

Was emily dickinson leading an isolated life?

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Emily Dickinson was acclaimed as one of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century. She got popularity only after her death when her sister found her poems and got them printed. In the later part of her life, people began to call her a mythical figure as she became the most isolated person and used to stay most of the time in the confines of her home. But was she really a recluse as was made out to be? I feel this is not so as in early part of her life she was a socialized person and had lot of friends too.

Even when she was living alone in her house and staying in isolation then too she was very much attached to the world. She had a deep understanding about the psychology and emotional aspects of the people which we could very well feel in many of her poems. In the following essay, I will prove she was never detached from the world, even though she remained most part of her life alone.

In her isolation, she was writing great poems with which she was making herself attached to this world. Emily Dickinson will always be remembered by critics and literary historians as one of the most eminent poets of all time.

During her life time, there were only seven poems published but after her death her 1800 poems went to the print by the efforts of her sister making her the most revered legendary figure of all times. A lot has been said of her reclusiveness and eccentric nature creating her as somewhat like mystic character. Her solitary nature undoubtedly made her a topic of discussion in her hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts during the later part of her life. But it would be quite unfair if her reclusive nature would be attributed to her unsound mind, or her eccentricity.

The truth is that she led an extremely normal life as a young adolescent and had also spent some part of her life in the boarding school for girls in 1847. The following study will show though Emily Dickinson was slightly leading a secluded life as compared to others around her yet she was very well part of the society and will also throw light on the way her writing had created an impact on her life. As a young woman, Dickinson was much socialized and a center of attraction. All important people in Washington D. C. , even justice of the Supreme Court were charmed by her personality.

She remained for longer hours in her room not in the hiding but writing as well as reading; not to shun away from society but to create phenomenal 1800 poems. However as soon as the time whisked away, she became more secluded and turned away many of her visitors and even her friends who came to see her. She would rarely leave her home. Her neighbors would gossip about her and made her a mythical figure. She never disclosed her emotions making herself more and more mysterious despite the speculations about her disappointed love affair.

It was found that she was attached to Reverend Charles Wadsworth and Samuel Bowles who was editor of the Springfield Republican in the honor of whom she had written many poems. Between 1861 and 1862 was a bad phase of her life as Wadsworth had shifted to San Francisco and Bowles had moved to Europe. She was totally disappointed though Bowles did return back in 1862 yet this time she did not talk to him. Meanwhile both her mother and father expired. Though Otis Lord, a friend of her father did bring love in her life yet she was an isolated person, living in the world of her own.

(Tandon & Trevedi, 2008) Never in her life had it appeared she lived a secluded life as her house was always filled with friends and relatives. She did all the household chores like cleaning, cooking and even gardening and wrote letters and revised for many of her friends. With the moral support of Austin, Benjamin Newton as well as Susan she came to know at the earliest that she was a poet and when she faced crises in her life, she confined her life into writing poetry. Between 1861 and 1864, she had written almost 750 poems. She wrote poems for herself and not for publication.

It is quite true that the rate at which she was writing poetry demanded her not only to be psychologically but emotionally strong too. Majority of her poems are on recluse and mysticism without any single trace of inhuman element. As found by Neeru Tandon & Anjana Trevedi, “ we find her continually on the threshold of wonder, standing detached in the sudden realization of the greatness of little things. ” (2008, p. 13-14) Winters of 1861 and 1862 were a period of psychological turmoil in her life when she was cut off from the society and even refused to let her poems printed.

How dreary to be Somebody
How public like a frog
To tell your name the
lifelong day
To an admiring bog. (Tandon & Trevedi, 2008, p. 13-14) Yet in this isolated life of hers, she was very well part of the world, as is reflected in many of her poems. She was also deeply imbued in nature and philosophical disposition of man that she could not but restrain herself from saying “ Philosophy don't know / And through a Riddle, at the last / Sagacity, must go / To guess it, puzzles scholars /... ” in her poem “ This World is Not Conclusion. ” (Dorioni, 1996, p.

33) This short poem is about her awareness on faith and philosophers disposition towards it. She knew that philosophers are not aware about the faith. She even states that there is no sense in believing in faith as it rejuvenates life of the people but at the same time perplexes them. In fact even scholars have no understanding of faith. Still the common man will go on believing in faith and even suffer because of it. Here Dickinson gives example of religion how people having faith in Christ and crucifixion had suffered. Sometimes the faith they have fails them and sometimes this very faith fills their lives with happiness.

Only those persons who have understanding of the world around and been in direct contact with the world around can really give such an in depth explanation of faith. Dickinson even points out the fact that even though we try to keep away from it in whatever way even by involving ourselves in drugs, still faith keeps on penetrating our soul and nibbles at it. With such a deep intensity, she is able to explain about the faith. It seems she was a master of psychology and could read emotional surface of man with deep intense feeling. (Doriani, 1996)

Through " This is letter to My World", Emily is trying to reveal her emotions to the world as she says she is very well part of this world even though she never comes out from the domains of her house and garden, still the world should not judge her partially because of it. It appears as if she is predicting that someday people will read her poems and will love the nature as she does. In the last two lines of her poetry, she seems to be requesting them to enjoy her poems instead of passing critical comments. This little and very beautiful poem enables us to see her life from different angle.

Though confined to her home yet she felt associated with the world and tried to remain attached with them through her poetry. In the eyes of Dickinson, there were three worlds, and she herself said she stayed in all of them- in the world of nature, of creatures and things she experienced; in the world of friends; and in “ the world of unseen unheard, whence we trail clouds of glory”. (Tandon & Trevedi, 2008, p. 16) In other words she was feeling herself present in all and everything when she says, “ soul unto itself is an imperial friend. ” (Tandon & Trevedi, 2008, p.

16) As she sat in the loneliness of her room, her mind wondered outside in the world. She was associated with everyone and everything around. As Emily Dickinson selected her own society, she closed the doors for divinity as she always wished there was no eternity. Yet another poem, “ Hope is the Thing With Feathers,” is all about the hope as she tries to find in the flight of the birds. As they fly in the nature around with free spirit and freedom and so is our hope. With the help of imagery and metaphors, she describes why “ Hope is the Thing With Feathers.

” (Melani, 2009) For her, feathers are the symbol of hope; they give us enough reason to have a flight and initiate a new beginning at the same time. As contrast to it, broken feathers or wings are the sign of distorted or disgusted persons who have failed in their life. Their wings have been broken and they no longer could even hope anything for themselves. She says hope is imbibed deeply in our mind and soul and it is our soul that gives rise to the hope as it is its home. Our hope stays in our home in the same way as the bird rests on a perch.

It's quite true that birds keep on singing their song of hope as in the second stanza she writes " And sweetest in the gale is heard". (Melani, 2009) As the song of bird is sweetest, so is the song of hope which comes from our soul. This short poem is nonetheless makes her as a person of the world and for the world as she could easily catch each and every moment of the world and put beautifully in the rhythm of her words. She fully knows that a person who destroys the hope with the anger and passiveness himself feels the pain of it. With the image of a person bashing the bird of hope, she explains those persons who are destroying the hope are in fact destroying themselves. In the last stanza too, Dickinson gives yet another reason why people should always keep hope as she says, " I've heard it in the chilliest lands. " (Melani, 2009) Killing hope is impossible as it is invincible and it is prevalent for everyone and everybody. It is a fact that bird never asks anything in return for its sweet voice as hope is a free gift from nature for all of us.

All we should do is never try to destroy the hope and allow it to move freely. You will yourself feel the fun and enjoyment of it as you feel when you hear the song of a bird. Undoubtedly her life was spent in extreme pain as she was emotionally and mentally disturbed, which we can feel in one of her poems " There's a Certain Slant of Light. " as the poem is of despair and pain. (Bloom, 1999, p. 14) As she was in pain, she tries to associate herself with the spiritual aftermath. As Harold Bloom analyzed it, for her the despair remained in-corporal just like a piece of music.

This despair will not change but is sure to change us permanently. (Brown, 1999) Emily Dickinson became a legendary figure and a great poet nonetheless as she remained secluded into her own life, she became more

<https://assignbuster.com/was-emily-dickinson-leading-an-isolated-life/>

and more close to everyone, herself and all over the world. She always wanted as she understood the world; the people too should understand her and her feelings and emotions. Many of her poems are also conversational in tone making her a great conversationalist of all times. Reference List Bloom, H. (1999) *Emily Dickinson*.

New York, NY: Chelsea House Publications. Doriani, B. M.. (1996). *Emily Dickinson: daughter of prophecy*. Massachusetts: Univ of Massachusetts Press. Guthrie, J. R. (1998) *Emily Dickinson's vision: illness and identity in her poetry*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida. Melani, L. (2009). *Hope is the thing with feathers by Emily Dickinson*. Retrieved on August 8, 2010 from W. W. W: <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/hope.html> Tandon, N. & Trevedi, A. (2008). *Thematic Patterns Of Emily Dickinson's Poetry*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers. ,