

## REPRESENTATION OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEME OF HOPE IN DICKENSON'S POETRY

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper attempts to examine the representation of theme of hope and optimism in Dickenson's poetry by showing some comparisons and contrasts among different of her poems. This theme is motivated by poet's own life and her judgments of life respectively. The purpose of analyzing this theme has been to explore how poet has used different contrastive associations in order to define her theme each time differently in her poems. The focus was on a specific term "optimism", considering hope: its loose synonym as a focal point to analyze. The perspectives of hope described in the poems have been studied with reference to characteristic features of hope mentioned according to the, contexts, choice of words, stylistic features, and intentions of the poet herself.*

**KEYWORDS:** Hope, Dickenson Poetry, Theme, Philosophy

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### INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to define Dickenson's philosophy of hope and optimistic attitude towards life with special reference to her poems. Through describing this theme of hope she defines spiritual freedom, bright side of life and motivation she describes spirit of having belief on God. Although her themes of hope in poem have counter arguments in her poems yet they are powerfully speaking to the themes. She has variety of themes so we cannot say that her work fits on specific genre. Some critics are of view that her poetry can be understandable by her life and others say that her life can be judged through her poems. Her themes and philosophy of life are so much universal, generalizable and depict able that she catches the attention of every literary person. One could almost say that each of her poems is like radical wine in a reactionary bottle. Indeed, that very contrast makes what the poems convey all the more startling and dazzling.

Dickenson (1830-1886) is often considered as sensitive as well as an isolated poet. Emily Dickenson was an American English poet and now recognized as one of the greatest American poets. Feminists finds patriarchic issues in her life regarding her father. Psychologists find psychological dealings, issues and themes in her poetry. Generally sense of hope, encouragement, love, sympathy, kindness can be found as themes in her poetry. Theme of hope has been handled through different choices of vocabulary items and symbols in order to define it. Dickenson is so

much clear and vivid in describing her theme of hope and optimism that reader's inner spirit of motivation and stimulus arises automatically about the understanding of the theme.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Churchill (2009) "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty". Dickinson has described the theme of hope in this manner that reader feels himself motivated to fight against the hardships of life. Dickinson deals with hope when hope is also remembered by Dickinson when her worries and difficulties hindrance her way in form of terror, fear and despair. Optimism is represented by Emily in a way that inspires reader and the poet herself to be motivated by her optimism that it makes her strong and powerful against despair, hopelessness and desolation.

Snediker (2008), in his book "A New Paradigm for Queer Theory" insists that optimism must be reimagined as necessary for critical engagement. Through fresh readings of the poetry of Dickinson, Snediker reveals how Dickinson and other poets demonstrated an interest in the durability, strength and permanence of positive effects. Snediker (2008) further maintains his point that optimism is not reducible to hope and not opposed to knowledge. Queer optimism demands that we think again about enjoyment, pain, personhood, and whether and how we live our theories.

Marini (2012) says, "Dickinson is not wholly optimistic rather relies on existence of hope in life. Hope is a thing that she suggests several times in her life, theme of hope can be seen in her earliest and latest poems".

Hope is a universal theme that Dickinson wanted to convey to her readers through her appealing poetry. Ryan (2014) says, "Her poems have no information that separates her from us. Not only her poems referred to the experience of the writer but also referred to the experience of the reader. She was devoted to the practice of theory. Through writing poems she not only sustains life but also creates zest and motivation in Life". In the light of that statement we can go ahead to find the theme of life, hope and optimism in her poetry.

### Analysis:

Dickinson's poems also reflect her personal experiences mostly. She has dealt with the theme of hope with different perspectives, outlooks and parameters in her poems. Unlikely to her contemporaries the way she deals with the theme of hope is not based on continuation and persistence. In one point of view she has one opinion but she switches from one idea to another perspective of hope. It is difficult for reader to depict whether she regards hope in positive or negative terms, whether she wants to adopt optimistic attitude by following and believing hope or she simply considers hope as a congealed thing which stops men from progress. Dickinson in her poem "Hope" Is the Thing with Feathers" mentions hope as a positive approach towards life. She uses the metaphor of bird to describe hope. As a bird cannot fly without wings so man cannot live without the glimpse of hope in his life. Her choice of words shows her positive approach towards optimism. She says, "Perches, soul, tune without the words". Further her optimism makes her, "Sweetest in the gale".

Hope for Emily in this poem is: “A bird with feathers”: Feathers are the source of helping and assisting the bird so for human beings life is enjoyed and nourished by the feathers of hope. Again she is of the view about hope that hope is a “Tune without words”, because it is abstract although yet exists as a strong and motivated feeling for human beings. Dickenson further declares, “I have heard it in the chilliest land”. She further maintains that no matter how much pressing and difficult the circumstances are she even then felt the presence of hope in her life. She is not so much highest in describing her passion that she may cross the limits yet she maintains and balances between hope and its description and does not crosses her limits. She says, “Yet never in extremity, it asked a crumb of me”. At the end of the poem she finalized her decision that hope demands nothing in return even not a little thing it just gives to its holder.

In another poem “A Great Hope Fell” Dickenson describes that hope is although great but when it falls down it is so much difficult to handle its threats and disadvantages. In this poem the idea of hope is different from the other poem in a way that Emily is although using adjective “great” yet she describes the harms side by side the very harms of its greatness. The more the tree of hope is big the more its fall would cause loss. She compares hope with hill and tree both when ground to earth bring results that are harmful. She also compares “hope” with “cunning wreck” that when smashed to death may loses its evidences and witnesses about its destruction.

She uses negative connotations of hope in this poem contrary to her previous poem like that of “The ruin”, “Cunning wreck”, “Dread occasion”, “Foundering at sea” etc.

In another poem “When I hope I Recollect” Dickenson presents hope by using a strict verbal imagery in negative connotations she tried to convey the positive theme of hope. She represents hope in this poem with a new angle by saying “recollect” to remember something by making effort to remember it. Hope is also remembered by Dickenson when her worries and difficulties hindrance her way. Her determination never leads her astray from the way towards pessimistic point of life. So as a resistance she says, “Roughest air\_ was good”. Hyphen is determent of her desire to convey more about hope something good and positive. Although the air of hope is rough, irregular, uneven yet it brings productive results which light up her life after hard work and tussle. She further says in her poem:

“Not Sleet could bite me—  
Not a frost could cool—  
Hope it was that kept me warm—  
Not Merino shawl—“

Sleet here is referring the rain and snow. Frost also depicts the hard and dead end of life. All these natural objects are not in her favor to maintain her view of optimism in life. Not to speak of the terrors of rain, snow and frost even then she holds the edge of life in form of hope.

Merino is a sheep whose fur is used to make clothes to prevent from cold. Here nature is also neglected and ignored by Dickenson as according to her all these things are not supporting her in holding optimism in her life. As long as hope is with her she feels protected from the dreads of life. She uses juxtaposition further to convey her point more clearly and vividly.

“And the Day that I despaired—  
 This—if I forget  
 Nature will—that it be Night  
 After Sun has set—  
 Darkness intersect her face—  
 And put out her eye—  
 Nature hesitate—before  
 Memory and I”

She uses the word despair which is counter of hope. She conveys that when despair controls man he forgets about the light of hope and in this way nature also has have her part in this process. She explains that when she forgets hope, her memory is also betrayed by nature and she as well when she sees darkness before her.

In another of her poem “The Way Hope Builds His House” she uses the imagery of house: sill, rafter, edifice, and pinnacle (A small pointed stone decoration built on the roof of a building). Dickenson describes that the building of life needs not the use of sill and woods but it only needs pinnacle which is the most successful and main part of the building of life. She symbolizes pinnacle with hope and tries to convey that as soon as the power of hope is there nothing can stop a life being successful. According to her, “Hope is a strange invention”. Hope is powerful yet subordinate to heart so she calls hope as an invention by heart. Heart invented hope because heart needs it. She simply wants to describe that man on earth faces troubles and despairs in form of serious and unsolvable matters but he invents hope and in this way he goes on living in spite of hardships and problems. Hope is although exciting, thrilling, yet it is always subordinate to heart. At the end of the poem she admires that hope is very unique and it keeps on increasing and developing. Its medicinal quality makes hope attractive and heart catching to adopt.

## CONCLUSION

Dickenson has utilized the theme of optimism from different parameters. In her poetry she deals with this theme each time with distinctive associations, symbols, and contrasting images and opposite vocabulary. Each of her poems contains different philosophy of optimism. A through study of her earlier poems shows that she uses positive connotations and association of optimism with different living and non-living objects. Gradually she shifts from positive representation of hope toward negative explanation of this theme. She realizes that the more the hope is empowered in human being’s mind, the more it is destructive and painful because of its unmeasured and unknown destination. The reason behind this is her own life and tussles that she faced, have been reflected in her poems in form of decaying, crumbling and wavy belief on optimism.

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