happy,
And seize the day of pleasure.”

inculcate the value of happiness. One should be happy about the blessings bestowed upon oneself and should understand the pleasure of retaining the happiness and spreading the same to others.

The line “To warn against the danger”, imparts the value of protecting oneself and others from the calamities of nature and other dangers encircling the globe.

“From being overflooded
With happiness should have it”

The above lines emphasize the value of being happy and enjoying upto one’s limitation. Over-enjoyment may bring in the consequence of some danger and push into some form of infirmity.

The line “It lives less in the present”, living in the present, one experiences, experiments and enjoys unminding the past and the future. Hence, this value is warranted for every human being.

The value of clarity in thinking and avoiding wild imagination is exhibited in the lines,

“Too crowding, too confusing-
Too present to imagine.”

Confusion leads to mental trauma. Therefore, one should know to discriminate good from evil and abide by good things in life to avoid confusing state. Wild imagination leads to disappointment in life.

TABLE 4

TITLE OF THE POEM	LINES OF THE POEM	VALUES EMBEDDED
The Sound of the Trees	I wonder about the trees.	Admiration for nature.
	Forever the noise of these More than another noise	Value of observing and even hearing the still voice of flora and fauna.
	So close to our dwelling place?	Adoring the environment around.
	And acquire a listening air.	The value of magical aura of air.
	As it grows wiser and older,	The value of respecting wisdom.
	I shall have less to say, But I shall be gone.	The value of preparedness to face death.

Adoration for nature is quintessential gesture for every human being. The poet wonders about the trees around his house in the line “I wonder about the trees”.

“Forever the noise of these
More than another noise”

These lines depict the admiration and the enjoyment of trees and flora and even try to hear the still voice of nature. People are conscious of what others speak and also they respond, but one also should train one’s ears to hear the still voice of other living things like flora and fauna.

The great attribute to the environment surrounding the dwelling place is essential for all mankind. The poet in the line “So close to our dwelling place?”, describes the beauty of nature around his house.

In the line “And acquire a listening air”, the value of breeze and wind is shown. The air is very much needed for human beings to survive. Henceforth it is almost like, the air seems to listen to the need of man.

By using the words ‘wiser’ and ‘older’ in the line, the poet shows respect and regard for wisdom. As one grows older, the experience of older people leads to wisdom and knowledge. The poet is quite aware of it and has used it in his poem.

“I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.”

From the above lines, the value of preparedness to face death is drawn. Every man has a responsibility and accountability to fulfil his duty to his family and the community when he lives on this earth. This is nothing but his preparedness to face his end of life with comfort and glory.

III. CONCLUSION

According to Kohlberg (1958) and Piaget (1932), moral values are developed directly or indirectly from the environment around. This study stresses upon imbibing values from literature, especially Robert Frost's poems.

The world is composed of Nature and Man. Eco critically, in Frost's poetry, nature plays a role of assistant to Man to find the rational and spiritual clarity. In all his poems, Frost has ventured to write about Nature and the human community.

From time immemorial, writers of literature have recorded and shown interest in human situation and life situation, to achieve harmony and happiness with fellow beings. They also sought relationship with the Creator. This study emphasizes and illustrates that Robert Frost was among such writers in enlightening the human values to be imbibed.

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

- [1]. Frost, Robert, *The Road Not Taken, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, Carpe Diem, The Sound of the Trees.*

SECONDARY SOURCES

- [2]. Nitchie, George W., *Human Values in the Poetry of Robert Frost*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1960.
- [3]. Kluckhohn, C. (1951) *Values and Value- Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification.*
- [4]. Jennings, Elizabeth, *Frost (Writers & Critics)*, Barnes and Noble, 1966.
- [5]. Lynen, F. John (1962) "Frost as a Modern Poet," in *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by James Cox.
- [6]. Elfira, Rizka, *The Moral Values in Some of Robert Frost's Poems*, 2009. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/30890075/THE_MORAL_VALUES_IN_SOME_OF_ROBERT_FROSTS_POEMS
- [7]. Sari, Reni, *An Analysis of Moral Values found in Robert Frost's Selected Poems*, 2010. Retrieved from <https://text-id.123dok.com/document/lzgw57y-an-analysis-of-moral-values-found-in-robert-frost-s-selected-poems.html>
- [8]. Myers, Nancy B. *Human Relationships in the Poetry of Robert Frost*, thesis, August 1969; Denton, Texas. (<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc131156/>; accessed November 11, 2021), University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/> .