

OPTIMISM IN A POEM 'THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER' BY ROBERT BROWNING

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Abstract

Robert Browning is eminent optimistic poet of Victorian period. He has also a mastery over using a poetic form named as Dramatic Monologue. His poems imbued with optimistic thought. His deliberation and debate over any matter is so strong that he does not escapes from his point of view until he does not conclude which is expected to him. The Last Ride Together is no exception to this. The poem is full of optimistic thoughts. After long love-pursuit, lady rejected a lover and though, in a mood of disappointment, he put forward a proposal of riding before her, as she has some place for him in her heart, she accepts for riding. The poet says that he had failed in his love, but there are number of people failed in their work, how many people became successful and how many among them failed. He claims that more people than become successful. Later, he asks artisans that people forget real art for which he spoils his whole life, on looking at a beautiful girl. He also asks musicians, that his lyric also became old by new songs and poets also uses imaginative things about which they have no experience. Lastly, he concludes, that his life is better than all this people as, he was riding with his beloved and it gives immense joy to his heart.

Keywords: Dramatic Monologue, Optimism, perfection, happiness, riding, heaven etc.

Introduction

Robert Browning is the most the most important poet in Victorian era. He uses dramatic monologue in his poetry. Browning has a keen interest in using this tool in his poems. As Hugh Walker points out 'Browning did not invent dramatic monologue, but he made it his especially own and no one put such rich and varied material into it.' The Dramatic Monologue is dramatic. It is an utterance of imaginary characters and not of the poet himself. Character is developed not through a conflict between the opposite thoughts and emotions of the characters himself. The poem 'The Last Ride Together' is regarded as one of the finest love-poems of Browning. It is rather a long poem of ten stanzas, each of eleven lines. It was first published in 1855 in Vol. I. of the Collection of Browning's poems entitled 'Men and Women', later it was included in Dramatic Romances published in 1868. The Last Ride Together is the most eminent poem of Browning. The poem expresses the feelings of a frustrated lover due to rejection of a beloved. But he assumes it in a very positive manner. He claims that many people failed in their life, very few became successful. So, his life is better than others as he has an opportunity to ride with his beloved.

Optimistic Outlook of Browning

Last Ride together is a dramatic monologue and Browning at his supremacy in handling this poetic form. It is an expression of his own thought but, it is in a lyrical way. His own emotion spoken by an imaginary character. It is spoken by a lover who loved his lady for a long time, who waited for her for long time, but she rejected him and turned to another

lover. He requested her to accomplish his two wishes, first, not to forget him and secondly, she should come with him for a ride. The lady pitied on him and accepted a proposal of ride. Title of the poem 'The Last Ride Together' the word used in a title 'Last' shows that before that some rides are also completed as there was same name in other poem 'My Last Duchess.'

Love of lover was true and sincere and though in a mood of despair. He came to know that she refused him now and she would not accept him further as his attempts are fruitless. The only meaning in his life was his love, but now it is futile to cry over the past. he does not blame for her treacherous nature nor himself. He knows that hands of destiny laid on him and no one escapes from that. It may be written in his fate. He also knows that God has ordained such situation in his life. Rather, he feels proud to be in company with her for such a long time. He thanks himself for a bliss of love for long time. he puts his two demands to her, first, to remember him throughout her life, secondly, if she thinks improper to accept his proposal of last ride together. As he enjoys supreme bliss in his life while riding with her. The disappointed lover pleaded her for the ride. She stood motionless for some moment. She bowed her head as if she was in a grave thought. She had pitied on her lover though possessed with modesty and pride. Feelings of leaned her on the side of lover but at the same time, her maidenly modesty leaded her towards a refusal to the proposal of a lover. It was a time of catastrophe for the lover as his life was in danger as acceptance was peasant for him and refusal is like a death warrant for him.

The lady accepted his proposal of ride together. It was a moment of great bliss and life for him. His last desire was at last completed. The lover is completely optimistic, he hopes that, world may end that very night, but he enjoys ride together with his dear beloved. As he is at the level supreme bliss, he is not worried about rection of his love by the lady. Meanwhile, the lady put head on his shoulder. She was too close to him and the lover experienced supreme bliss when she lay on his breast. He feels a heavenly bliss, out of fleshly desires and got spiritual delight as he had achieved heavenly pleasure but he had a fear also that she would be at distance from him and moment of pleasure accomplished.

His company with beloved is like a sheet of paper which is crumpled and wrinkled due to wind. In the same way his soul crushed when beloved rejected him but, now in her company it opens like a sheet of paper as wind open it started to flutter. He had no hope to achieve his past love. He does not like to cry over the past which is not in his hand. Lamenting on the past and grudging on it is futile. He is an optimistic person thinking about the present and not about past. If he acted differently, he would miss the pleasure which he is enjoying with his beloved now.

Failures are a part of life. So, lover was not the only person to fail in his life. Everyone try to be successful, but very few of them get successful. At least, he was enjoying a company his beloved. No on achieved desired results as compared to their efforts and struggle. Little done and vast undone is a tragedy of our life. We always pine for more and more accomplishments in life. In actual, we earned so little. Aspiration of human being are never fulfilled; he always fails to achieve to his goal. In the same, he was not able to win the

lady's heart for life long period, but he succeeded in persuading her for last ride together. Browning's poetry is full of optimistic outlook in every stanza.

Lover thinks over the lot of other people. No one can fulfill all his desires and plans. There are some limitations to complete our plans and desires, he was at least in company of his company of his beloved. His lot is better than a statesman as they worked hard throughout the life, but, achieved a little space as an obituary note in a newspaper only. Similarly, great soldiers and warrior sacrificed their life for their country, only reward to them is to buried in Westminster Abbey where only the great personalities are buried and flag has hoisted and epitaphs may raise in his memory, but he achieves more than all this people. He is referring to the lot of poets now. He is more skillful than artisans. He expresses his opinions and ideas through sweet and rhythmical way, but sometimes, not able to reach the readers. His views and ideals are sublime which sometimes he himself had not accepted in his own life. But what did he achieve in his life? He lives a life in poverty, sickness and lastly became old. As compared to poet, the lover is luckier. Though, he has failed in his love, but it comforts to his heart while riding with her. These moments are unforgettable and bliss of life for him.

Sculptor is no exception in above discussion of statesman and soldier. He also spent years for his art and shapes a beautiful statue of Venus, the Greek goddess of youth and beauty. The people pay no attention to his art when they saw a real girl. She may have a ordinary beauty. She may be poor or dressed shabbily and she may be busy in her daily activity wading through a shallow stream of water. Though, the spectator turns their eyes from statue to look at her. If this is so, he is happier in the company of his beloved. So, there is no reason to remain dejected. In all the discussion, it clearly shows that, Browning is strong supporter of optimism. Now, the poet proved what he wanted to suggest through this deliberation. It cannot be said success in life is good for man. The lover is mouthpiece of Browning. It is the same emotion of poet himself. He hopes that unfulfilled desires should be fulfilled in the next birth as there should be something for the next birth. There should be new hope that he should meet his beloved in the next birth. It is optimism which reached at its highest water mark on the top level. What a conclusion, if he wins her heart in this very moment, he had nothing to expect in another world. Now, his soul had unfulfilled desires and chance to complete in next birth. He is hopeful to achieve his beloved in heaven also. Beloved uttered not a single word, but he has no worry about that as he was riding with her pleasantly. As per his opinions, heaven is nothing but, life at its best. Some people enjoy happiness in the heaven, but he has same happiness at present as he enjoying riding with his beloved. We imagined that heaven lies somewhere in the sky, but it is our imagination only. It would be heaven on earth for a lover, if they would ride together for ever. It should be eternal and everlasting. The poet also thinks about musician whose hair became gray in a young age. The speaker says about the musician that only few melodies are sweet and your friend says about you "well, he is a good composer, but we all know how musical tastes change....." it is not better than my riding together with my beloved.

Who can say what's the best? Man is the helpless victim in the hands of destiny. Whatever happened in our life, we are totally unaware about that. We tried our best

throughout the life for perfection in every field or for satisfaction. If the speakers beloved married with him then what remain next in his life that is the question asked by the speaker. It is a perfection of his life. He argued that heaven should not be attraction for him as he got more than heavenly bliss. He claims that bliss of riding with his beloved is superior than pleasures of heaven. It is really true about the lover and beloved as they think their union is a supreme bliss of life, but here, according to some critics, it seems that speaker in the poem is more attracted towards the physical beauty of his beloved. The line clearly shows the speakers indication. 'We ride and I see her bosom heave.' Suddenly, the speaker came to know that his beloved is silent now and thinks that their pleasure will be ended. It is feeling that should be for persisting for a long time as it gives pleasure to his heart.

Actually, beloved refuses the company of her lover and clearly rejected to love-making onwards. She has declined his proposal of love but accepted a proposal of last ride together as she has some place for him in her heart. In this love doesn't need to reciprocated to meaningful, on the contrary, the speaker suggest that thwarted love can be beautiful and even sacred. The speakers love in the poem is so strong that nothing is dearer to his heart than lady's love, he wants to conquer her heart in any condition. If she leaves to him then life should be meaningless for him. The poem clearly shows that love can spoil the life sometimes as there is nothing more important to lover and beloved than their love. It is life giving for them. The line touches our heart and learns a lesson to us –

'Fail, I alone, in words and deeds?

Why, all men strive and who succeeds?'

It doesn't mean that ambitious people have no place in this world, but failure sometimes, leads to success. They tried their best to achieve their goal. No one is perfect in this world. There should be imperfection in every one though he may be leader, soldier, poet, sculpture, musician etc. if they achieved greater feat in their life, but it should not live for a long time, in some days, they forget their greater achievement, as nothing is permanent and live for a short while. It is not ever-lasting. Even, great conquest is meaningless. Statesman and soldier ends up nothing than 'ten lines' entry in the history book and 'heap of bones' he also come to know that his riding will also be ended. It is a truth that highest delights cannot be remained forever. It will spoil in some time, but it arises the hope for paradise. Whatever unattainable attained in the heaven. This is optimism of Browning.

Conclusion

In short, we can say that Robert Browning is an optimistic poet. His poetry imbibed with optimistic views not only in The Last Ride Together but also in all his poems. He has a mastery to use dramatic monologue. His poetry creates a new hope and opens the doors of optimism for the other writers of English. This quality made him distinct from others. There is difference between Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning. One is pessimistic and other is optimistic. Both are opposite to each other in their style and presentation of emotions. Browning don't worry about obstacles and tensions on the other hand Tennyson's views on life and everything is of pensive mood. His energy, spirit and immortality of soul thinks us beyond the portal of death.

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