



Psycho Analysis of Browning's Love Poetry

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Then a light, then thybreast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest.¹

That the theme and emotion of Love has a lot to do with Psyche, is not only a poetic tradition, but a mythical concept also as is evident from the myth of Cupid and Psyche, and Browning is the fittest poet to be studied, for he is the only writer to write of the passion of Love and devotion for God simultaneously. According to the myth Psyche was a beautiful nymph; Once she failed to pay heed to Venus, passing by her side ; this infuriated Venus and the goddess of love was filled with the passion of revenge, she asked her son cupid to arouse the erotic passion of love in Psyche and there after, to make her sad by abandoning her. Cupid went on the mission, but, seeing the beauty of the nymph, himself feel in love with the nymph. They used to meet in the night only. Once, with a desire to see her lover, Psche entered the room with a lamp in her hand. Having seen the extremely handsome cupid, she trembled and the oil in the lamp fell on cupid; the god woke up and with burnt pinions, disappeared from the window. A conscientious and psycho analytical reading of Browning's love poetry makes a reorder feel a revitalisation of the mythical episodes also.

It should not escape the attention that most of Love poems written by Robert Browning are in the form of dramatic monologues, the characters

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have been presented in the light of not what they do, bt what is within their mind ; this necessitates the analysis of their psyche and certain motivating emotions, which justify their complex actions and thoughts. These poems need a Freudian and Jungian interpretation, this approach is supported by the expression, "Browning's a catches his characters in a cool moment of introspection or of guarded self revelation, and h lets us see in their minds the causes and results of previous actions, as few other poets have been able to do."² In such a process some intricate situations are to be created, which makes this "the poetry of situations"³. The speaker is put in a critical situation and indulges in a process of self realisation ; there are clash of ideas and thus the poet achieves a higher and deeper reality, greater psychological variety than is possible for those who deal with it the externals alone.

A pscho analysis of the mind of Alfonso II, the Duke of Ferrara shows that he was an Othello like husband, who always doubted the integrity of his wife. Fra Pandolf made a portriat of his wife, the Duchess. The Duke suffers from a complex ; he thinks that he is unable to satisfy the emotional

inclination of his wife ; she wanted to be told that she was beautiful ; but the pride of the Duke came in the way :

Sir ' t was not

Her husband's presence only, called that spot of joy into the Duchess' cheek:⁴.

The Duke means to say that the painter might have told her that it was impossible to paint the half flush that dies along her throat. What his arrogance could not like was that she had a heat too soon made glad. This caused jealousy in his mind and he ordered that her smiles should be

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stopped. Though it is not narrated, yet it is true that she was poisoned to death. The sense of feminine weakness before a husband's tyranny is also suggested here. So far as love is concerned it is the perversity that has been highlighted. The philosophy is that the canker of doubt kills the matrimonial joy and bliss. The overall impression is that this strange monologue is an epitome of Italian Renaissance and humanist painting. Such an age was singular for its intrigue, its avarice, its cunning and its hypocrisy. The special charm is its epigrammatic style.

Another such poem is The Last Ride Together that needs a psycho-analysis to explore an unqualified optimism as a manifestation of soul study ; a strong mind never bothers about failure or success, because the two are the two sides of the same coin. One should have perfect hope in God, for what He does, is in one's ultimate interest ; lover should think of nothing but love itself ; this makes the ride a spiritual experience ; the lover says :

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?

Why, all men strive and who succeeds "

We rode, it seemed my spirit flew,

Saw other regions, cities and regions new.

As the world rushed by on either side⁵.

This indicates that the characters "speak in the voice of Browning but their utterances are their own."⁶ It is on account of depth in probity that the poem has been eulogised as "one of the greatest love poems in all literature"⁷ it deals with the probability of the fulfilment of love in the life that is powerful to be born "as an aspiration which was not to be realised here all, but must have its completion in the other life."⁸

The psycho-analysis of a lover, who had strangled her beloved and

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who is sure that she did not feel any type of pain at a time, when she was breathing her last, has been most successfully presented in the poem Porphyria's Lover. In this poem Porphyria entered the cottage of her lover in a stormy night and "kneeling and made the cheerless grate blaze up and all the cottage warm."⁹ This strange girl is not only possessive but is full of uncontrollable passion to make her lover's cheek lie there on her shoulder and to give herself to him for ever, at last the lover knew.

Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise

Made my heart swell, and still it grew,

While I debated what do¹⁰

The lover strangled her to death, which was painless. The ending of the poem is strange and remarkable ; the lover thinks that it was the perfection of love ; not only this, it had a divine sanction also :

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirred,

And yet God has not said a word.¹¹

the psycho-analytical interpretation of the poem gives rise to a question as to whether the lover is insane ; howeve, such a theory holds no water, for there is no incoherence in narration and he believes in the immortality of soul. It is action of murdering the girl is really the emancipation of soul from the elutches of worldly intrigues.

One more poem of pscho-analytical interest depicting love's perfection in life after life is Evelyn Hope ; the peculiarity of this poem is that the beloved in question is just dead ; the lover sits by her bedside ; perhaps she had not heard his name ; all this does not dishearten him ; the

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Idea that one day she will read his love letter and will come to know, what he meant, gives him ample consolation :

No, indeed ! for God above

Is great to grant, as mighty to make.

And creates the love to reward the love.¹².

Thus, it can safely be concluded that it is the feminine psyche that Browning's adroitness has explored, "I do not hesitate to put his portriats of women quite on a level with his portriats of men, and far beyond those of any other English poets of the last three contries."¹³.

Reference

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