

## Death – An Inevitable Fact of Life: A Comparative Study of the Portrayal of Death in Emily Dickinson's and Jalaluddin Rumi's Selected Poems

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### Abstract

The undeniable certainty of death and the uncertain fate of humans after death have been the greatest concerns of humanity from the beginning of existence until now. No one is untouched by the profound event of death, and most have not refrained from creating often horrifying images of it in their minds. Death is one of the most significant stages and events in human life, and the manner of facing it and the attitude towards it have always been crucial issues in the history of human intellectual life. The way one dies, the purpose of death, and the timing and circumstances of death all have a profound impact on the human perspective on mortality. For some, death is the most terrifying moment in the cycle of human life, seen as the endpoint of existence and a descent into nothingness. Yet, for others, it marks the beginning of a new life. The approach to death is a fundamental theme in literature, as the inevitability of death intertwines with life, providing a prevalent topic in the works of poets and writers. The following study, using the textual analysis method, tries to depict the varied themes of death portrayed in two poets' selected works; Emily Dickinson, an American poet, and Rumi, a poet from the east part of the world with thoughts inspired by Quranic verses. In Emily Dickinson's selected poems, "I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died," and "I Felt a Funeral in My Brain," the theme of death emerges as a central and pervasive element, reflecting the poet's unique perspective on mortality. Dickinson's treatment of death is characterized by a tragic and pessimistic outlook, marked by an abundance of pain and suffering. The fear of death consistently haunts her mind, profoundly shaping her perception of life. On the contrary, the imagery of embracing death and the belief in eternal life with the divine Lord underscore Rumi's fearless attitude toward mortality in his poem "When I Die."

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of death in literature has long been a subject of profound fascination and exploration. The confrontation with death, a universal human experience, has elicited myriad responses across cultures, eras, and individual sensibilities. Poets, with their unique linguistic

prowess, have often ventured into the enigmatic realm of death, seeking to decipher its mysteries, its fears, and its profound significance in the tapestry of human existence. Among the vast landscape of poets, Emily Dickinson and Rumi stand as towering figures, each contributing a distinct voice and perspective to the discourse on mortality. Dickinson, with her introspective and often enigmatic verses, and Rumi, the mystic whose words transcend boundaries, offer contrasting insights into the nature of death and its implications. Death has always been a theme in philosophy, theology and literature, and for centuries and centuries, the great thinking minds have been dwelling on it. Death, as a recurrent theme in literature, has inspired poets of all ages to write about it. Many poets such as John Donne, Dylan Thomas, T.S. Eliot, and W.B. Yeats have presented death in their poems. "Death, the ultimate end, the conclusion, though unpleasant, is a universally accepted fact and is as important as existence. Every living object of the world is bound to move towards its end and surrender itself in the face of death. A certain kind of fear is inherent in human beings but there is little doubt that the modern man's mind is more occupied with greater 'anguish' concerning death than did the men of primitive time" (Ahmad, Lakhvi, 2015).

Death is a spark for introspection, leading to consider the enigmas of death and the essence of existence as a major theme in Emily Dickinson's poetry (Chahal, Patel, 2023. p. 231). Emily Dickinson was one of the most influential and eminent American intellectuals of the nineteenth century. She was born in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts, and died in 1886 in her house. Dickinson's sister, Lavinia, discovered her collection of 1800 poems after her bereavement and published them in 1890; "she did not see any of her almost 1800 poems through the process of publication" (Schabanel 2020, p.28). During her lifetime, she "kept herself in isolation and created a small mysterious world through her poems" (Daghamin 2017). In her poems, she created themes of nature, love, God, religious pain, identity, immortality, separation, the inner world of a person, pain and suffering, and most importantly, death. Daghamin (2017) declared that "death is not only one of her most frequent themes but also one that preoccupies her lifelong attention"(152). T. Halim, Wahid, and Sh. Halim (2022) claimed that Emily Dickinson portrayed death as bleakness, gloominess, and pain (439). Schabanel (2020) believed that "with these challenging death poems, Dickinson might be offering us a better way to access the world"(32). Or even, Topcu stated that Emily Dickinson pictures the concept of death as "the great dictator, the ever-present imperator, a force" to be respected (171).

Ma'la'na Jalaluddin Muhammad Balkhi, known in the East as Molana or Molavi (meaning our Master) and in the West as Rumi, was born in Balkh of Khorasan, present-day Afghanistan, in September of 1207. The term Rumi, which means "the Roman" or "belonging to Rome", refers to his residential area in Anatolia, which belonged to the Byzantine or eastern Roman Empire conquered and ruled by Muslim Turks, at the time called the *Suljuqs* (Zare-Behtash 2017). Rumi's writings and teachings have received global recognition and even the year 2007 has been declared by UNESCO as the "Year of Rumi" (Abdulrahman, Tayeb 2023). Rumi (1207 – 1273) is considered one of the most prolific poets across the globe. He is known as the greatest Persian and mystical poet of all ages. His works have been translated into many languages including German, English, Russian, Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi, and many more. In another paper by Zare-Behtash (2019), it was stated that "Rum's collected lyric under the name of *Divan-i Shams* with 40,000 verses are the 'spontaneous overflow of emotions' and his other major work *Mathnavi*, with 25,000 couplets, comprises six books with their separate prefaces for each book containing short stories in didactic style with metaphoric language (111). As for death in Rumi's poem, Abdulrahman, Tayeb (2023) stated that "For Rumi, death has been an eternal life that was a way to be with the beliefs. Rumi is a seeker of death, just like every other Sufi"<sup>1</sup> (918). Rumi's optimistic attitude toward death is well illustrated in his poem "*When I Die.*" Rumi's poem titled "*When I Die*" explores the concept of death and is noteworthy for its depiction of Rumi's perspective on the subject. This particular poem is intriguing for analysis

<sup>1</sup> Sufi, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is member of a Muslim group who try to become united with God through prayer and MEDITATION and by living a very simple, strict life (1547).

as it vividly illustrates Rumi's attitude towards death. It conveys the idea that death is not a conclusion but rather a beginning, marking the liberation of the soul.

The significance and necessity of conducting this research are primarily driven by the fact that the topic of death and the meaning of life pose a significant intellectual challenge for humanity, especially contemporary humans. Given the importance of such a theme, efforts have been made to undertake a comparative examination of the two distinct and influential perspectives towards death, centred around Emily Dickinson and Rumi. The aim is to explore the commonalities and differences in their perspective on the matter of death. In this study, an endeavour has been made to present the viewpoints of the two distinguished and influential thinkers from the East and the West.

## **2. THE NATURE OF DEATH IN ISLAMIC BELIEF**

The nature of the concept of death in religion is more connected to the spirituality of individuals. It is more concerned with the hereafter rather than here and now as the existentialist enterprise (Ahmad, Lakhvi, 2015). In Islamic belief, death is not seen as an end but rather as a transition from one stage of existence to another. Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, emphasizes the certainty of death and the transient nature of worldly life. It states, "Every soul will taste death" (Qur'an 3:185). This verse underscores the inevitability of death for every living being, regardless of their status, wealth, or power in the world. It has also been stated in Holy Qur'an, "Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" (al-Nisa, 4:78). Islamic teachings not only acknowledge death as a natural biological process marking an end for all living beings, but also affirm that God holds exclusive authority over the termination of life, being the sole Creator. The affirmation is reflected in the statement, "He is the Creator of everything, dead or living (al-Dukhan, 44:08; al-Mulk, 67:02). "The experience of the coming of death is mentioned as painful and not quicker, according to Islamic beliefs, unlike the belief of nothingness in ancient civilization. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that death is like a sore and throbbing extraction from a life-dwelled cage of stinging bars (Ahmad, Lakhvi, 2015).

Islamic sources describe life in the grave as an intermediate stage between death and the Day of Judgement. The deceased undergoes a period of questioning from the angles of *Munkar* and *Nakir*<sup>2</sup> about their faith and deeds. The righteous are blessed with comfort and bliss in their graves, while the wicked face torment and anguish as a consequence of their actions. The ultimate reality for Muslims is the Day of Judgement, when all souls will be resurrected and held accountable for their beliefs and deeds. Those who lived righteous lives and adhered to the teachings of Islam will be rewarded with paradise, a place of eternal happiness, and closeness to Allah. Conversely, those who rejected faith and committed evil will face the consequences in hellfire. In summary, the nature of death in Islam is viewed as a profound transition that leads to the hereafter, where individuals will be recompensed based on their faith and actions in worldly life.

## **3. THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF EMILY DICKINSON'S POEMS**

The topic of death has long been portrayed in literary works and religious Holy Scriptures. Death has not been reflected only in novels, short stories, and dramas, but also it has been intensively discussed in poetry. Emily Dickinson's unique treatment of death stands remarkable in the history of American poetry and literature (Daghamin, 2017). As a study by Chahal and Patel (2023) stated that "Dickinson is regarded as one of the most well-known poets who throws a great lot of light on the subject of death despite having lived a very brief life, and that death as a spark for introspection, leading to consider the enigmas of death and the essence

<sup>2</sup>Among the angles are those who are in charge of the trial of the grave. They are called *Munkar* and *Nakir*. (*The World of Angles* by Shaykh 'Abdul'I-Hamid Kishk, p.20-21)

of existence is a major theme in Emily Dickinson's poetry." Her vision of life is marked by a tragic and pessimistic outlook, characterized by the abundance of pain and suffering. Melancholy permeates her death-themed poems, intensifying their tragic depth. The continuous and premature loss of family members and friends further contributes to Dickinson's tragic circumstances. The fear of death consistently haunts Dickinson's mind, profoundly shaping her perception of life. As a poem of hers from the book of her collection of poems edited by Thomas H. Johnson clears this concept: "We never know we go when we are going / We jest and shut the Door / Fate – following – behind us bolts it / And we accost no more" (1-4, p. 638).

### 3.1. An Analysis of the Poem "I Felt a Funeral in My Brain"

This poem, written during the early stages of the Civil War, carries various layers of meaning. While acknowledging that each reader may derive their own interpretation, the analysis suggests two main possible readings. First, it could portray the conscious deceased who, though no longer part of the world, still perceives their surroundings through hearing. The persona silently witnesses their own funeral service, comprehending the movements of mourners and the rhythmic beats of the funeral service. The impactful moment is the sensation of the "Box" being lifted, creating a crescendo of silence and confusion, leading to the persona's powerless existence. The climax occurs in the final stanza when the support structure beneath the deceased disappears abruptly, symbolizing the moment of entombment. This descent is compared to a journey into the underworld, marking the transition from being a perceptive "Ear" to an unknown space where familiar sounds cease. The description of death becomes a wild and new experience, akin to a journey ending in a stationary destination. According to Sheinbaum (2016), in this poem, Emily Dickinson explores themes of internalization of her anxiety, isolation, and self-awareness. Furthermore, she noted that "by way of metaphor, Dickinson personifies the speaker's feelings of despair and anxiety as they begin to overwhelm her. And through her use of repetition, many clues illustrate the fact that this mental breakthrough she is writing about is familiar, and possibly frequently occurring in her "Brain" (87). In another study by Halim, et al. (2022), it was stated that "this poem presents a disturbing portrayal of death, showing how the body separates from the soul through a terrible struggle."

Alternatively, considering the historical context of the American Civil War, the poem may be interpreted from the perspective of a person, possibly a soldier or civilian, facing execution by hanging. The detailed analysis draws parallels between the poem's descriptions and the ritualized process of hanging during the Civil War. This interpretation aligns with the experiences of individuals who were executed for crimes like espionage, treason, or desertion. The poem's vivid portrayal captures the solemn ceremony, echoing the solemnity of executions during the war. According to Pedro Rafael (2020), the analysis connects the poem to Ambrose Bierce's *"An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,"* where the author, a Civil War soldier, realistically depicts military executions. The poem and Bierce's story share thematic elements like the countdown to death, the isolated experience of the condemned, and the surreal moments leading to the final, irreversible blow marking the end. In summary, Emily Dickinson's *"I Felt a Funeral, in My Brain"* intricately explores the theme of death, encompassing both metaphysical and tangible aspects. The analysis suggests potential connections to the harsh realities of the American Civil War, demonstrating Dickinson's ability to delve into profound human experiences and emotions.

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,  
And Mourners to and fro  
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed  
That Sense was breaking through – (lines 1-4)

Dickinson illustrates the vicious cycle of a recurring mental breakdown through metaphor, repetition, and a focus on the sense of sound. The first stanza grounds the audience in the metaphor of the internal setting and introduces the poem's intent, while Helen Vendler, a renowned literary critic, who published a book of literary criticism on Emily Dickinson's work in 2010, interprets the "Funeral [she feels], in [her] Brain" (line 1), as a metaphor for "spiritual death" (143). This personification of anxiety occurs internally for readers to emphatically "feel" the Funeral experienced by the speaker. The first stanza also provides insight into the nature of the anxious nature of this breakdown, with the repetition in "Kept treading – treading – till" (line 3) suggesting a recurring or cyclical experience of the "Funeral" or the breakdown. Dickinson's use of sound, such as "treading – treading," evokes the physically of the breakdown, later revealed as "Boots of Lead." The repetition illustrates the torturous reaction of the sensation, portraying it as laborious and almost lethargic. The speaker's self-awareness is hinted at in lines 3 and 4, suggesting a detached observation amid the overwhelming sensation. As Sheinbaum (2016) stated in her paper about this part of poem that "at this point, Dickinson is essentially telling us that she still has a piece of herself that is untainted and logical. She is at once victimized by a sensation and reporting on it with a certain detachment" (88).

And when they all were seated,  
A Service, like a Drum –  
Kept beating – beating – till I thought  
My mind was going numb – (lines 5-8)

Moving to the second stanza, repetition and sense of recurring torture continue in a line parallel to line (3): "Kept beating – beating – till." The use of "Kept" implies a prolonged and recurring experience. The action verb "beating" symbolizes a metaphorical instrument sound, a "Drum," connecting the "Service" or "Funeral" to a vivid, cochlear experience. The word "beating" also conveys the impending implosion of the heart or brain, suggesting an inevitable breakdown. As Vendler states "[Dickinson] fears that her mind will become not deaf, but 'numb'—a worse affliction than deafness" (142). Vendler's analysis emphasizes the juxtaposition of sound and self-awareness, portraying the speaker's gradual loss of self through anxiety-modifying sounds.

And then I heard them lift a Box  
And creak across my Soul  
With those same Boots of Lead, again,  
Then Space – began to toll, (lines 9-12)

The third stanza diverges in structure from the preceding two, as it breaks away from the recurring sounds that had persistently assailed the speaker. The metaphor of a funeral is prolonged through the imagery of "a Box" in lines 9-10, where the speaker hears the lifting and creaking of a box, presumably her spiritual self enclosed in a coffin. Vendler, regarding this, states that Dickinson's "analytic self [watching], but her threatened self is now in 'a Box,' her coffin being taken to its grave" in this moment, which means that this once more a moment of self-awareness, as she is recognizing herself being lost in this breakdown" (142). The onomatopoeic use of the verb "creak" reintroduces the auditory element that permeates the poem, evoking a tangible and painful sensation as the box "creaks across [her] Soul," suggesting physical distress. In line 12, the reference to "those same Boots of Lead, again"

recalls the relentless footsteps mentioned earlier (line 3) and the lifting of the box (lines 9-10), relying heavily on auditory cues to anchor the reader in the speaker's breakdown and intensify the sensory experience. The repetition of "those same...again" (line 11) implies a cyclic nature to this breakdown, almost like a recurring routine. However, line 12 deviates from the continuous vibrations and sounds, portraying an explosive moment: "Then Space - began to toll." Here, the verb "toll" associated with "Space" — a broader and encompassing concept — constitutes synesthesia. Vendler notes that "this tolling is the final sound the speaker perceives" (142). The chiming of a bell or the beat of a drum from Space serves as Dickinson's last anchor, offering a sense of grounding amid the tumultuous breakdown.

As all the Heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race  
Wrecked, solitary, here – (lines 13-16)

The continuation of the idea from the previous lines extends into the fourth stanza, revealing that the speaker's last tangible sense of "Being" is portrayed as "an Ear" (line 14). This ear, capable only of receiving and acknowledging sound, serves as a metaphor for the speaker's final connection to a sense of grounded reality and her true self. Metaphorically, she becomes deaf to the "Space" around her, and the phrase "Being, but an Ear" (line 14) suggests that her sense of self is diminishing to merely an ear – devoid of soul, brain, or recognized mind at this juncture. In the fourth stanza's line 13, we learn that the "toll" is emanating from "all the Heavens were a Bell." This evokes a sense of profound isolation for the speaker, separated from the tolling of the celestial bell while being confined to a state of "Silence, some strange Race" (line 15). In this moment, she can only perceive the sound but is unable to participate or be part of it. The explosion depicted at the end of the third stanza leads to Dickinson's portrayal of complete isolation. This isolation in the fourth stanza is not solely a detachment from her true self, now dominated by mental illness, but also a separation from every other individual, as no one else is undergoing the same agonizing experience. Vendler observes the "terrible isolation endured by those who are mentally ill," highlighted by Dickinson's depiction of forced solitude with the line "Wrecked, solitary, here" (142). Thus, according to Vendler, the term "Wrecked," when connected to the earlier term "creak" (line 10), can be interpreted as the ultimate consequence of the "Soul's floor" breaking due to its "instability" and the intense sonic and violent torment it endured (such as the "treading," "beating," and "creaking"). At this point, Dickinson finds herself alone, devoid of hope, and shattered. Yet, the word "here" conveys a sense that she is gaining awareness of her place in the world and within herself. Regrettably, this newfound footing proves transient as the final (fifth) stanza begins (143).

And then a Plank in Reason broke,  
And I dropped down, and down –  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And finished knowing – then – (lines 17-20) (Johnson, 1970, poem NO. 280. p. 128).

After witnessing a moment of self-awareness, Dickinson's speaker experiences a profound loss of hope in line 17 when she declares, "And then a Plank in Reason broke." At this point, her sense of self, logical reasoning, and the hope of self-preservation shatter. She descends into a state of confusion and despair, as expressed in the line "And I dropped down, and down" (line 18), unable to find any stable ground, constantly encountering obstacles at

every turn (line 19). According to Vendler, the absence of reason leads to madness, replacing sanity and preventing the speaker from finding tranquillity (143). As a consequence of this disconnection from self-awareness and rationality, the speaker becomes spiritually dead in various aspects of her being: Brain (line 1), mind (line 8), Soul (line 10), and Being (line 14). The breakdown of the "Plank" signifies a collapse, where the absence of one element causes the entire structure to crumble. Consequently, she is engulfed by anxiety, losing herself in its overwhelming grip. The concluding line, "And Finished knowing - then -" (line 20), carries a sense of finality, suggesting that she has forgotten her true self amid the chaos and instability. However, the word "then -" hints at a cyclical nature, implying that this breakdown is not a one-time occurrence but a relentless, repetitive cycle.

The formal elements of the poem reinforce the concept of a recurring cyclical trauma. Notably, a key pattern emerges with the repetition of the word "And" at the beginning of lines in the first two stanzas, the initial two lines in the third and fourth stanzas, and all four lines of the fifth stanza. This frequent use of the connecting word suggests a diminishing rational capacity, signalling a breakdown in logical connections between thoughts. The repetition underscores the cyclical nature of the breakdown, illustrating its intensifying impact as the speaker becomes increasingly fragmented, with more "And"s disrupting her thought processes towards the end. The seamless flow from the final stanza back to the first accentuates how the breakdown restarts as it nears its conclusion, creating a cyclical structure: "And Finished knowing - then - / I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (line 20, line 1). Throughout the poem, Emily Dickinson utilizes sound to convey the physical aspect of her mental affliction, highlighting the connection between her mind, brain, and body. The repeated use of sound reflects the tangible nature of her affliction. The metaphorical setting of an "intolerably prolonged" Funeral for her spiritual self conflicts with her role as a "Mourner," continuously mourning herself amid attacks on her psyche. The poem vividly depicts the deterioration of self-awareness and emotional regulation, portraying anxiety as an overwhelming experience akin to a prolonged, suffocating breath. The "attack after attack on 'Reason'" represents anxious thoughts and recurring physical sensations assaulting her sense of self and psychological logic. Through metaphor, repetition, diction, and the primary sense of sound, Dickinson provides a realistic and palpable portrayal of anxiety in this poem.

### **3.2. The Analysis of the Poem "I Heard a Fly Buzz – When I Died"**

I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –  
The stillness in the Room  
Was like the Stillness in the Air  
Between the Heaves of Storm

The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –  
And breaths were gathering firm  
For that last Onset – when the King  
Be witnessed – in the Room –

I willed my Keepsakes – signed away  
What portion of me be  
Assignable – and then it was  
There interposed a Fly (poem 465, line 1-12)

In the poem "I Heard a Fly Buzz—When I Died," Emily Dickinson vividly portrays the unsettling experience of death, challenging the notions of immortality and salvation. The poet, previously hopeful of an afterlife, becomes disillusioned, with this denial highlighted through two key elements: the intrusion of a buzzing fly and the repetition of the word "see" towards the end of the poem. The poem unfolds dramatically after the mourning relatives cease their grief. In an atmosphere of external calm and inner stoicism, the dying person begins to part with her "keepsakes," culminating in a dramatic climax in the third stanza. The anticipation of divine glory, light, or angels is replaced by despair as a mere buzzing fly appears, emphasizing the grim reality of the impending decay.

With Blue – uncertain stumbling Buzz –  
 Between the light – and me –  
 And then the Windows failed – and then  
 I could not see to see – (lines 13-16) (Johnson, 1970, poem NO. 465. p. 223).

From the capitalized word 'Blue', according to Liu (2016), it can be guessed that the fly is a blowfly, which is utterly dirty and ugly. Furthermore, he notes that "the fly may also stand for Beelzebub, who is also known as the lord of flies. Sometimes Beelzebub is used as another name of *Satan* - referring to any devil. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Beelzebub is Satan's chief lieutenant." So, if the symbolic meaning of fly is interpreted in this way, it adds a gruesome tone to the poem. Or in another study by Khalil (2022), it was stated that "the fly suggests the arrival of death and the buzzing of fly prevents the speaker from reaching a state of spiritual contemplation or grace which seemed more appropriate for the situation" (26). The 'light' in the poem holds two meanings; literally, it signifies the illumination entering through the window, while metaphorically, it symbolizes salvation, a concept deemed holy and pure. Here the poet intentionally establishes a stark contrast between the repulsive and sullied blowfly and the divine salvation, creating an ironic and pitiful effect. Additionally, the speaker's mental struggle is conveyed through dashes in the line "Between the light—and me—," representing the painful acceptance that salvation is shattered by the intrusion of a repulsive creature. In the concluding lines, the speaker emphasizes her disillusionment by using the repetition of "see." The loss of literal sight symbolizes the loss of hope to witness salvation after death, encapsulating the profound disappointment in the face of shattered beliefs.

#### 4. THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF RUMI'S SELECTED POEM

Death stands as one of the world's enigmatic subjects across diverse cultures, positioned ahead of birth and seemingly marking the end of the natural life of any living creature in the universe. One of the themes cherished by every Sufi is the concept of life and its opposite, which is death. For contemplative figures like Rumi, death holds greater significance than life, as they seek to comprehend life through the lens of mortality. The lover's courage, exemplified by self-sacrifice and self-denial, embodies a key characteristic of love. This selflessness is the profound meaning and rightful essence of death. "For Rumi, death has been an eternal life that was a way to be with the beliefs. Rumi might be the only person to connect the idea of joy and happiness with death. Rumi accepted death as a part of life. He is a seeker of death" (Abdulrahman, Tayeb, 2023). In Rumi's view, the spirit and psyche of a person are like a river of flood flowing in the body's bed. As long as these rivers of spirits and psyches do not join the sea of unity, the human, in this abode of the soul, does not attain tranquillity and peace. In this context, death is the end of the river and the beginning of the sea. As Rumi says, "All this

dying is not the death of the (physical) form: this body is (only) an instrument for the spirit (Nicholson, 2011, *Mathnavi* V: 3821).

In the moment of death, divine people, the real lovers of God on Earth; loving God profoundly, do not harbor any grief or sorrow for leaving the earthly realm; rather they contemplate only the union and meeting with the presence of the Almighty. This is because the human soul, upon death, is liberated from the constraints of worldly sensory perception and the physical body, returning to its original place of spiritual growth and true perfection. Rumi's optimistic attitude towards death is evident throughout his poem "When I die".

When I die  
When my coffin  
is being taken out  
You must never think  
I am missing this world

Don't shed any tears  
Don't lament or  
feel sorry  
I'm not falling  
into a monster's abyss (lines 1-10)

The poem is concerned on the concept of "everlasting life after death" based on the belief that death is a natural part of life. We cannot resist it since it leads to boundless life and existence. Rumi, in this poem, claims that after he passes away and his coffin is taken away, his admirers, followers and loved ones must not presume that he regrets his earthly life. He conveys to the audience that he is not afraid of death, but rather well prepared for it. The poet's positive outlook is obvious throughout the poem, as he spreads his arms to embrace death. Therefore, he will not miss this world after death. For Rumi, death was a rebirth for the soul in another world which is the true world. Thus, his advice to loved ones is to avoid crying and feeling guilty. "He claims that after death, he will not experience any agony. Therefore, when he passes away, no one needs to weep or mourn" (Abdulrahman, Tayeb, 2023). The last line, shows that he a strong believer of God, and thus he knows the fact that death is just an end to his physical pain and that his soul can never descend in the "monster's abyss," a metaphorical reference to hell. In September 1273, Konya saw frequent earthquakes, causing terror among the locals. Rumi was unwell at the time. Despite the presence of great physicians, he did not recover. The earth kept trembling off and on. People came to visit their great Master, the Senior of Konya. His disciples requested Rumi to pray for his health, but he refused. As Schimmel (1993) stated

"Rumi addressed the visitors and said, "The earth is hungry. Soon it will get a fat morsel and then get rest" (as cited in Zare-Behtash, 2017, p. 102). All the visitors were weeping, but Rumi reassured them that the light will connect to the source of light and asked them to stop weeping. As the curtain between him and Beloved was about to be lifted, he wondered why they were unhappy. Rumi saw death as a wedding with eternity, so why not enjoy it and celebrate this union?

When you see  
my corpse is being carried  
Don't cry for my leaving  
I'm not leaving  
I'm arriving at eternal love

When you leave me  
in the grave

Don't say goodbye  
Remember a grave is  
only a curtain  
for the paradise behind

You'll only see me  
Descending into a grave  
Now watch me rise  
How can there be an end  
When the sun sets or  
The moon goes down

It looks like the end  
It seems like a sunset  
But in reality it is a dawn  
When the grave locks you up  
That is when your soul is freed (lines 11-32)

Rumi expresses contentment in departing from the transient world, having chosen no align with the devil's domination. He encourages his loved one not to mourn his passing, emphasizing that this burial marks a path to eternal life with the divine Lord. The speaker's unwavering and fearless attitude toward death stem from his spiritual integrity, bringing him closest to God due to their intimate connection. Rather than sorrow over his departure, Rumi asserts that he is entering the realm of eternal love. His impassioned remarks underscore his deep conviction. Furthermore, Rumi dissuades people from bidding farewell at his cemetery, characterizing the burial as merely a "curtain." Utilizing the imagery of a tomb and a curtain, he conveys his views on death; the curtain symbolizes the gateway to paradise, with the first floor being life, and the second, death. Rumi's ability to portray death positively lies in the symbolism woven into his poems. He uses metaphor to highlight that one cannot deem death as the ultimate end; just as there is darkness when the sun sets, there is dawn after the moon rises. The soul's journey continues even after the body's demise, ascending to heaven as the moon gives way to the rising sun. Therefore, as per Rumi's poetry, a mystical death leads to the liberation of the soul from the confinement of the body, allowing it to attain eternal life. This transition also signifies the commencement of a person's new life. The human body returns to its original source (earth), influencing other organisms throughout the cycle of life. This suggests that immortality extends beyond the realm of the spirit.

Have you ever seen  
A seed fallen to earth  
Not rise with a new life  
Of a seed named human

Have you ever seen  
A bucket lowered into a well  
Coming back empty  
Why lament for a soul  
When it can come back

Like Joseph from the well (lines 33-42)

In these lines, the speaker poetically describes a seed's journey, drawing a metaphorical parallel to human life. The seed, akin to the body, falls to the ground in death, while the soul, like a shoot, emerges into a new existence. The enduring theme is the soul's external nature,

liberated as the body perished, reflecting a belief in rebirth and regeneration. Rumi engages readers through direct rhetorical questions with implicit answers. In the subsequent stanza, he metaphorically asks if any bucket returned empty after descending into a well, symbolizing death, and the bucket representing life. The final line alludes to Prophet Joseph's tale in the Quran, who rose to power after being cast into a well, drawing a parallel to the speaker's anticipated ascent to heaven following death, guided by divine grace.

When for the last time  
You close your mouth  
Your words and soul  
Will belong to the world of  
No place and no time (lines 43-47) (Rumi, 2004, p.166-67)

Lastly, Rumi in his poem “When I die” asserts that upon his death, his words will endure eternally, and his soul will transcend any specific location, becoming intertwined with the divine plane. The notion of eternity knows no confines, unrestricted by any particular space. As the body and soul parts way, the soul attains immortality, dispelling the fear of death. The poet encourages readers to view death as a new beginning rather than the ultimate end.

In Rumi's perspective, death is not the end of life, but rather another birth and the beginning of eternal life. Rumi's views in this regard fall with the framework of the “Transcendentalism” theory, as he considers the primary factor for the meaningfulness of life to be love for God, the journey towards Him, and death as a crucial element in connecting and evolving the soul. As humans are entangled in material attachments and worldly dependencies, death becomes the treacherous enemy that renders them helpless and fearful. However, for the enlightened, this death does not conquer them; rather, they see it as a natural stage of life, a rebirth into a broader and brighter world.

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In Emily Dickinson's selected poems, the theme of death emerges as a central and pervasive element, reflecting the poet's unique perspective on mortality. Dickinson's treatment of death is characterized by a tragic and pessimistic outlook, marked by an abundance of pain and suffering. The fear of death consistently haunts her mind, profoundly shaping her perception of life. Death as a spark for introspection, leading to consider the enigmas of death and the essence of existence is a major theme in Emily Dickinson's poetry (Chahal, Patel, 2023. p. 231). Emily Dickinson vividly portrays her attitude towards death in her poems “I felt a funeral in my brain” and “I heard a fly buzz when I died.” In the poem “I felt a Funeral in my Brain,” she pictures the internalization of anxiety, struggle between body and soul, through witnessing her own funeral. Or in the other poem of hers “I heard a Fly buzz when I died,” Emily Dickinson, through using metaphors, such as “Fly, light, King and window, and repetition of the word ‘see,’ portrays the unsettling experience of death, the internal struggle at the time of death, or even the profound disappointment in the face of shattered beliefs, challenging traditional notions of immortality and salvation. In Emily Dickinson's selected poems, the thematic analysis reveals a consistent and profound engagement with the concept of death. The poems explore the psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of death, portraying a complex and nuanced understanding of mortality. Dickinson's unique use of symbolism, metaphor, and linguistic devices contributes to the rich and layered portrayal of death in her poetry.

But on the other hand, Rumi's poem "When I Die" expresses his positive outlook on death, emphasizing that it is a natural part of life and a transition to boundless existence. The poet assures his loved ones not to mourn his departure, as he is well-prepared for the afterlife. The imagery of embracing death and the belief in eternal life with the divine Lord underscore Rumi's fearless attitude towards mortality. "For Rumi, death has been an eternal life that was a way to be with the beliefs. Rumi might be the only person to connect the idea of joy and happiness with death. Rumi accepted death as a part of life. He is a seeker of death" (Abdulrahman, Tayeb, 2023). In Rumi's selected poem, the thematic analysis reveals a profound and positive engagement with the concept of death. Rumi sees death as a spiritual journey, a union with the divine, and a transition to boundless existence. His poems convey contentment, fearlessness, and an unwavering belief in the afterlife.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The exploration of death in literary works has consistently captivated and intrigued scholars, spanning various cultures, time periods, and individual sensitivities. The encounter with death, a shared aspect of the human experience, has prompted diverse reactions and interpretations from poets throughout history. Armed with their distinct linguistic prowess, poets have delved into the mysterious realm of death, aiming to unravel its complexities, confront its fears, and discern its profound significance within the fabric of human life. Among the expansive array of poetic voices, Emily Dickinson and Rumi emerge as towering figures, each contributing a unique perspective to the ongoing dialogue about mortality. Dickinson, known for her introspective and often cryptic and enigmatic verses, and Rumi, the mystical poet whose words transcend cultural boundaries, provide contrasting insights into the essence of death and its multifaceted implications. Death, a perennial theme in philosophy, theology, and literature, has been a source of inspiration for poets across ages, driving them to articulate their contemplations on this universal phenomenon. Hence, the following paper has tried to portray different perspectives of Emily Dickinson's and Rumi's towards death through their selected poem. In Emily Dickinson's selected poems, the theme of death emerges as a central and pervasive element, reflecting the poet's unique perspective on mortality. Dickinson's treatment of death is characterized by a tragic and pessimistic outlook, marked by an abundance of pain and suffering. The fear of death consistently haunts her mind, profoundly shaping her perception of life. But Rumi, as a seeker of death, expresses his positive outlook on death in his poem "When I die." He emphasizes that it is a natural part of life and a transition to boundless existence. As a result, the two poets have different perspectives towards death as seen in their selected poems.

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