

# ***Chapter - I***

## CHAPTER - I

# A SURVEY OF FROST CRITICISM

Robert Frost (1874-1963), whom Randall Jarrell "the greatest of the American poets" "along with Stevens and Eliot"<sup>1</sup> has won international recognition in the realm of "arts and artifices of verse."<sup>2</sup> The extent of his reputation has been so pervasive that his enigmatic personality, thriving career and prodigious output provoked serious critical attention simultaneously at home and abroad. This present survey will provide some piquant glimpses into the individual and the poetic image of Frost, as divulged by the commentators of different interests.

Frost's strikingly long life of nearly eighty-nine years has become the focus of incisive discernment. It is patently obvious that without an accurate knowledge of the man, Frost's work or his stature could not precisely be appraised. Accordingly the familial tensions concerning the poet and the record of his life took shape in masses of biographical literature. In this regard we would refer to Gorham Munson's biographical volume, Robert Frost: A Study in Sensibility and Good Sense (New York: George H. Doran, 1927) which is the first of its genre. But it is outmoded and incomplete; it could not reach the required standard of a high calibre study. Nevertheless, the genealogical facts of the Frost family, which the thesis presents, are important and informative. Munson's interpretation of Frost as " the purest classical poet of America today " is still stimulating. Another interesting biographical volume Robert Frost : The Trial by Existence (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston,1960) has been presented by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant. Her study, which is largely based on her acquaintance

with Frost, provides plethora of material concerning the poet's life. But it does not examine the poet's life methodically. Evidently Mrs Sergeant discloses more information than Munson does. The difference between their viewpoints is also discernible, while Munson endeavours to give his thesis an interpretational slant, Sergeant remains content with her appraisal. Again, we could refer to Jean Gould, who in his 1964 study, Robert Frost: The Aim Was Song (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1964) cursorily exposes the contradiction in Frost's character. He does not deeply probe into the poet's life or poetic self. His biography lacks essential genealogical stresses of the Frost family. There are other stimulating studies of Frost's life. Lawrance Thompson's Robert Frost: The Early Years, 1874-1915 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966) is a full-length first-rate official biography. It surpasses the previous biographies in authenticity and scholarly interpretation. Thompson gains access to confidential Frost material; his penetrating analysis of genealogical stresses of the Frost family proves his supremacy over Gould or Sergeant. His biography is thoroughly documented. The stupendous accomplishment of this volume lies in the reinterpretation of Frost as a man and a poet. Lawrance Thompson's second volume Robert Frost: The Years of Triumph 1915-1938 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) which won the Pulitzer prize in the category of biography for 1970, casts a slur on the character of Robert Frost. In this volume, Thompson insensitively uses pejorative language underlining Frost's vindictive retaliations, professional rivalry, murderous inclinations, conniving malignancy, blazing cantankerousness, violent illiberalism and so forth. The volume ostensibly appears to damn and destroy the bulk of hagiographical writings relating to Frost, which appeared during the poet's life-time and shortly after his death. Nevertheless the massive volume is useful for its presentation of striking memorabilia.

All the biographies, written so far, have not only unfolded diverse facets of the man but also examined the fact that a good many poems turn up to be deeply

personal or distinctly self-revelatory. Louis Untermeyer appropriately observes: "Frost's poems are only superficially reticent; actually they are profound and personal revelations,"<sup>3</sup> Hence a study of the poet's life is of paramount importance for a perceptive judgement of his poetry.

Apart from biographical writings, a considerably massive and variegated bulk of criticism has grown up around the formidable corpus of Frost's works. Of course, uncanny is the pattern of critical reaction to Frost's oeuvre. Not only was Frost the only poet to win four Pulitzer prizes, he also was one of the few modern American poets whose work generally aroused favourable comments. Frost, nonetheless, could never escape being criticized by his detractors. This is why Frost's commentators may roughly be categorized into two groups: those who favourably consider his poetry and those who contend that "his poetry shows serious weakness in execution or philosophy which prevent him from attaining true greatness."<sup>4</sup> Before touching on the nature of the negative criticism, we would attempt to glimpse at the favourable criticism devoted to Frost's work.

In 1937 was published a very significant work on Frost and his work. It was Recognition of Robert Frost (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1937) edited by Richard Thornton. This was published in honour of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of A Boy's Will. The volume incorporates shining examples of the first British, American and continental favourable evaluations. The British critic Norman Douglas, in his notice (first published in The English Review, June, 1913) discovers "a wild racy flavour" in the poems of A Boy's Will and they suggest a response to nature to show the "true lyric feeling"<sup>5</sup> of Frost. Lascelles Abercrombie, in his review (first published in The Nation, London, June 13, 1914) upholds that Frost's similes and metaphors are usually striking because of the "concrete familiarity of the experiences they employ."<sup>6</sup> Frost's intimate friend Edward Thomas, in his review (first published in The English Review,

August, 1914) insists that Frost knows the life he writes about better than Wordsworth. Thomas argues "he (Frost) sympathises where Wordsworth contemplates"<sup>7</sup>. According to him, poems like "The Death of the Hired Man", "Home Burial", "The Black Cottage" and "The Wood-Pile" are "masterpieces of deep and mysterious tenderness."<sup>8</sup> This review is rewarding for a comparative study of Wordsworth and Frost. Edward Garnett's article (first published in The Atlantic Monthly, August, 1915) is tremendously perceptive. He judges Frost as "a fresh creative force, an original voice in literature"<sup>9</sup> He explicates several poems of Robert Frost. Regarding "Home Burial" he opines that "for tragic poignancy this piece stands by itself in American poetry."<sup>10</sup> The American critic Ezra Pound's observation is remarkably incisive and stimulating. In his article (first published in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, December, 1914) Pound glorifies Frost's artistic integrity and honesty for writing about New England rural life instead of "cribbing" themes from Ovid. Louis Untermeyer, in his article "Man and Poet" (published in Modern American Poetry, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936) considers Frost laudatorily. He observes the poet to be fortified by serenity and strengthened by his strength. "He has been intellectually revised and spiritually revived."<sup>11</sup> In the incisive essay "The Neighborliness of Robert Frost" (first published in The Nation, December 6, 1919) G.R. Elliott argues that the poet is precisely aware of "the human spirit of neighborliness." He defines neighbourliness as "the spirit which enables people to live together more or less fruitfully in a small community, and which, with all its meanness, comprises the basal conditions of wider human brotherhood."<sup>12</sup> Elliott's article is useful to comprehend the deeper meaning of Frost's society-oriented poetry. Mark Van Doren, in his article "The Permanence of Robert Frost" (first published in The American Scholar, Spring, 1936) categorically assesses Frost as a Symbolist poet. Among the continental critics Albert Feuillerat is remarkable for his scintillating observation. His essay (first published in Revue des deux mondes, September 1,

1923) considers the "Americanness" of Frost's poetry superbly. "His (Frost's) work" he insists "in fact has a flavor all its own, a somewhat tart flavor; but it owes its quality only to the land from which it has sprung."<sup>13</sup> More than fifty comments and essays collected in Recognition of Robert Frost highlight Frost criticism through 1936.

In 1942 Lawrance Thompson, who had consented to become Frost's biographer, published a perceptive book, entitled Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost (New York: Russell and Russell, 1942; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1961). It is a scholarly study which attempts to correct the previous failings in evaluating Frost's poetry. Thompson favourably considers Frost's theory of poetry, his dramatic narratives, lyrics and satires and his attitudes towards life and art. Beneath the intricate structure of Frost's poetry, this study attempts to reveal "not only wide technical range of intent and extent but also a spiritual depth of sight and insight".<sup>14</sup>

In 1953 Randall Jarrell, the most persuasive advocate of Robert Frost, published his significant book, Poetry and the Age (New York: Knopf, 1953) which contains two well-crafted and perceptive essays on Frost: "The Other Frost" and "To the Laodiceans". The bulk of Jarrell's criticism about Frost, though not massive, is invaluable for its incisiveness. According to Jarrell, Frost is not a "brilliant partial poet"<sup>15</sup> but a "complete" or a "representative" one whose vision of life and the world is comprehensive.

In the 1950s two other significant books were published. One is Sidney Cox's A Swinger of Birches: A Portrait of Robert Frost (New York: New York University Press, 1957) which attempts to expose various anecdotes about Frost's career and vivid memories of what the poet said. The book is also remarkable for its consideration of a good many poems of Frost, who, according to Cox, "has seen many oppositions become almost unions, ... on earth things are dual; so he

swings"<sup>16</sup>. This volume contains an introduction by Robert Frost who comments, "this ought to be a good book".<sup>17</sup> The other book is Reginald L. Cook's The Dimensions of Robert Frost (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1958) which attempts to discover the interrelation between the poet and his poetry. It also presents the theory of voice tones concerning the poetry of Robert Frost.

The 1960s, being the prolific years in Frost criticism, have seen a number of book-length appraisals which have broadened the horizon of Frost studies. An exhaustive study is John F. Lynen's The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960). It is devoted to establish Frost as a sophisticated artist whose technique is essentially pastoral. Lynen explains how the New England landscape enriches the bulk of the Frost canon metaphorically and symbolically. His interpretation of Frost's treatment of nature is imposing. He contends that, for Frost, nature is an image of the entire world of circumstances within which man discovers himself. Frost's pastoralism, concludes Lynen, does not make him an escapist, rather it establishes him as the major figure in contemporary literature. Radcliffe Squires's The Major Themes of Robert Frost (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963) is a scholarly study; it attempts to explore the legality of Frostian language, the relevance of Frost's work to life and "the philosophic muse that speaks in the center of his poetry."<sup>18</sup> In 1963 appeared Reuben A. Brower's The Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963). It provides a perceptive analysis of Frost's poetry particularly in the context of nineteenth century nature poetry. Brower's comparisons of Frost's poetry especially with those of Wordsworth and Emerson reveal a link between Frost and romantic progenitors. Critical literature of Frost is further enriched by Elizabeth Jennings's rewarding study, Frost (Edinburgh London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964). It presents an intuitive and chronological examination of all the volumes of Frost's poetry. Jennings rates Frost as a "philosophic poet"<sup>19</sup> and analyses the views of those commentators who

failed to grasp the profound resonance of Frost's poetry. The critics have looked upon this work as an important contribution to Frost scholarship. In 1966 was published a remarkable work on Frost and his poetry. It was Philip L. Gerber's Robert Frost (1966. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969). This critical study attempts to arrive at an acceptable definition of Robert Frost. It perceptively considers the poet's life, personality, craftsmanship, poetic theories and the major themes with which the poet is concerned.

In the 1970s Frost criticism reaches the most significant milestone. The avant-garde critic, Frank Lentricchia's Robert Frost: Modern Poetics and the Landscapes of Self (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1975) exposes Frost's realistic and ironic vision of the world. Lentricchia attempts to consider Frost's poetry in the context of what he calls Neo-Kantian philosophy. He believes that "Robert Frost occupies a position somewhere between the Neo-Kantian, object-oriented aesthetics of the new critics and the protophenomenology and existentialism of William James..."<sup>20</sup>. Lentricchia's work is an example of scholarly philosophical-literary criticism. Throughout his work one can find references to not only Kant and William James but Schiller, Schelling, Hans Vaihinger, Nietzsche and others. Lentricchia argues Frost's modernism very strongly. Though Reuben Brower and John F. Lynen insisted on this point earlier, a difference exists between Lentricchia's viewpoint and that of his predecessors. While Brower and Lynen argue Frost's modernism on pastoral context, Lentricchia pleads this modernism on post-Kantian ground. Richard Poirier's Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) is an interesting and demanding study of Frost's poetry. Poirier argues that Frost's poetry remarkably explores the possible connection among various kinds of creativity in poetry, in sex and the seasons. Poirier convincingly establishes that Frost's work is suffused with sexuality and the pleasant activity of the genitalia. In the sonnet "The Silken Tent" Poirier discovers phallic implications in the "central cedar pole" and the



"going slightly taut/ in the capriciousness of summer air."<sup>21</sup> And the poem "All Revelation", at one level, discovers "life through the pleasure of the genitalia."<sup>22</sup> Poirier's study concerning the centrality of sexuality in Frost's poetry gains imposing insight into Frost criticism. The critic concludes, "Frost is a great poet of marriage, may be the greatest since Milton, and of the sexuality that goes with it."<sup>23</sup> There is another significant publication in the year 1979, Robert Frost and New England: The Poet as Regionalist (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979) by John C. Kemp. In this book Kemp persuasively considers Frost as a new England poet. He explains Frost's inductive approach to New England. According to him, Frost "locates his poems precisely and concretely, and his speakers react to their environments in varied, unpredictable ways."<sup>24</sup> He appreciates North of Boston for its vivid language, well crafted metrical forms, profound theme, unified vision and stimulating imagery. To him "North of Boston is a notable landmark in the history of American poetry."<sup>25</sup> Kemp, in his thesis, analyses the views of the commentators carefully. He refutes the argument of David Perkins who insists that Frost lacks the "seriousness, profundity, and commitment"<sup>26</sup> of a major poet. Kemp feels that Frost was the "most serious" about "one of the central problems that confronts the modern mind: the problem of meaning"<sup>27</sup> which has been important in the post-Darwinian, post-Freudian world. Kemp establishes Frost as a "very large poet" who possesses two qualities: "an extraordinary verbal genius" and "a powerful and meaningful vision of the human condition."<sup>28</sup>

In the 1980s there has been no dearth of Frost criticism. Dorothy Judd Hall published Robert Frost: Contours of Belief (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984). This volume resolutely considers the religious belief of Robert Frost who despised "religiosity". Hall repudiates the views of Hyatt Howe Waggoner, Yvor Winters, Joseph Warren Beach or their campfollowers who endeavour to interpret Frost as an agnostic or sceptic. She cogently analyses the religious function of Frost's

poetry and discloses "the link Frost perceived between metaphoric and spiritual revelation."<sup>29</sup> In 1988 appeared George Monteiro's Robert Frost and the New England Renaissance (Lexington, Kentucky: the University Press of Kentucky, 1988). It attempts to consider Frost's poetry within a New England literary context. Monteiro discloses how the poems and essays of Emerson, Thoreau and Emily Dickinson, in particular, and occasionally Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William James proffered an abundance of material that Frost incorporated into his New England poetry. Monteiro's critical approach enhances our interest in Frost. Some of the essays of his volume entitled "Dangling conversation", "Designs" and "Roads and Paths" which consider the poems "My butterfly", "Design" and "The Road not Taken", respectively, are well done.

In the 1990s appeared a handful of books widening the contour of Frost criticism. George F. Bagby's Frost and the Book of Nature (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993) is a perceptive study of Frost's nature poems. Bagby interpretes Frost as an "emblem poet" who searches for truth in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau. For contextual study Bagby categorizes Frost's emblem poems or nature lyrics in four groups: "fablelike", "prototypical", "meditative", and "heuristic". Intellectually provocative, Bagby's thesis broadens our horizons. Katherine Kearns's Robert Frost and a Poetics of Appetite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) is the most stirring study since Richard Poirier's Robert Frost : The Work of Knowing. This thesis sheds a brilliant light on the sexualized metaphorical structure elevated by Robert Frost who is, to Kearns, "a master of the sexual innuendo, which is always seemingly belied by the hearty voice that utters it."<sup>30</sup> Kearns superbly analyses Frost's irony, his women characters, the role of eros in his work and his treatment of prosody and lyricism.

Like the favourable criticism the bulk of negative commentary on Frost is substantially enormous. From the 1910s began in fact the negative criticism about

Frost and his work. In 1917 was published Amy Lowell's Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917) which contains a long essay on Robert Frost. It is notorious for her fallacious arguments. Miss Lowell argues that Frost's poetry is strictly limited to New England themes. She claims that "North of Boston" is a "very sad book"<sup>31</sup> which displays death and disease of New England. She categorically identifies this volume as "an epitome of a decaying New England".<sup>32</sup> She explicates several poems of Robert Frost. To her "Home Burial" discloses "monotony and a mistaken attitude toward life bringing on insanity."<sup>33</sup> She finds "A Hundred Collars", "a little dull"<sup>34</sup> and fails to appreciate its humour. She erroneously contends that Frost lacks humour. Frost's reaction to her criticism is noteworthy. The poet, in a letter, writes to Edward Thomas, "Amy Lowell says I have no sense of humour, but sometimes I manage to be funny without that gift of the few."<sup>35</sup> Miss Lowell believes that Frost's poetry is pervaded by tragedy. Her view about the characters in Frost's poetry is also faulty. She observes Frost's characters as "leftovers of the old stock, morbid, pursued by phantoms, slowly sinking to insanity."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Amy Lowell mistakenly comments that Frost fails to use dialect in his poetry.

In the 1930s the negative critics open up some acrid charges against Frost. R. P. Blackmur in his review (first published in The Nation, June 24, 1936) observes a weakness of craft in A Further Range. He categorically refuses to recognize Frost as a poet. Frost is assessed as a bard who fails to transform his instincts into true poetry. Blackmur defines a bard as an "easy going versifier of all that comes to hand." On the contrary, a poet is defined as a "maker in words, a true imager, of whatever reality there was in his experience" and who can distinguish between true subjects and "the false host of pseudo-subjects." To exemplify his point Blackmur suggests that Swinburne is a bard-cum-poet but Yeats is a poet. He contends that as a bard, Frost, who fails to have resort to the "complete act of craft"<sup>37</sup> is controlled by his instincts. Blackmur considers the

poem "Build Soil" as a "dull verse." Another negative critic, Cleanth Brooks is also remarkable for his pungent remarks. Brooks, in his book Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939. Chapel Hill : The University of North Carolina Press, 1967) argues that "much of Frost's poetry hardly rises above the level of the vignette of rural New England ... . In general, Frost's metaphors are few and tame; and the occasional bold metaphor is confined to his very lightest poems ... . Frost does not think through his images; he requires statements."<sup>38</sup> This commentary reveals that Brooks fails to appreciate the brilliant late poems of Frost. However, Brooks is fully aware of Frost's symbolic technique and precisely holds the view that Frost's "anecdote is absorbed into symbol."<sup>39</sup>

In 1944 was published Malcolm Cowley's article, "The Case Against Mr. Frost" (first published in The New Republic, September, 11, 18, 1944) which unfolds dissenting opinion of the critic. Cowley criticizes Robert Frost as a "social philosopher in verse". He contends that Frost, who is "opposed to innovations in art, ethics, science, industry or politics" dismisses Freudian psychology, objects to invention and even to the theory of evolution. Thus Frost is tremendously "walled in by the past"<sup>40</sup> and can never do anything positive to relieve or resolve the social problems. Cowley suggests that Frost fails to explore his inner self for he, in his poetry, refuses to enter the woods which symbolise "uncharted country within ourselves".<sup>41</sup> He never considers Frost as a major or great poet. He goes on to insist that Frost is not a poet of the great New England spirit but one who "celebrates the diminished but prosperous and self-respecting New England of the tourist home and the antique shop in the abandoned gristmill."<sup>42</sup>

In 1957 appeared Yvor Winters' The function of Criticism: Problems and Exercises (1957. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962. ). The fourth essay of this book is "Robert Frost, Or the Spiritual Drifter as Poet" (first published in The Sewanee Review, Autumn, 1948) which may be considered to be

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the most significant negative evaluation of Frost. Winters caustically identifies Frost as a spiritual drifter for he appears to be something of an Emersonian without Emerson's religious conviction. Winters insists that Frost is a poet of "the minor theme, the casual approach, and the discretely eccentric attitude."<sup>43</sup> He holds that "the whimsical, accidental, and incomprehensible nature of the formative decision"<sup>44</sup> appears to be the identical themes of the poems "The Road Not Taken", "The Sound of the Trees", "The Hill Wife" and "The Bearer of Evil Tidings". Frost's failure to develop serious decisions and moral choices in his poems, cuts him off from a profound understanding of human experience. Winters conceives that poetry should be the means through which reasonable idea and moral instruction should be articulated. According to Winters Frost is entirely regardless of reason. To recapitulate his charges against Frost Winters notes that Frost exalts impulse but despises reason, makes formative decisions casually, advocates retreat from cooperative action and ignores the ideas of good and evil to be taken very seriously. The charges Winters lays against Frost are undue and untenable. He imprecisely puts much stress on man's rational faculty and not enough on his intuitive power which is the lifespring of poetry.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Winters' judgement is awfully narrow for he believes in the social function of poetry and shows always a moralistic attitude to his criticism.

In the 1960s appeared George W. Nitchie's full-length study, Human Values in the Poetry of Robert Frost: A Study of a Poet's Convictions (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 1960) which is the most developed and analytic of the adverse criticisms. Nitchie discerns an anti-intellectual in Frost whose poems are testimony to his convictions while revealing fundamental indecisiveness, whimsicality, evasiveness and incoherence. According to Nitchie "The Bear" and "The Egg and the Machine" suggest anti-intellectual propensity and sympathy for "motiveless hatred of complex machinery."<sup>46</sup> "The Road Not Taken" and "The Sound of the Trees" display moments in which "crucial acts of choice are made in

an entirely whimsical manner."<sup>47</sup> Nitchie is seriously concerned with the state of human values in Frost's poetry. He insists that Frost has simplified the rural world which reduces human values in the poetry of Frost. The human situation, as it is noticed by Nitchie, is insular and fundamentally antisocial. Nitchie argues that Frost trusts will and distrusts intelligence. Distrusting intelligence and emphasizing will Frost proffers a world in which the mysteries of life can neither be investigated nor construed. The exercise of the will simply results in an incoherent vision of man. Frost's limitations, Nitchie enumerates, impel him to assess Frost's stature diminished as compared with Yeats, Eliot, Auden and Stevens. Nitchie's study, which is a compendium of most of the damning assessments, appears to be comprehensive. But its limitation extends to outlook and method as well. Like Yvor Winters, Nitchie is of a moral bias which causes him to evaluate Frost narrowly. Moreover, in comparing Frost's ideas with those of Yeats, Eliot, Auden or Stevens, Nitchie generally puts up Frost's worst poems against their best ones.

In 1976 was published a significant work, A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode (Cambridge: The Belknap press of Harvard University Press, 1976) by David Perkins. Perkins devotes a complete chapter to Frost in this book while studying other poets like Hardy, Pound, Eliot and Yeats in respective chapters. Perkins refuses to recognize Frost as a major poet along with Yeats or Eliot. He insists "there seems to be a difficulty about conceding that Frost is a major poet. His ironic playfulness is one cause of this dubiety"<sup>48</sup>. To Perkins Frost is not a serious poet who lacks profundity and commitment. But Kemp discerns a serious poet in Frost and we have already seen how he repudiates Perkins's view. Ethically inclined Perkins highly appreciates the penultimate line of Eliot's "The Waste Land". According to him, "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata" provides a basis for ordering human existence. He argues that the profound extent of "quasi-moral, quasi-religious satisfactions"<sup>49</sup> produced

by Sanskrit words might be definitely difficult to derive from Frost. Frost indeed did not make any allusion to the Vedic Scriptures or the Upanishads but the "quasi-moral" and "quasi-religious" elements are quite evident in his poems of which "Birches", "After Apple Picking", "Maple", "A Loose Mountain" to name but a few.

This overall scenario of Frost criticism has however oversimplified the importance of imagery and symbols in the works of Frost. That area has not been that way explored. In this connection, we refer to two books. One is Dennis Vail's Robert Frost's Imagery and the Poetic Consciousness (Texas Tech University, Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1976) which attempts to examine the recurring patterns of symbolic imagery in Frost's lyrics to reveal the artistic consciousness of the poet. Vail contends that behind the visible world of Frost's poetry there exists a "world of the spirit, a separate higher world, hidden but deeply felt, from which the visible world is observed but which is nevertheless tied to it." He deals with only a substantial part of this higher and hidden world which concerns the "artist's consciousness of himself as artist."<sup>50</sup> In Vail's thesis the recurrent lyric images which have particularly been considered are trees and woods. Conspicuously Vail excludes a great many images employed in Frost's narrative and dramatic poems from his consideration. Accordingly, incisive though Vail's thesis is, it could not attain the virtue of comprehensiveness. And the other book is B. S. Brar's The Poetry of Robert Frost: Study in Symbolism (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991). It examines the symbolic technique and lofty drama of humanity evolved in Frost's poetry. Brar shows how Frost dramatizes human aspirations and anxieties through subtle symbolic devices. He considers Frost's symbolistic technique as rich and complex as Yeats's. The splendours of Frostian symbolism are manifold. Frostian symbolism encompasses the poet's biographical, sociological and psychological facets. Like Vail he too is deeply concerned with the exploration of hidden realities occurring behind the chain of natural

phenomena in Frost's poetry. To him Frost's varied symbolic patterns unfold "man's existence in relation to the vast universal phenomenon".<sup>51</sup> Brar's observation is of course worthwhile but it is however very concise. For example, he has approached only two poems "Mowing" and "My November Guest" from Frost's A Boy's Will.

The independent study of images or symbols can hardly divulge the complete vision of life of a great poet like Frost. Hence, major images and symbols of Frost's poetry become the main objective of this present dissertation.



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