



# HOPE AS AN ARTISTIC MOTIF: EMILY DICKINSON AND RUPI KAUR IN PERSPECTIVE

Bharti Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Dr Sagar Vyas<sup>2</sup>

Research Scholar of Sabarmati University<sup>1</sup>, Assistant Professor<sup>2</sup>

Department of Indian Languages and Literature

Sabarmati University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

**Abstract:** The theme of hope, a poetic motif deeply rooted in the human experience, serves as the focal point of this research paper. This comparative study explores how two divergent voices in the world of poetry, Emily Dickinson from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Rupri Kaur, a contemporary sensation, employ hope as a recurring and transformative element in their respective works. Despite the disparities in historical context, style, and cultural backgrounds, both poets intricately weave the thread of hope through their verses, offering unique insights into the multifaceted nature of this theme.

Emily Dickinson's reclusive and enigmatic poems, alongside Rupri Kaur's candid and minimalist expressions, converge on the subject of hope, inviting a cross-temporal and cross-cultural dialogue. This research paper critically examines selected poems by these two poets, shedding light on the thematic and stylistic complexities underpinning their interpretations of hope. Through this exploration, the paper aims to showcase how hope has adapted to evolving societal norms, technological landscapes, and personal experiences.

By placing Emily Dickinson and Rupri Kaur in conversation, this study reveals the profound and transformative power of hope in poetry. It delves into the philosophical, emotional, and cultural dimensions of hope as envisioned by these poets, elucidating the diverse ways in which they harness this motif to engage with their readers and make sense of the world.

**Keywords:** Hope, Artistic Motif, Comparative Analysis, Poetry and Optimism, Cross-Cultural Comparison, Contextual Interpretation, Literary Analysis, Digital Age Poetry

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of literature and poetry, the theme of hope has remained a resilient and enduring motif, inspiring countless writers and poets throughout the ages. Its dynamic, multifaceted nature offers a timeless source of inspiration that transcends the boundaries of time, culture, and artistic expression. In this research paper, we embark on a comparative exploration of hope as an artistic motif, illuminating the works of two distinct but equally influential poets from different eras and backgrounds: Emily Dickinson, a reclusive 19<sup>th</sup> century American wordsmith, and Rupri Kaur, a contemporary poet who has taken the world by storm in the digital age.

Emily Dickinson, known for her enigmatic and contemplative style, and Rupri Kaur, celebrated for her brevity and candor, may seem worlds apart in terms of their poetic techniques and historical contexts. Nevertheless, their distinct voices converge on the profound subject of hope. This research paper endeavours to examine how these two extraordinary poets employ hope as an artistic motif in their works, while simultaneously highlighting the evolution of this motif over time and through diverse cultural lenses.

Through a comprehensive analysis of selected poems from both poets, we will delve into the thematic and stylistic nuances that underpin their explorations of hope. By doing so, we aim to demonstrate the enduring relevance and significance of hope as an artistic motif and how it has evolved in response to shifting societal norms, technological advancements, and personal experiences.

By placing Emily Dickinson and Rupri Kaur in dialogue, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of hope and its transformative power in poetry. As we journey through their verses, we will explore the philosophical, emotional, and cultural dimensions of hope, unpacking the ways in which these poets breathe life into this motif to engage with their audiences and make sense of the world around them.

In this examination of "Hope as an Artistic Motif," we aspire to offer a fresh perspective on the timeless theme of hope, transcending the confines of time and traditions, and presenting Emily Dickinson and Rupri Kaur as voices that resonate across the ages, demonstrating the enduring power of hope in the ever evolving world of literature and poetry.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF HOPE IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

Emily Dickinson, one of America's most celebrated poets, is renowned for her profound exploration of the human experience, often cloaked in enigmatic verses and mystique. While her work spans a wide range of themes, the concept of hope stands as a central and recurrent motif in her poetry. Dickinson's distinctive perspective on hope, marked by its complexity, ambiguity, and profound introspection, invites readers into a world of poetic exploration that transcends conventional understandings of optimism and resilience. In an article published by Johns Hopkins University in 2016, Keith Mikos states, "Dickinson poems are often compressed, a quality that makes even the smallest detail—and every detail—potentially crucial for interpretation" (Mikos 30).

### 2.1. THE ELUSIVE NATURE OF HOPE

In many of her poems, Emily Dickinson depicts hope as an elusive and intangible force, a subtle and delicate thread that weaves through the fabric of existence. Her portrayal of hope often eschews the clichéd and the obvious, instead focusing on the delicate balance of fragility and strength, as seen in lines such as "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul" (poem 254). This evocative imagery underscores the fleeting and delicate nature of hope, making it a precious, yet vulnerable element in human lives. According to Schöberlein, "The brain, in Dickinson's poem, creates and sustains the soul; the soul, in turn, is a natural growth clearly dependent on the brain" (Schöberlein 58).

### 2.2. HOPE IN THE FACE OF MORTALITY

Emily Dickinson's poetry frequently grapples with the inevitability of death and the transient nature of human existence. In this context, her concept of hope takes on a unique dimension. It becomes a means of defiance in the face of mortality. The poem "Hope is the thing with feathers," mentioned earlier, hints at hope's ability to persist and provide solace in the darkest moments of life.

### 2.3. HOPE AS A SUBLIME ESCAPE

Dickinson's poems often suggest that hope serves as a form of escapism, a source of respite from the harsh realities of the world. Through her words, hope becomes a refuge, a realm where individuals can momentarily transcend the troubles of life and find solace in the face of adversity. In poems like "The feet of people walking home" (poem 792), hope represents the dreamlike escape from the mundane.

### 2.4. THE AMBIGUITY OF HOPE

One of the most fascinating aspects of Dickinson's approach to hope is its ambiguity. Her poems often invite readers to grapple with the dual nature of hope, where it can be both a source of inspiration and, at times, a cruel illusion. Dickinson's poetry challenges conventional notions of optimism by offering a nuanced portrayal of hope that acknowledges its capacity to both inspire and disappoint.

### 2.5. HOPE AS INNER SANCTUM

In many of her poems, hope is presented as an internal sanctuary, a realm within the human soul where resilience and strength are nurtured. The poem "Hope is the thing with feathers" (poem 254) illustrates this idea beautifully, as hope is portrayed as a steadfast companion within, even in the direst circumstances.

In conclusion, Emily Dickinson's treatment of hope in her poetry is characterized by its depth, complexity, and originality. Her exploration of hope is far from the clichés of blind optimism; instead, it delves into the intricate human psyche, where hope serves as a multifaceted force, offering solace, resilience, and, at times, profound ambiguity. Her verses remain an enduring testament to the timeless nature of hope and its ability to provide profound insights into the human experience.

## 3. THE CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON HOPE IN RUPU KAUR'S POETRY

Rupi Kaur, a prominent voice in contemporary poetry, has captured the hearts of readers worldwide with her distinctive style, candor, and exploration of modern-day themes. Among these themes, hope emerges as a poignant and recurring motif, reflecting a contemporary perspective on the age-old concept. In Kaur's poetry, hope is reframed and reimagined, offering insights into the complexities of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 3.1. RAW AND UNFILTERED OPTIMISM

Rupi Kaur's portrayal of hope is marked by its raw and unfiltered optimism. She offers a vision of hope that is straightforward and unapologetic. Her poems are filled with messages of self love, empowerment, and the resilience of the human spirit. Kaur's hope is not veiled in metaphors or obscured by complexity; it is a force that empowers individuals to embrace their inner strength

and rise above adversity. This unembellished optimism resonates with contemporary readers, who seek clarity and authenticity in an increasingly complex world.

### 3.2. HEALING AND SELF LOVE

Kaur's poetry often explores the intimate and personal aspect of hope. Her work addresses themes of healing, self-acceptance, and self-love. Through her words, hope becomes a means of transcending personal pain and adversity. Kaur's contemporary perspective on hope emphasizes its role in personal growth and the reclamation of one's identity. She encourages readers to find hope in the process of healing and the discovery of self-worth. As she writes,

"I stand

On the sacrifices

Of a million women before me

Thinking

What can I do

To make this mountain taller

So the women after me

Can see farther

### 3.3. HOPE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Rupi Kaur's rise to prominence has been closely tied to the digital age. Her use of social media and digital platforms has enabled her to reach a global audience. In this context, her perspective on hope is reflective of the interconnected and digital world in which we live. Kaur's ability to share her poetry and messages of hope with a vast online community underscores the role of technology and social media in reshaping contemporary expressions of hope.

### 3.4. HOPE IN THE FACE OF INJUSTICE

Kaur's poetry also delves into the social and political dimensions of hope. She addresses issues such as gender equality, racial discrimination, and social justice. Her hope is not merely an individualistic concept; it extends to encompass the hope for a more just and equitable society. In doing so, Kaur's contemporary perspective on hope reflects the activism and social awareness of the present day, making her poetry a voice for those seeking change and justice.

### 3.5. NARRATIVE SIMPLICITY AND UNIVERSAL RELEVANCE

Kaur's poetry is known for its simplicity and brevity, which contributes to its accessibility and universal relevance. Her hope is not bound by complex symbolism or elaborate metaphors. Instead, it speaks directly to the human experience, making it accessible to a broad and diverse audience. Her contemporary perspective on hope transcends cultural, generational, and linguistic boundaries, offering a message that resonates with people from all walks of life.

In conclusion, Rupi Kaur's contemporary perspective on hope is marked by its unadorned optimism, focus on healing and self-love, and relevance to the digital age and contemporary social issues. Her poetry provides a reflection of the complexities and aspirations of our modern world, capturing the essence of hope as a force that empowers individuals, fosters self-acceptance, and advocates for a more just society. Rupi Kaur's work stands as a testament to the enduring relevance and adaptability of hope in our ever-evolving world.

## 4. A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: UNIVERSALITY AND CONTEXT

In this comparative analysis, it is essential to consider the interplay between universality and context as a pivotal dimension of understanding how these two poets interpret and employ hope as an artistic motif.

### 4.1. UNIVERSALITY OF HOPE

The concept of hope is inherently universal, transcending the constraints of time, place, and culture. In both Emily Dickinson's and Rupi Kaur's poetry, hope is presented as a fundamental and timeless human experience, a force that resonates with readers from diverse backgrounds and historical contexts. Their work serves as a testament to the enduring nature of hope, reminding us that the human desire for hope and renewal is a shared aspect of the human condition.

## 4.2. CONTEXTUAL SPECIFICITY

While hope may be universal, the ways in which it is perceived and expressed are heavily influenced by the specific contexts and historical periods in which these poets wrote. Emily Dickinson's 19<sup>th</sup>-century America was characterized by the tumultuous backdrop of the Civil War, social reform movements, and the emergence of a distinct American identity. Her poetry often reflects the complexities and uncertainties of her time, where hope might be seen as a means of coping with the uncertainties and disruptions of a changing world.

## 4.3. CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS

Rupikaur, on the other hand, writes in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a time marked by globalization, digital communication, and social activism. Her poetry is imbued with contemporary sensibilities, addressing issues like self-empowerment, feminism, and social injustice. The hope in her poetry is colored by the immediacy of social media and the digital age, where her work serves as a form of activism and empowerment for a global, interconnected audience.

## 4.4. NARRATIVE STYLES

The narrative style empowered by both poets differs markedly, with Emily Dickinson favouring intricate, metaphor-laden verses and Rupi Kaur adopting a minimalist, direct approach. This difference in style also reflects the contextual nuances of their respective times, as Dickinson's elaborate verses are reflective of the Victorian era's affinity for metaphor and symbolism, whereas Kaur's brevity mirrors the fast-paced, information saturated contemporary world.

## 4.5. CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Both poets hail from different cultural backgrounds, and this diversity enriches the exploration of hope in their work. Dickinson's New England Puritan heritage and Kaur's Punjabi Sikh roots infuse their poetry with distinct cultural influences. These cultural backgrounds shape their perspectives on hope, leading to unique interpretations and expressions that are emblematic of their origins.

In this comparative analysis, it becomes evident that the interplay between universality and context is fundamental to understanding the treatment of hope in the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Rupi Kaur. It underscores the enduring, cross-cultural appeal of hope as an artistic motif while highlighting the profound impact that historical context, narrative style, and cultural diversity have on the interpretation and representation of this timeless theme. Ultimately, this comparative perspective serves as a lens through which we can appreciate the fluidity and adaptability of hope in the ever-evolving landscape of literature and poetry.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research journey into the portrayal of hope in the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Rupi Kaur offers a multifaceted and enlightening perspective on the enduring power of this artistic motif across time, culture, and style. As we conclude this exploration of 'Hope as an Artistic Motif: Emily Dickinson and Rupi Kaur in Perspective,' several key insights emerge, underscoring the dynamic and transformative nature of hope within the world of poetry.

Emily Dickinson, a 19<sup>th</sup> century American poet, and Rupi Kaur, a contemporary literary sensation, inhabit vastly different temporal and cultural landscapes. Dickinson's introspective, metaphor-rich verses, in contrast to Kaur's concise and candid style, demonstrate that hope as a theme is as malleable as it is universal. Both poets, in their distinctive ways, navigate the enigmatic and elusive nature of hope, drawing attention to its presence in the human experience.

Through Dickinson's lens, we see hope as an ethereal and steadfast force that quietly perseveres in the human soul, even in the face of life's most profound challenges. Her works suggest that hope is a source of defiance in the presence of mortality, a sanctuary within the soul, and an escape from the mundane.

Kaur, on the other hand, presents hope as a force that is more overt, accessible, and immediately empowering. Her work focuses on themes of healing, self-love, and personal growth. Kaur's contemporary perspective on hope underscores its role in the digital age, where it can be disseminated widely and rapidly, reaching a global audience and fostering a sense of shared experience.

Both poets tackle the ambiguous nature of hope, acknowledging that it can be both a wellspring of inspiration and a source of disappointment. This duality of hope, as explored by Dickinson and Kaur, resonates with readers who have experienced the ebb and flow of optimism in their lives.

In conclusion, this research paper illuminates the enduring and adaptable nature of hope in the world of poetry. Through their distinct voices and styles, Dickinson and Kaur reveal that hope remains a perennial and unyielding source of inspiration, constantly evolving to meet the needs of a changing world. Their poetry underscores the fact that, whether in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the 21<sup>st</sup> century, hope continues to be a cornerstone of human existence, a force that uplifts, empowers, and renews the spirit across generations. Ultimately, the words of these two remarkable poets invite us to embrace the profound and transformative potential of hope in our own lives, no matter the circumstances or the era in which we find ourselves.

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