

Poetry analysis

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

English Literature ic and Modern) Topic: Poetry Analysis " We never know how high we are"—Emily Dickinson

In all the investigations, the most important one is, knowing the true potentialities of the self. This is an ongoing g process. In this short poem, Emily Dickinson succeeds in delivering the gist of the ultimate philosophy as to how an individual should face the challenges of life, move towards destined goal, achieve the pinnacle of perfection and remain egoless.

The opening sentence, " We never know how high we are," (Line 1) is the assertion of an achiever. He has achieved, and therefore with the categorical statement, he advises the inquisitives, the truth about human life and its purpose. The directionless and destinations less human being is as good as a wooden log. " Till we are called to rise," (Line 2) gives indications about the purpose to rise. Every call has a goal behind it. For example, Lord Jesus Christ gave the call of Ten Commandments. Karl Marx gave a call for the workers to unite and fight against the rich class. Martin Luther King gave a call to practice non-violence. Only when an individual is convinced about the genuineness of the call, he proceeds further on the defined path. But the poet says, just listening to the call is not enough. She qualifies the call further and states, " And then, if we are true to the plan," (Line 3) In secular as well as in spiritual fields, what one needs is not great projects to self-elevation. The need is about great individuals who are willing to implement the projects in an impeccable manner. Those plans need to be implemented with dedication and inner discipline. The poet therefore argues that there are no shortcuts to success. One has to push to the front, through trials and tribulations and enjoy the duty and beauty of life. Considering success and failure as alternative beats of the same heart, one has to proceed further

and move towards the target. The poet writes, “ Our stature touches the skies.”(Line 4) A determined individual can cross the moon and beat the stars!

No one is defeated unless one admits defeat. Hard work and intelligent applications are the sure procedures for success. Once an individual is convinced about the genuineness of these ideals, achievement of the goal turns out to be easier. No one should conclude that the road to success will be an easy going option even for a determined individual. The purpose of the assertion of the poet, “ The Heroism we recite Would be a daily thing,” (lines 5, 6) refers to the work culture and attitude to life. Life is compared to an ocean. No one will ever be able to take bath in the ocean when all the waves are over. Such a situation will never come. The very nature of the ocean is to generate waves. Therefore, having gone for the sea-bath one should not be afraid of the oncoming waves. To such an individual living heroically is the normal way of life and a routine culture.

The religious tone of the poet is revealed in the final two lines of the poem. The poet expects of the determined individual to be free from ego. Do all work with an attitude of surrender, and not owning the pride of an achiever. The wise saying goes, ‘ What you do is not important; how you do, what you do is important.’ “ Cubits warp” (Line 7) --Warp means to perform duties in such a manner, when an individual transforms for the worse and takes to negativities. A cubit is an ancient unit of measure used in the Old Testament. King is the symbol of flattery and egoism. Therefore, the poet’s advice to an achiever is, surrender all the achievements at the feet of Lord, and do not be boastful. “ For fear to be a King” (Line 8) as the poet puts it. To surrender is the quality of a humble individual and it is dynamic in content. It is not the

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weak action performed out of fear.

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