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**A CRITICAL STUDY OF ROBERT BROWNING'S PURE LYRICS IN  
COMPARISON WITH ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S  
PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWS**

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**Abstract:** Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning have been most famous poets of Victorian age as in the hands of Browning dramatic lyric got popularized but his contribution for personal lyric is also a matter of study. Mrs. Browning's poetic outlook and her views on the lyricism of Robert Browning are the rarest critical commentary which is the topic of discussion here so that the lyrical qualities of Browning have been examined in the view of the psychology of Barrett Browning.

**Keywords:** Lyrical poetry, dramatic monologue, poetic psychology, musical genius, faith in God.

Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning are the poets of high order and their works reveal their artistic conscience, creative skill and miraculous faith in God, soul and immortality. As poets, they fulfill their duty by presenting new and valuable views regarding life, human nature and behavior. They paint the truth in the right perspective as it is seen by them. As optimists, they have faith in themselves and present their views with firm belief in God and His mercy. Their poetical works are inspired by religious feelings and spiritualism. To them, poetry is an art to represent truth and reality and to convey this truth to the readers. As poets, they 'discern the God like mystery of God's universe'.

As realists, they do not see life through traditional and conventional views and justify their opinions in the real sense. Both accept the beauty and power of this universe and feel the necessity of verses to express the very fact related to soul, hopes, purity. Robert Browning reacts against the tyranny and convention in society.

Robert Browning's main concern is to analyze and portray human nature in an original way. He has indomitable hopefulness and spiritual energy and his works confirm the fact that he is religious poet having faith in God's mercy. Browning's genius is essentially dramatic and he presents the emotions and experiences of the imagined character. As a poet, he has lyrical qualities and his works such as 'Pauline', 'Pippa Passes' etc. have lyrical qualities and reveal his skill in the use of lyrical rhythm and melody.

There is lyrical touch and considerable beauty in many passages that impart a dignity to the work. It is regarded metaphysical and full of positive excellence. His other works 'Paracelsus', 'Stratford' and 'Sordello' show his skill of uniting within himself the elements of a true modern poet who has the soul of a dramatist and a thinker. His volume 'Dramatic Lyrics' (1842) establishes his position as a lyricist as this work reveals his passion of love and beauty and his poetical talent of expressing internal sentiments, feelings and thoughts. His drama 'Pippa Passes' also has lyrical quality as its highest beauty lies in its lyrical passages. It is regarded a piece of right inspiration as well as an irrepressible song. There is a variety of verse that embodies the beautiful poetical and musical rhythm. In "Genre and Poetic Authority in 'Pippa Passes'", David G. Riede remarks 'Pippa Passes' ... ..of doing without metaphysics of presence. (CEB 200)<sup>1</sup>

The publication of 'Men and Women' (1855) establishes his position as a man and artist. His poems have appealing imagery, music and holiness. This volume reveals the progress of the poet's mind as his poems 'A Lover's Quarrel', 'Old Pictures In Florence', 'The Patriot', 'Cleon', 'Bishop Blougram's Apology', 'Karshish', 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came', 'A Woman's Last Word', 'In A Year' etc. reveal his skill to represent the human psychology and his profuse genius to handle the subject in a glorified manner.

'One Word More' shows his lyrical skill as it is wholly charged with the intensity of affectionate devotion to his wife. In this poem he speaks of his love for his wife and says that as a writer his best gift to her is his poetry because he has no other gift to her and expresses his inmost love for her. He says:

*Take them, Love, the book and me together Where the  
heart*

*lies, let the brain lie also. (OWM)<sup>2</sup>*

As a true lover he dedicates his feelings and emotions as well as intellectual works to her. As a poetic artist, he reveals his inmost soul in this poem. To him, Raphael and Dante expressed their love for their beloveds in an unusual way and addressed the people. As a painter Raphael wrote poems. Similarly Dante painted the pictures to express his love. But Robert Browning regards himself humbler than as he lacks their loftiness and yet writes personal poems. He says:

*I shall never, in the years remaining Paint you  
Pictures*

.....  
*All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love! (OWM 177)<sup>2</sup>*

He believes that love brings great transformation in life as the artist becomes a true

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man in love. Though he is a poet as well as painter in the eyes of the world, he reveals himself as a man before his beloved and wants to do something exceptional to present his real personality before her. Though Robert Browning has been writing dramatic monologues so far, he writes a personal poem as a tribute to his wife. Elizabeth Barrett Browning admired his poetry and wrote enthusiastically to her sister about his poems included in the volume 'Men and Women' and remarked:

Robert will stand higher than ever through these poems -  
.....'Superhuman'. Mark that! Only Superhuman.

(EBB LHS 216)<sup>3</sup>

Robert Browning makes a beautiful use of nature imagery, Greek myth and Biblical illusions in his poem. He believes that the moon also has two personalities as one is seen by the world while the other is for her lover Endymion as the later saw that side of the moon that was unseen by other. Similarly Robert Browning expresses his own feelings and thoughts in these personal poems.

He says:

God be thanked, ..... he loves  
her! (OWM 180)<sup>2</sup>

As lyricist, his poems are musical and melodious. His poems such as 'By the Fireside', 'Meeting at Night and Parting at Morning', 'Porphyria's Lover' etc. reveal his use of music and melody. Both the poets believe that music is the language to please God as Mrs. Barrette Browning says:

All truth, and all beauty and all music belong to God ... In poetry, which  
includes all things, the diapason closet full ... in god. (BC 10:139)<sup>4</sup>

To her, the act of composing poetry is to make music, to create a mystic song. Like R. N. Tagore, her whole poetry is a tribute to God as she feels the God-life within herself. 'Abt Voglar' reveals Browning's views on music as in this poem he describes the inspiring effect of music. He believes that music has a divine touch, not bound to any law. Like John Milton and Thomas Gray, Robert Browning says that music has a glorious power and is superior to painting, poetry and other fine arts. As a musician he says:

*But here is the finger of god, .....*

*And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head! (AV) <sup>2</sup>*

Robert Browning's main concern is to represent the incidents that help in the development of the soul. His characters are mostly introspective and analytical and through the use of monologue he presents the inner feelings of the particular character. As a poet, he is interested in the quest of the soul.

To Robert Browning, monologue is a form that presents various moods, emotions, ideas and reflections of the characters. As a poet he makes a use of various artistic devices

and methods of fulfill his purpose. As an artist he has the capacity of a dramatic, a lyrical and a narrative writer. Like James Joyce, he deals with the play of the sub-conscious as he peeps into the soul of the character in a certain situation and thus his monologues are regarded as the beginning of the modern drama. As a psychological realist he observes and analyzes the moods, emotions, feelings and fancies of the human mind. In his poems he peeps into the very sub-conscious mind of his characters. Mrs. Barrett has shared her innumerable views about the lyricism of Robert Browning. Both believe that love makes human relations eternal as it has the power to unite human beings. To them, love of God is supreme and life is useless if one does not love God and is deaf to his call. One can get real success and happiness realizing the cravings and need of the soul to mingle with the supreme soul.

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