

Write a note on Browning's philosophy of life as revealed in *The Last Ride Together*.

Ans Browning's genius is dramatic and at the same time metaphysical. Every poem written by the poet contains a robust philo-

sophy of life. *The Last Ride Together* too is raised to a pedestal of great truths.

The poet has a great faith in life after death. He believes in the existence of God and in the immortality of soul. Death is not the be-all and end-all of life. It takes us to a new world of perfect peace and happiness. When one dies, it is better that one should look forward for further happiness to be enjoyed in heaven. Life on earth is a "broken arc," it is in heaven "a perfect round". The lover in the poem says :

... Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate.
My being ; had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
—Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.

The philosophy of failure and success looms large in the poem. Nobody can say what is good for us—failure or success. Failure, the lover argues, is the evidence of final triumph. Failure here on this earth means success in heaven. If our soul experiences the supreme joy of the fullest realization of our ideals, heaven would lose its meaning. It would then be a dull, insipid existence to live in heaven. Real happiness lies in endless pursuit and not in attainment. Life is a persistent struggle to reach our goal in life and this struggle has its continuance in heaven. The lover thus philosophizes in the poem :

This foot once planted on the goal,
This gloy-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such ? Try and test !
I sink back shuddering from the quest—
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best ?
Now, Heaven and she are beyond this ride.

The poem further offers a complete philosophy of love. "Love does not mean to Browning a gross sensual appetite as it does to Byron ; it does not even mean the rich sensuousness of the Cavalier poets or even the fine intoxication of the romantic Keats ; it does not mean an undefined reflection of the Platonic ideal as it means to Shelley." Love to Browning is an alchemic power which transmutes, etherealises and elevates the human soul. Love, in his opinion, belongs

as much to the body as to the soul. But it has nothing carnal in it. The lover in *The Last Ride Together* thinks that love deified him, 'So one day more am I deified'. His lady-love leant and lingered on his breast for a moment and "flesh must fade for heaven was here."

The poet spins out a philosophy of life and art in the poem. Life is greater than art. The artist only imagines and is happy. But he does never enjoy the relish of true happiness in living actually a life of joy and beauty. The lover says :

What does it all mean, poet ?....

Have you yourself what's best for men ?

Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —

Nearer one whit your own sublime

Than we who never have turned a rhyme ?

Even the masterpieces of great art, being inert and cold, fall below the most commonplace beauty of living persons. However perfect a work of art may be, we instinctively look at something living and real.

The lover in the poem says :

And you, great sculptor—so you gave

A score of years to Art, her slave,

And that's your Venus—whence we turn

To yonder girl that fords the burn !