

CHALLENGING THE TIME-HONORED: A MULTI-LAYER STUDY OF ROBERT FROST'S "MENDING WALL"

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Received: 10 August, 2023 Revised: 18 September, 2023 Accepted: 25 September, 2023 Published: 31 October, 2023

ABSTRACT

This paper strives to figure out the resonating potentials of Robert Frost's poetry. Most often he is thought a poet of nature, but looking into his poetry it gets revealed that his poetry can reflect contemporary problems as well. The aimed paper takes Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" as a source of interpretation and its multiplicity in terms of meanings and voicing contemporary issues. The author is underpinning some issues like expansionism, nationalism, post-colonial concern, globalization and its repercussions in the context of the poem, "Mending Wall". The forgoing terminologies are also the findings of this paper. In addition, close reading technique is used as method of interpretation for the paper.

Keywords: expansionism; colonialism; post-colonialism; globalization

INTRODUCTION

Robert Frost is a versatile poet. His poetry is looked from different angles and most of them are concerned with nature. He is thought as a poet of nature but in fact his poetry keeps a wide space for researchers and researches. An array of works on Robert Frost has been reviewed, and it seems that Robert Frost is not only represents nature in his poetry, but many of the subjects matter. The major concern that is looked in his poetry is human advancements and scientific adventures. As he is a representative of modern age, he knew the mentality of modern man and his desire to control the world.

In the beginning, war was considered as a mean to subjugate others or upheld his territory. So, his poetry ranges from nature to colonial disputes. Moreover, as the time passed, scientific advancements changed the world greatly and being part of modern age he knew the limitations of science and scientific advancements. Robert Frost was influenced from science and the scientists like Einstein, and the philosopher, Darwin. He admitted that modern questions carry modern answers and

science will provide but he also looked behind the curtain that it may have negative impacts upon the humanity (Fagan, 2007). He observed the detachment of human, and running after science.

This paper provides multifaceted interpretation of the Robert Frost's poem, "Mending wall". It reflects how man is getting evolved with time and promotes his interests. In the past, expansionists and colonial practices were considered means of progress. But as the world progresses, people diverted their attention to science and modern-day tools to upgrade their standards of living. In addition, concerning multifaceted interpretation of the poem, "Mending Wall", shift in the ideas of humans – from closed market strategy to globalization- is also reflected. In the same way, threats posed by globalization are also discussed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does Robert Frost, "mending wall" reflect colonial and post-colonial thoughts?

2. How is the poem, “mending wall” related globalization?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To know about colonial and post-colonial thoughts with respect to Robert Frost’s “mending wall”.
2. To understand the interpretation of the poem “mending wall” with respect to globalization.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Effects of the Free Market

The free market tends to globalize materials across the globe. The globalization of materials creates a high level of dependency which affects the individual potentiality and capacity of countries to stand on their own feet. The free market strategy benefits a few people in the world hence, this section deals with the disadvantages of the free market.

Global integration pushed the world into social and political upheaval. Lipchitz & Row (2005) say, there are some scenarios of crowds in the streets and akin processions down the roads from some countries like Geneva, Seattle, Gothenburg, and Genoa were the known cities conjuring up the images of protestors, broken windows, injuries, and deaths. These processions were taken as a serious challenge to globalization and global economic integration. So, capitalists thought, if the procession continued it would be a threat to our lobby and might collapse the entire edifice. Since 9/11 these gatherings were tagged as anti-globalized movements and later renamed as global justice movement and got down. The aim of subduing these movements was to save the capitalist agenda and propagate the concept of globalization and name them fearful and terrorists. The reason for these emerging social activist movements was environmental deterioration, unfair working conditions, human rights violations, child labor, women’s rights, and genetically modified organisms through cloning. All the preceding factors help the agenda of globalization which help a few people, the rest bear the repercussions. Likewise, the foregoing issues, working globalized capitalists continue to create offenses against people and the entire world in different ways. Against few capitalists and manifesto of globalization global civil society works to unfold the real facets.

Halliday (2005) writes in his book *The globalization of world politics* that globalization is seen as the close desegregation of states and societies, and it worked under the idea that differences do not matter but we should link the world nearby by the thread of trade and economic interests. It affected not only identity and loyalties but also influenced the nation-state. It goes against the spirit of nationalism which is a serious threat to one’s identity. In contrast with globalization, nationalism is seen very much in evidence and it should be in the demand of people to ensure their autonomy. Both developing and developed countries have the same demand. The relationship of developed countries’ nationalism invokes disputes based on economic advantages. In earlier times the focus on domestic and international politics was to make it universalized or a single world community. Now the stress is on what distinguishes the community from others and importance is given to differences in culture, tradition, ethnicity, and identity.

Numerous implications are surfaced for globalization. It sets contradictions in the world. By creating a global market, goods and materials flow across the world freely and pose a threat to domestic productivity and interests. Developed countries mobilize free trade and enhance their interests but on the other side, less developed countries are overwhelmed by developed countries. Nationalism is a response to globalization. He sums up that in the world of globalization people do not demand integration but succession, independence, and an approach to the world market in their way.

Globalization and its Effects

This section deals with the cons of free market and globalization that how the free flow of commodities affects one’s identity and potentiality. In today’s world, it is very common to work across cultures being unaware of the impacts of global connectivity upon individuals. People work in a global setting and look at everything from their point of view and do not conceive all differences and controversies which affect people. Most well-educated don’t educate themselves about cultural differences in a global setting how does it work? Globalizers do not focus on individual differences of a particular group of people and emphasize that cultural difference leads to stereotyping therefore every individual should be

known through general characteristics of the personality, not as a byproduct of the environment. It is important to judge people individually. The author highlights the cons of globalization that globally every culture is marked with special traits which turn into a trademark and the masses should not be tagged with one identity, individual identity should not be ignored for global integration. In a global set up culture is judged based on a collectivist approach which disfigures the individual identity. (Meyer, 2014)

Tang et al., (2020) explain in their article, that it is becoming certain that globalization is not only an economic matter but has some more observable features like international mobility of goods, exchange of financial capital, information, and most importantly people. In the bold letters of that, there are technological advancements and cross-cultural interactions which are boosted through cross boundaries of free trade, immigration, and tourism which gives birth to political ups and downs and ecological problems. The idea of globalization acts as a stirring agent for the postmodern world. Because of economic, monetary, and financial layouts, worldwide popularity and acceptance are given to globalization. It is an economic-based practice in which polarity across the world surfaces. Some countries enhance their production and some reduce their production because of geographical and unequal distribution of materials.

It was expected that globalization will provide benefits globally but with time disadvantages of globalization become more conspicuous. It was based on the neoclassical theory that the current of money in developing countries would create stability but the experiences and observations indicate negative implications for the world. If it were managed properly it could provide better results to all of us.

Wolfgang (1999) argues that there is no room for heroes of globalization in a closed economic system. It is a system in which rules and regulations define state interests. Some practices like observance of restrictions on import and export regulations, the standard of products, and investment laws that confirm state well-being are the conceived obstacles by globalizers in the mobilization of goods. Gradually they attempt to undermine the state-defined principles of the notational market and

substitute it with a cross-national arena where economic actors will no more face hurdles. Instead of sticking to national guidance, economic actors will not be prevented by restrictions and preceding the dynamic of competition. It stretches the global arena into a homogeneous competitive regime where everyone wants precedence over others for their best interests.

As the aforementioned paragraph discussed the biasness of the free market in economic orbit Meckie (1970) further devises remedial measures that the free market failed to work more and should not be applied to organizations diversely. Unnecessary free exchange of goods creates competition which turns into a means of irregularities. Regulation should be given to those areas where competition cannot regulate properly.

DISCUSSION

The Conquests, Expansionist Ideas, and Frost's Poem "Mending Wall"

The preceding concepts can be better identified in Frost's other work "Mending Wall". It is dialogic and provides a critique of human doings. The title loads discussion regarding human conquests and colonizing other countries. Wall represents boundaries and limits and "mending wall" shows the continued activities of the wall. The word "mending" is used as a qualifier for the noun "wall" which does make sense that there already exists a demarcation point between two individuals and "mending" stands for the dispute going between the two characters as represented in the poem. The two characters symbolically represent border clashes of the countries in the world which leads them to conquests and geographical expansion and exploration as already discussed in the above sections. It is told a rough task in the poem to quote the line "we wear our fingers rough with handling them". Colonization or conquest is the subjugation of the powerless and inflecting savagery upon them. It is beautifully explained in the poem how one character comes up to another character having a stone in his hand showing the brutality of the characters. To refers to the line I see him there bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top In each hand, like an old-stone - savage armed (Winston et al., 1964.p.48)

Referring to the above lines it is clear that the act of walling is actually a criticism of the very doing. The

poet uses language like “old-stone savage armed”. It shows barbarism and the poet tags them with such language. Civil societies are identified with polite tongue and barbarous are identified with the barbaric language used by the writers (Palmer, 2001). So, Frost’s poem shows the consequence of colonization and geographical expansion concerning the difference created by the road not taken and its justification in “mending wall”

Mending Wall and Self VS Other

Wall separates something from others. As the whole discussion is developed on system of difference. This wall also creates a difference, the forgoing statement is making a base for colonial discussion and this section goes through the postcolonial perspective that whenever colonizers approach the continent they captivate everything of the colonized and create a lot of differences like self vs other, oriental and occident, black and white and east and west. These differences and the invisible wall begin in the people, Edward Said’s book *orientalism* best describes the mending wall between oppressors and oppressed. Said, takes for grant the Eurocentric approach who takes themselves as self and oppressor as other (Berry, 2003)

“Mending wall” as nationalism and Identity:

Modern man has adopted new ways or ways of difference. For the elevation of living standards, the modern man takes the way of colonizing other countries expanding geographical boundaries repairing their walls there. In the poem, the two characters reconsolidate and try to resolve the problem of clashes, as from the poem I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;

And on a day we meet to walk the time and set the wall between us once again.

We keep the wall between us as we go. (Winston et al., 1964.p. 48)

It is the representation or reconciliatory attempt of the two characters. From a critical perspective, Robert Frost is not only the reflector of human problems but is also an ambassador of global peace. On the one hand, there have been discussed that it reflects the colonial and expansionist thought but on the other side he gives a reconciliatory way to the practice challenges global peace. Here the point is nationalism and maintaining identity. The chronological study of history shows that

nationalism is one of the aspects of modern states. Nationalism is considered a state of mind and the expression of national consciousness. Various scholars and political analysts think that nationalism surfaces from some sort of identity or in other words it is the search for identity. The other concept of nationalism is that of economic interest and cultural development. It also refers to class, development, and program of modernization. He further says that modern states produce nationalism which is demonstrated in some situations like challenging the identity and demography of a country. Robert Frost’s poems have social, political, cultural, and economic implications. The aforesaid themes are beautifully reflected in the poems of Robert Frost.

Globalization and Robert Frost Mending Wall

“We keep the wall between us as we go”..... (Wniston et al. 1964. P.48.15)

The previous sections discussed different factors that contribute to human development. For the uplifting of living standards, humans prefer captivating other assets through colonization, keeping others inferior, and taking their economic interests. Robert Frost’s poem mending wall represents another theme of globalization. The act of mending the wall can also metaphorically represent the concept of globalization. In the poem, the two characters are willingly making and designing their boundaries. In the contemporary world, this can also be taken in the sense that the two characters are trying to keep promises with each other same as the case with the globalization of the world. The uniting of two characters are symbolically representing integration in the world.

Integration of the countries in the world’s collective human economic development. It opens a market to the world where everybody can play their part in the development of global economic progress. In the poem, keeping a wall signifies a connection between the countries. It settles a footprint for the rest of the world to follow the ideology of globalization as an economic strategy. The activities of globalization span over boundaries which can be social, cultural, political, technological, and economic. Globalization changes the dimensions of trades, ideas, and migration (Reinert & Goldin, 2012)

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This section has a connection with forgoing section concerning the globalization taking Frost's poem as a base. Frost's poem, making wall can be connected to the widening of the boundaries international market. As the two characters by their desire to settle their dispute over the border can be taken as market expansion. The market expansion provides employment but it has several cons as well. Open market access creates inequalities in getting results. Halliday (2005) writes in his book the globalization of world politics that globalization is seen as the close desegregation of states and societies, and it worked under the idea that differences do not matter but we should link the world nearby by the thread of trade and economic interests. It affected not only identity and loyalties but also influenced the nation-state. It goes against the spirit of nationalism, a serious threat to one's identity. In contrast with globalization, nationalism is seen very much in evidence and it should be in the demand of people to ensure their autonomy.

Globalization and Shift in Ideas Concerning Frost's Poem

There is no denying that globalization did not benefit humanity but Frost's poem and concept of globalization make us aware of some of the consequences. As the characters settle their problems in the words I let my neighbor know beyond the hill; And one day we meet to walk the Line And set the wall between us once again.

We keep the wall between us as we go. (Wniston et al., 1964.p. 48)

As a consequence, globalization creates a high level of dependency of masses in the world which push them into flux. Letting neighbors beyond the hell shows coming in contact with different countries on a globalized ground. And the setting of the wall once again represents a shift in ideas that countries in the world witnessed some ideas transformation that if you want to have progress be globalized.

Globalization as a Threat to the World

In the poem "mending wall" Robert Frost shows the recognition of individual roles contrary to globalization. He is also called the poet of terror. Dealing with social situations, Frost is lacking any desire to overcome the situations but he finds new

ways to deal with the fear of man. Forming the aforementioned sweeping sentences as a base, Robert Frost makes aware people in one way or in the other way regarding any social problems. Referring to the poem mending wall in the context of globalization we extract the hidden theme and also the cons of globalization that the world is driven by global integration but bears few positive aspects on developing countries and largely benefits capitalists and entrepreneurs. Being a rugged individualist Frost did not like urbanization, overpopulation, and shrinkage of the land. Applying it to globalization and human progress in individual capacity is preferred. The thick bonding or wall building between countries through the idea of globalization is to be reconsidered because the world has recently faced the pandemic of novel coronavirus. The pandemic shaped a new test for globalization. The global economy did not serve humanity as it was thought. There came a complete border disruption across the globe and put a serious threat to the developing countries. Individual characters in his poems should not be taken as alienated, away from the social setup, and driven by psychological problems but folding and unfolding some bitter truth. His poems resonate with contemporary social issues when we wear modern lenses. His character develops the message of individual strength that is not to be mixed in the flux.

"it may to sleep before it fell,
Arid I could tell" (Wniston et al., 1964.p. 48)

CONCLUSION

Robert Frost is not only the poet of nature but his poems can be interpreted at various lenses. The poem, "mending wall" provides a range of interpretation in this articles. Mending wall renders a number of interpretations like human interest to promote his standards through colonial and expansionist activities. It also represents the changing mind set of modern man. Moreover, this poem also gives a rich background to the concept of globalization. It unfolds the idea that with the passage of time mentality is changing from ancient to modern and post-modern. Mending wall metaphorically represents emerging relationship like globalization and its impacts like deprivation of individual ability to enhance his/her life standards. It has had negative effects on the countries individually

that how much they get benefits from the globalization. As a wholly, every individual country does not get benefit from globalization.

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