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THEMATIC STUDY IN ROBERT BROWNING'S *THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER*

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the imperishable love which the lover feels for his lady love. In love, there is neither fake nor true. The fact is some are feeble in expressing their love and some are unaware of this feeling. But love remains the same in all the relationships. The relationship may break up but their love will be immutable. Because they let their hearts communicate and they even comprehend each other's silence. In *The Last Ride Together*, the narrator wishes his love for lady love to be long-lasting. Even after his beloved's rejection he doesn't curse her instead he blesses her. In the modern world, if the lover gets deserted he would simply expose her. Through this poem, Browning beautifully reveals that if there is love there wouldn't be revenge. Here the lover only wants the last ride from her before they split up. In the last ride, he doesn't want to converse with her neither about the past nor about the future. He just wants to cherish the present by showering his love on her. Moreover, spiritualism can also be seen in this poem. The narrator believes that they will be reunited in the heaven. Even though they are about to separate the poet leaves an optimistic note to the readers.

Keywords: Self-consolation, rejection, Everlasting love and inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

The Last Ride Together is the famous monologue written by Robert Browning, an eminent Victorian poet. He has been considered the master of the

dramatic monologue. The dramatic monologue, as we understand it today "is a lyric poem in which the speaker addresses a silent listener, revealing himself in the

context of a dramatic situation” (Murfin 97). Although Browning has been produced numerous monologues they are often criticized by contemporaries for being too emotional. Much of the dramatic tension in Browning's monologues lies in the contrast between the “truth” that the character tries to create and the real truth that is gradually revealed in the narration. There is a blend of pessimism and optimism can be visualized in this poem.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The Last Ride Together grapples with innumerable themes such as hopelessness, self-consolation, and ecstasy and so on. ‘Love’ emerges as the major theme in the poem. The word ‘love’ was not invented by any single person. It was there since the world had been created. It can be seen everywhere. It has brought out well through this poem. The researcher wishes to explain all the themes individually.

The speaker realises that failure is inevitable in everything we do. He himself has been rejected by his ladylove. He doesn't curse her for being ditched. He attempts to diminish his pain by trying to hide his desires. The narrator feels no bitterness or resentment from his beloved. The narrator says overwhelmingly,

“My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!”
(7-8).

Due to his beloved's rejection, he pleads her for a last ride desperately. Browning suggests through the speaker, that the lover should be elated for experiencing love with a beautiful woman. The narrator should be filled with pride because his love gives him the imperishable memories. He begins waiting for the response of his mistress. When his beloved leans against his breast for a moment just before commencing on the last ride, the narrator is not only overjoyed but also experiences heavenly ecstasy. At that moment he feels like seeing a cloud in the western evening sky. His heart bursts out with joy when his lady love is ready for a final ride after a lot of hesitation. The narrator has ceased thinking about the past. He feels that it will serve no purpose to worry or wondering about whether he might have changed things through a different approach towards his relationship with his beloved. While he may have gained her love, there is also the possibility that “she might have hated” him, thus leaving him in a most wretched position. Hence, instead of lamenting over a spilt milk, the narrator chooses to rejoice in the fact that though he does not have the love of this lady, he is at least not hated by her and “here we are riding, she and I”. The narrator goes on to console himself with the thought that he is

not left isolated. As he and his beloved ride smoothly, and the landscape rushes by on either side, the narrator feels as if his 'spirit flew' and in this moment of ecstasy, he sees the world in a different perspective. Moreover he accepts the truth that "To Err" is human's nature, so he has decided to live without her with the hope that she gave. He doesn't want to take revenge for her deception. He wants to make the best use of the present moment by riding with his beloved. In fact the man cannot execute whatever his brain thinks. The lover says that he is glad for being with her and breathing her by his side. A statesman's devotion to his country gets the inadequate reward of a short obituary while a brave soldier who sacrifices his life for his country receives the petty reward of a "flag stuck on a heap of bones" and an epitaph in Westminster Abbey. The lover feels that he is much better than these men because his "riding is better".

He says that he is also better off than a poet who may have the ability to express beautiful things in melodious and rhythmic language but never succeeds in achieving the ideals that he considers best for other men. He ends up "poor, sick, old ere your time" and while a poet can only describe the romantic ride but the narrator actually experiences it.

The narrator also feels that he is more fortunate than a sculptor or a musician. A sculptor may spend twenty long years in making a beautiful statue of Venus, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. While people will praise it, they will turn away from it the moment they see "yonder girl that fords the burn". The sculptor will have to accept that life is always greater than art.

The musician too, is unsuccessful. He grows old composing music but the only praise he gets is that his opera music sounds very nice. His music will not be admired forever because everything will change during the passage of time. The narrator is more fortunate because while he too, devoted his youth to courting his beloved, he has won the reward of the pleasure of riding in her company.

OPTIMISM

The lover goes on to say that no one knows 'what's fit for us'. Man's life does not end in this world. He has a life beyond, too. Hence, some desires must be left unfulfilled on this earth so that one may "have bliss to die with". If the lover had achieved his life's greatest aim on this earth and won the love of his beloved, he would have achieved perfect happiness but then, heaven would no longer "seem best". Since he has not won his love in this life,

he can die with the hope of getting his beloved's love in the life beyond. His ride is joyful but "heaven and she are beyond this ride". The lover is attempting to say that his love on his beloved is unique.

CONCLUSION

Spiritualism plays a vital role in this poem. The readers may think that the lover has gone through hell all his life. This poem sounds pessimistic so far. This may create a bad impression on love. But Browning turns the whole thing optimistic with the belief of Christianity. Thus this poem is a fantabulous revelation of love.

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