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Q. Discuss Browning is a love poet ?

Ans: Robert Browning is a natural poet of love .Browning's marriage with Elizabeth was so happy that it left ~~his~~^{its} mark on his poetry .He came out of the overflow^{ing} powerful feelings of love and affection .He has sung so well of love that we can rank him next only to John Donne in the genre of English love poetry .But he is a love poet with speciality of his own .His love poetry has a range and realism which are different from those of his great predecessors .His love poems do not deal with love of truth or ~~love of mankind or of one's~~ mother land .Browning's love is a passion that draws a man to a woman or a woman to a man .For him love unites not only a man and woman it unites God and man .It is the supreme principle both of morality and religion .In his love poems Browning describes the passion and treats it from intellectual point of view .He places his lovers in various situations and examines their psychological implications .A study of his major love poem will reveal the nature and quality of his art as a poet of love .

Broadly speaking ,Browning has written two kinds of love poems personal and dramatic . His personal poems are very few , because his bent of mind was fundamentally dramatic .He was interested more in looking at others with an objective eye than in indulging in self analysis .So his genius was not suited to personal love poetry which essentially requires a lyrical bent of mind on the part of the writer still ,as we have stated ,Browning under the influence of the inspiring love relationship with his wife wrote a few brilliant poem of personal love .

"Prospice" is the poem of personal love written after the death of his wife. The poem speaks of Browning's desire to be one with his wife in the next world .But it is not of despair that he wants to leave this world .Like a true lover he must live life to the full .He is prepared to undergo all the trials of life before going to the next world .He feels the loss of his wife ,but the faith that ultimately he will meet her in heaven gives him courage to continue to struggle with determination .

There is a full throb of passion in this poem .The belief in his reunion with his beloved is in the nature of an "ecstatic thought" a complete fusion of emotion and thought .

Browning

Though the intense love that Browning felt for his wife finds expression in some beautiful poems he found the dramatic mode more congenial. However, most of the poems by Browning dealing with love are dramatic in essence. In each, there is a certain situation and the revelation of the emotions of a character placed in that situation. As a consequence, the individuality of the speaker is brought out. The dramatic note naturally gave Browning the opportunity to deal with "Love" in various aspects. It is significant that his own love was smooth and fortunate and yet he deals very well with rejected or unfulfilled love. It speaks for his objectivity and sense for the dramatic.

In some of his poems Browning treats love dramatically. Thus his poem "Andréa Del sartor" begins with the following words:

"But do not let us quarrel any more, No my Lucrezia, bear with me for once; In this poem Browning shows how love is debased to the level of sensuous slavery. Although Andrea and Lucrezia are married, there is no normal love relation between them. Lucrezia is interested only in Andrea's money. She does not understand the true worth of an artist. She can not inspire Andrea to be a great artist like Raphael or Michael Angelo. Again Andrea's fondness for his wife blinds him of his social and professional duties. He exploits the money of the king of France to make a house for Lucrezia. He even neglects his parents. Thus his irrational love brings about his ruin.

Again in "Fra Lippo Lippi", Fra Lippo is a monk who once rejected worldly pleasure. Yet he feels the urge of mixing with girls. In all these poems, Browning treats love dramatically. Here Browning shows that physical love is one of the basic human instinct. If society attempts to deny it there will be perversion. Fra Lippo Lippi was made a monk at the age of eight. A monk is supposed to renounce worldly pleasure including sensuous love. But as he confesses to the watch man:-

"You should not take a fellow of eight years And make him swear to never kiss the girls". Although Browning strongly believes in God and life after the death, he does not advocate strict asceticism. Rather he suggests that man can attain fulfillment by accepting the pleasure and pain of this physical world.

Andrea

In "porphyria's lover" we find the psychological makeup of the speaker. He is afraid that the blissful moment of love will pass away so he kills his beloved. Yet he suffers no sense of guilt. The murder reminds us of the murder in Browning's "My Last Duchess" where the Duke kills the Duchess cold bloodedly. However, the motif for the murder of the Duke and the lover are very different. Porphyria's lover is not as cruel as Duke. He just wants to get his beloved permanently, as if he wants to make her a permanent piece of art like the picture of lovemaking on the urn in Keats "Ode on a Grecian Urn".

In his love poetry Browning does not describe the beauty of woman: There is very little of the physical charms of a woman. He concentrates on the power which a woman can exert in her relationship with a man. That man may be her husband or her lover. In such poems as "porphyria's Lover" "The Bust" there is no reference to the outward beauty which attracts a lover. Browning has tried to understand the wide and varied phases of love. His love poems are an attempt to give expression to all sides of physical love. It may vary from animal passion as in "Pippa passes" to the romantic love in "The Last Ride Together".

Browning has attached mystic significance to his love poetry by talking of love and God as two interconnected realities. His love is not confined to the body or to this world alone. It is his faith that true lovers meet in the next world after their death. So love is not an end in itself. It is a means towards the attainment of heavenly bliss. Even when Browning is portraying cases of failure in love he has a word of hope for them. The lover of "The last Ride Together" experiences the same failure in love in this world, but by virtue of his sincerity in love he feels.

"Who knows but the world may end to night"? He believes that if the world ends at the moment when he is taking his last ride with the beloved, then that moment will become eternal. In spite of the fact that the beloved has turned down his love the lover is full of hope. The lovers of Browning leave much upon God in matters of love, and the theme of love God relationship finds a recurrent expression in the poetry of Browning.

"God creates the love to reward the love" and if the lovers do not avail of the moment, they are failures. — themselves

Browning's love poetry is both complex and comprehensive. His love poems deal with cases of successful as well as unsuccessful love. Of the poems which treat of physical love about two third represent feelings of man and one third express the feelings of women. The love of man is partly successful and partly unsuccessful. Among the successful poems we have "By the fireside", "Respectability", and "One word More". Poems marked with a mode of failure and despair are "Love among the Ruins", "porphyria's Lover", "A Lover's Quarrel" etc.

In Love poems where a woman's passion dominates there is less intellectual elements. When a poem deals with love of a man it shows greater intellectual depth. Moreover, the tragedies of woman in love appear more interesting to the poet than the tragedies of men.

So Browning considered love to be the basic principle of the universe. True love will be fulfilled if not in this world, certainly in the next. The love with which Browning generally deals with is passionate, but the passion is of tenderness and devotion. He does not become sentimental. Above all it is the variety of love situations in his poetry that is amazing. There is love triumphant and love as a strengthening force, love eager and young, love satiated, love, rejected love, betrayed love making heroes of men or love enslaving and corrupting them. Love in all its guises, appears in Browning's poetry. It can be an anticipation of heaven; it can also be a foretaste of hell.