

# The Real Place of a Princess: Public Response

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## ABSTRACT

The late Princess Diana of Wales (1961-1997) is one of the leading figures in the twentieth century. She used her fame as a British royal member to shed light on important humanitarian issues such as helping the homeless people, fighting against AIDS, donating money to cancer patients, supporting diseased children, and banning landmines. Her life has proven that she is one of the few celebrities who care for people; especially those in dire need. This is why she earned titles like 'queen of people's hearts', 'people's princess' and 'England's rose'. Diana's death in a car accident has shocked the world and put it in great grief. The accident is considered by her public to be a terrible tragedy. This paper attempts to shed light on the emotional response that followed the princess's death by studying twenty poems that were produced after her sudden death. Such poems reflect the huge influence that Princess Diana had and still has till this moment on the British way of life and thinking. The poems also assure that the real place of Diana is in her people's hearts and memories. They also make it obvious that the sky is a better place for her; to be away from oppression and suffering. This paper will also apply the five stages of grief introduced by the psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross to the poems in order to uncover the reasons behind giving Princess Diana such saint-like position by the public.

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## 1. Introduction

Princess Diana of Wales was born on July 1, 1961, in England. The people considered her as a unique woman and they thought of her life as a fairytale. This is because she was born to a rich family. Her parents are Johnnie and Frances Spencer who hold the titles Lord and Lady Althorp. Also, before turning twenty years old, in 1981, she married Prince Charles and became one of the British royal family members. Diana received a great acceptance from the people's side to the extent that after her divorce in 1996, the people blamed Prince Charles as well as the royal family for this separation. Moreover, Diana is remembered and loved till now, seventeen years after her death in a car accident in August, 1997.

Diana's popularity expanded after her tragic death. Losing Princess Diana pushed the people to think of all her good deeds. They also began to realize that Diana was the only British royal member who ever has given them care. Andrew Morton comments on this fact saying:

The tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales on 31 August 1997 plunged the world into paroxysms of grief, despair and regret, unrivalled in the modern era. This spontaneous eruption of anguish was a sign not only of her enormous personal impact on the world stage, but of the potency of her position, of what she represented as a woman as a flag-bearer for a new generation, a new order and a new future. (1997, p.9)

Ross Mckbin also explains that during the week before the funeral of the princess and even during the funeral itself the people have found it difficult to understand what happened (1998, p.15). Moreover, Mandy Merck writes that in the churches, clerics announced that the public response to the death of Princess Diana is the most important spiritual event of the past twenty five years (1998, p.2). Thus, Benton concludes, "Diana's life and death did not just mark popular change in what public discourse should be about, it also helped to bring it into being" (1998, p.101).

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## 2. Public Love is Best Conveyed in Poetry

In case of lament, poetry is not only considered a perfect way to convey emotions and sentiments, but it is also considered as a vehicle of bringing peace and comfort. This feeling of relief occurs when a writer uses poetry to comment on realities. This means that the writers as well as the readers of poetry are given an ability to understand, and thus endure, life. For such reason, Holcome argues, "The great theatre of the world is written in verse, and its poetry reconciles us to the manifest absurdities, injustices and cruelties of our natures" (2013, para. 7). For Princess Diana's unprofessional public, poetry is a good way to express their grief which emits great love and passion. In brief, the mourning poetry allows Diana's public to express all aspects of sorrow and loss. This helps them "maintain the value and dignity of one's humanity under hardship, if possible" (Lee, 2010, p.27).

This paper deals with twenty poems; fifteen of them are written by unprofessional persons. All of these poems agree on the fact that the twentieth century public considered Diana as the most famous woman on earth even after her death. The poems also make it clear that some ordinary people decided to write poems to express their deep love towards the princess as well as their loss. One of the unprofessional writers explains why he decides to write a poem for Diana saying, "I wrote this poem for Princess Diana just an hour after I heard about her tragic passing. It's one of those days I'll never forget. It came right from the heart" (Croft, 2014). Another fan of Diana's writes:

I am a mathematician and as a result have never really taken any notice of current affairs or history or the monarchy. However, for some reason I was always interested in Diana, the Princess of Wales. I thought she had an air of sincerity and grace and for that I appreciated her and her work greatly. She died the night of my mother's wedding day which brought her death into plain view to me. It hit a nerve which I was unaware existed and made me feel deeply sad. She did so much and helped so many people. Within a few weeks I had written this poem and I then submitted it to a school magazine. I was only thirteen when I wrote it but even now, ten years on, when I read it I feel all those emotions I had back then. I miss her .....the world misses her! (Doyle, n.d.)

All of the twenty poems convey the great love that the people had and still have for the late princess. For instance, Cynthia Jones writes, "She was loved by all / Had a heart of gold, / Now in God's arms / forever her soul is consoled" (2009, 1-4). Jones, in this poem, explains that all the people loved Diana because of her pure kind heart. She also believes that God will reward Diana for being such a good model. Moreover, Conning writes, "Darlin' Diana" imagine the world an oyster just for a little while / We know the girl that would be pearl with such sincere smile" (2008, 1-2) and:

Dear lady Diana darlin' Diana we all loved you Princess of Wales  
Dear lady Diana darlin' Diana our very own princess without fairy tales.  
Sweeter than the sweetest rose forever in full blossom  
Love we shared with one so rare from deep within our bosom. (2008, 5-8)

Here Conning is expressing his deep love for Princess Diana by comparing her to a pearl which is always white and pure. According to him, she is that person who has a great personality and a warm smile. He uses also alliteration in order to put a stress on the fact that he loves Diana and that she was and will always be England's darling.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

In 1969 the Swiss American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced to the world her theory of how people deal with death and dying which is called the five stages of grief. Kübler-Ross identified this theory after studying the development of grief and mourning regarding dying people and their families. The five stages of grief are: **Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance** (Giddings, 2006, p.40). These five stages will be applied to the twenty poems this paper studies.

### 3.1. Denial

After the death of Princess Diana, the public found it hard to believe that their lovely princess has gone forever. They were in a state of shock which acts as the first stage of the theory of Kübler-Ross. This stage of denial or shock "acts as a buffer for the grieving individual. It allows him to collect his feeling" (Giddings, 2006, p.41). Williamson comments that the death of Diana was senseless and that it shocked her public not

only because of its suddenness but also because of the absence of Princess Diana who is a popular icon (1998, p.25).

The state of shock is clear in four of the twenty poems. For example, Phillips writes, "Such a tragedy, / Such a shock, / To know that our Queen of hearts, / We now have lost" (1997, 1-4). Here the writer makes it clear that he cannot believe that he will never see Diana any more. Moreover, Shinmoy's poem expresses his deep shock as he says, "Princess Diana, you are no more! / Your soul-bird has reached the Golden Shore. / The world's bleeding heart mourns your death. / Your life on earth the Lord's own Breath" (n.d., 1-4). Shinmoy in this poem portrays the grieving hearts of Diana's people as being bleeding as a result of the sudden pain and loss.

### **3.2. Anger**

Soon after the end of the denial stage the feeling of shock is replaced by anger. In this stage the person in grief has to blame someone, something or even the whole world for his loss (Giddings, 2006, p.42). The poetry lamenting princess Diana conveys the fact that the princess's public is angry and thinks it is too early for their beloved princess to die. They also feel that their kind princess had done so many good deeds to have such an awful death. Hinchcliffe writes, "Princess Diana, / We're sad that you are gone, / Your life was cut short, / And we know that it's all wrong, / We don't know who to blame, / And so we're very mad, / Why should this happen, / To make us all sad?" (n.d., 1-8). The poem here is just expressing the writer's discontent and anger about the way Diana died. He felt that it is not fair for Diana to die in a car crash. He is also unsure whom to blame.

Six poems out of the twenty blamed the media for the accident that caused Diana's death. They blamed the paparazzi photographers who were following her all the time invading her private life. Croft in his poem writes, "A picture's worth a thousand words / And more than that in gold / But the devil wears a camera / And he's coming for your soul" (2008, 1-4). Thus, Croft subjects his anger towards the paparazzi photographers and accuses them of being the primary cause of the princess's car accident by portraying them as being devils. Croft assures that the photographers are not human because, if they were, they would have taken mercy on the kind princess. Phillips also conveys the same idea when he writes, "The media wanted your picture, / So we could gloat over your past, / They got it, / But that was the last" (1997, 13-16). Here again the writer is accusing the media of killing Diana. As a direct result of this accident, many lawmakers began to put rules to protect celebrities and their private lives from the media. For instance, in California, the lawmakers discussed a bill against invading the privacy of any celebrity, but it never became a law (O'Neil 77).

Diana's public also blamed the royal family for her death. The public felt that the more Diana's popularity flourished, the more she got into troubles with the royal family. But it must be mentioned that Diana declared that the queen was like a mother to her. In fact the queen was the only royal member that sympathized with Diana. But this sympathy vanished after Diana's divorce (Seward, 2000, p.1). Moreover, the public sympathized with Diana right after it was discovered that Prince Charles is cheating on her. This case won Diana a huge part in the people's hearts to the extent that her popularity exceeded that of Charles'. For this reason Paprocki argues that during that time "no one seemed sure whether Charles would ever ascend to the throne. Rumors suggested that he might eventually step aside and allow his son, Prince William, to become king" (2009, p.17).

But the people reached the top of their anger towards the Royal family right after Diana's death in Paris in a car crash. The people felt that the royal family refused Diana's romantic relationship with Emad Al Fayed (Dodi). This relationship was supported by the people as they believed that Dodi brought joy and stability to the last few days of Diana. Before him she was just a sad lonely person. This relationship also

becomes forever operatic. It fits with along Western tradition doomed love, of romantic pass in as in extricably linked to death; it is a reworking of Romeo and Juliet, of Tristan and Isolde, of Wuthering Heights, Anna Karenina and Daphe du Maurier's Rebecca. (Wilson, 1998, p.116).

This picture is clear in Bottomley's words, "Then, one day she met a man who loved her. / And, together they were very happy. / But fate was destined not to be kind. / True love and happiness weren't meant to be" (n.d., 53-56).

Only four out of the twenty poems dealt with the public rage towards the royal family. For instance, Michelle Bay writes, "Devoid of emotion, royalty scoff at her short life, / while the masses in England are filled with

heartache and strife" (n.d., 12-13). Thus, the writer is making a comparison between the grief that the public felt after Diana's death and the royal family's attitude towards Diana while she was alive. This comparison makes it obvious that the people believe that the royal family did not like Diana during her stay in the marriage with Prince Charles. Furthermore, the people felt that the royal family did not deserve Diana and that Diana was too much for them. She was nice and kind in a way that no royal family member before was. This is clear in the lines of Tioliendo, "To the less fortunate your kindness was never hidden / You're the portrait of the fineness of Great Britain" (n.d., 5-6). In brief, after the death of Diana, the royal family "looked unlikely to survive" the public rages (Seward, 2000, p.11).

### **3.3 Bargaining**

The third stage is the shortest stage during which the grieved person is asking for more time (Giddings, 2006, 42). In case of Princess Diana her people are blaming themselves for not giving enough time to understand their princess while she was alive. This bargaining is clear in three out of the twenty poems. For instance, Doyle says, "Some of us never even noticed her there / We did not notice her love or her care. / We didn't notice her slightest breath/Until the day of Diana's death" (n.d., 9-12). The people also blame themselves for ignoring all what their princess have done for them during lifetime and for giving extra care only to her scandals. Phillips writes, "O how we analysed those magazines, /And all your public affairs, / And ripped apart your life, / With no mercy to spare" (1997, 9-12).

### **3.4. Depression**

During this fourth stage, the person in grief realizes that death is a fact and that he must deal with it. So, he may have signs of anger and sadness, but such feelings are not prevalent (Giddings, 2006, p.43). Therefore, the person in depression stage feels that this feeling will last forever (Kübler, 2005, p.20). Kübler-Ross identifies two kinds of depression; reactive and preparatory. Reactive depression deals with past losses, while preparatory depression deals with losses yet to come (James, 2008, p.365).

Only four poems out of the twenty dealt with reactive depression. In these two poems the writers recall the past sorrows of the late princess. For example, King mentions how Diana was hurt when her parents were separated when she was only six. King writes, "Such was the omen. / Frightful start - beginning life / with a wounded heart; / tender passions torn and worn; / unfaithful mother; bitter scorn; / endless nights of endless fears" (n.d., 12-17). It is obvious now that Diana lived an insecure childhood. Diana's public believes that she married Prince Charles who is much older than her because she "was looking to him as a father figure, someone who would provide her with the love and security she had never known" (Daymon, 2002, p.38).

Also, the poems recall how the royal family used to oppress the lovely princess all the time. Princess Diana was always regarded by her public as a victim. To the people she was just a lonely wife and a prisoner in a huge palace. O'Shei makes it clear that Diana felt unhappy during her time at the palace. He said that the palace to Diana, "was a rambling, lonely place, where she attempted to learn the protocol involved with being a member of the royal family" (2009, p.11). Even Diana herself once declared that she was not like any woman in the royal family. She was doing everything in a different way. For example, she was the only royal woman that suffered from morning sickness during her pregnancy. That is why she was "a problem" (Seward, 2000, p.98). This idea of oppression is obvious in Bottomley's words, "All she wanted was to be cared for and loved,/ And she tried so hard to make it so. / But, after the birth of another son, / Her life became filled with sadness and woe" (n.d., 29-32).

Preparatory depression is clear in two out of the twenty poems. The two writers try to describe their lives without the presence of Diana. For this reason, Dawson ends up his poem saying that he is suffering from emptiness because of Diana's loss, "I salute her and feel emptiness and shock now she has gone" (2002, 26).

### **3.5. Acceptance**

When the grieved person reaches the acceptance stage, this means that all the other feelings he underwent have diminished. Thus, he accepts the idea of death (Giddings, 2006, p. 44). When Diana's public finally reaches this stage, it declares all the good deeds of Princess Diana as reasons for why she has such a respectable place. The poems give plenty of reasons behind Diana's huge popularity. The most important of these reasons is being a humanitarian person. Diana's humanitarianism has been clear long before being a princess. For instance, when she received the title 'Lady Diana', she was still at school and she did her best to keep it a secret (Paprocki, 2009, p.10). Moreover, her school, West Health School, used to encourage its

students to volunteer in charity deeds. Diana, as her teacher Penny Walker puts out, "was always a big part of that. She didn't have to do it; it was by choice" (Owings, 2013, p.21). Also, after graduating from the school she worked as a nanny for a while for an American family. Then she worked as a kindergarten teacher (Morton, 1997, p.6). Kay King, the person who ran the school where she worked as a teacher, said that Diana treated the kids in a nice way and that she used to make the kids laugh" (Oswings, 2013, p.28). Furthermore, before her wedding, "she was sitting in jeans, staring at the TV while an assistant worked on her short blonde hair" (O'Shei, 2009, p.4). Even after becoming a princess, Diana did not change her kindly behavior; especially towards the palace's staff. Some of the royal handlers were concerned about Diana being too friendly with ordinary people. Stephen Barry, one of the members of the Staff of the palace says, "I was afraid her warmth and chattiness might make some of those in the royal service take advantage" (Paprocki, 2009, p.11).

After becoming a princess, Diana supported many important humanitarian issues such as helping the homeless people, fighting against AIDS, donating money to cancer patients, supporting diseased children, and banning landmines. This means the public did not love and appreciate Diana for her physical appearance; they all loved her humanitarian deeds. Levchuck supports the same idea when he says:

During her lifetime, people all over the world fell in love with the Princess of Wales. It's no secret why. Her passion and her drive to help adults and children in need made people everywhere look up to her and want to be like her. ... she was best known for her sense of charity. (1999, p.5)

But no one realized how much Diana was humanitarian until the time of her death. The poetry that was produced after her death proves this fact. Fourteen out of the twenty poems mentioned her various charity works. For example, Angelou writes, "Glowing in Bosnia, radiant at glittering balls, / We came to love her and claim her for her grace and accessibility" (1997, 10-11). Here this writer is referring to the fact that Diana did all her best to ban landmines. She went to Bosnia as a part of this campaign. Also, Dawson writes, "She had immense feeling and understanding / For those suffering ill health and loss of limbs" (n.d., 21-22). By this she refers to Diana's desire to help people in dire need. She did her best to fight diseases like AIDS and cancer. For this reason Paprocki says, "Diana developed a busy philanthropic life. She credited with helping the world overcome its initial fear of touching AIDS patients shortly after the disease was discovered in 1980s" (2009, p.16). Also, Dawson's words 'loss of limbs' may refer to Diana's campaign to ban landmines which caused loss of limbs. The phrase also may refer to Diana's visit to the children who had lost their limbs in war.

Glover in his poem concludes that Diana's humanitarianism is part of her personality when he writes, "Diana it was...../ it was a passion to do a good deed, / it was you the whole world did need, / it was your eyes warming with care, / and now a loss no one can bare" (n.d., 1-5). It is clear now that her public felt that her charity works were not for showing up or for getting famous. The people really felt that Diana wanted to help all the peoples all over the world. This is clear in Chew's lines, "A fair woman wishing / for only the best of others" (n.d., 11-12). The public also believed that Diana had changed the royal family into a more caring one. This is obvious in a poem called Diana by an anonymous author, "When royalty shows a more human face in the future / It's all because Diana was here" (n.d., 19-20).

A second reason for Diana's respectable place is the fact that she was a very good and caring mother. She always took photographs with her two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry. Even after the divorce, she reduced her responsibilities to be available for her sons. Paprocki explains, "Diana a dedicated and responsible mother, even as she grew restless as a member of the royal family. Diana would often surprise her nannies by peeking into the nursery unannounced to see her young sons, who at times were the only joy in her very restrictive life" (2009, 14). Moreover, Diana once admits, "I always tell my boys what doing - and I always ask their advice" (Seward, 2000, p.8).

Seven poems out of the twenty refer to the fact that Diana was a good mother. Bottomley writes, "So, William and Harry were showered / With all the love Diana could give. / They meant more to her than anything; / They were truly her reasons to live" (n.d., 41-44). Even one of the public imagines that Diana is now a star and because she is a good mother she visited earth on the night prince William got married. Jepson writes,

There's a star in the sky,  
Glowing with love,  
Looking down on a couple ,  
From miles above,  
The star is Princess Diana,  
The couple are William and Kate,  
And it's Diana's way of saying,  
I was always at your wedding,  
Regardless of my fate. (n.d.1-9)

During her life time, Diana did her best to make her kids understand her charity works. She wanted them to know how other people lived and suffered. Thus, she took them to visit AIDS clinics, shelters and desperate communities. Diana succeeded in her aim as her son Prince William grows up to be a humanitarian just like her. For instance, "being taken by his mother on a secret visit to see the homeless living in a shelter as a child led directly to his becoming the shelter's Parton a decade later" (Price, 2011, p.152).

The third reason the poems give for Diana's popularity is that Diana was such a hope giver. This is why she "had become an international icon. She grew in confidence as she went about her public business of meeting dignitaries, as well as spending time with ordinary people" (Paprocki, 2009, p.14). Five out of the twenty poems refer to Dania's smile. Elton John in his famous poem, *Candle in the Wind* says, "Loveliness we've lost/ These empty days without your smile" (1997, 17-18). One can argue that the writer here is not talking about the literal meaning of smile. He is dealing with the hope Diana gave to her public whenever she smiled. Benton refers to this fact when he says:

Perhaps Diana gave even more million dreams of power, of being a prince or a princess. She was unfenced blank into which our energetic imagination could leap, transforming ourselves as she had transformed herself, and transforming her outcome in better ways than she transformed her own. (1998, p. 91)

#### **4. Princess Diana's Real Place**

Diana's mourning poetry proves that her real place will always be in the memories and hearts of her people. Nearly all the writers confirm this fact. For example, Jones writes, "May she rest in peace now / We'll never forget her, through our every day sorrow" (2009, 15-16). Also, Doyle writes, "Although she has gone, gone forever / She will remain with us forever and ever. / She will never be forgotten in any way / Although she has gone so far away" (n.d., 1-4). Some of the writers exaggerated while conveying this idea. For instance, Conning argue that the people's love for Diana will grow stronger every year as he writes, "Our love for you shall grow Diana with every passing year / From a flowering stream to beyond a dream your eternity we share" (2008, 11-12). The same is true regarding Chinmoy poem at which he says, "The twentieth century's sweetest dream / Is devoured / By the saddest car-tragedy-nightmare. / Before long, / The nightmare will be transformed / Into Immortality's Nectar-Delight" (5-10). The writer assures that people will not only forget Diana, but they will also become merry and happy whenever she crosses their minds.

Diana is unforgettable to her public because she was too good to be true. She will live forever because her real place is in their memories. Thus, the public feel that Heaven is a suitable place for her. Being up there will keep the princess away from conspiracies and sufferings. Richard Andrew king writes, "Mirror, mirror, in the night, / reflect a star whose beacon light /shone 'round the world / to hush a cry; / now shines forever / in a royal sky" (n.d., 46-51). According to king Diana is no ordinary star; she is a bright star that will shine forever. Croft also writes, "A throne has been reserved for you / A special place on high / The princess has ascended / To her castle in the sky" (2011, 21-24). So, here Croft makes it clear that death is better for Diana as she was oppressed and suffered on earth. Moreover, Burch says, "She was meant to leave, as the wind must blow, / As the sun must set, /As the rain must fall" (n.d., 13-14). This means that Burch says that earth is not her real place. She is something more divine and he compares her to the sun and the rain. By this he portrays Diana as being a unique person who devoted her time, money and effort to make the world a better place.

## 5. Conclusion

During her lifetime Princess Diana of Wales had a great popularity. Diana has lived a unique life that is full of glamour and fame as well as of suffering and oppression. Everyone in the world wanted to meet her or to attend one of her events. This is mainly because of her great humility and being classless. This made out of her one of the most famous international personalities in the second half of the twentieth century. Diana is also one of the few celebrities who had great influence on the public during her life as well as after her death. This is because she succeeded in touching each one of her people by her humble personality and her major charity works. She also taught a lesson to each and every royal member to understand his people.

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