

A DEMOCRATIC VISION OF SELF
IN ALLAMA MUHAMMAD IQBAL
AND WALLACE STEVEN'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the differences in a democratic vision of self in an Eastern Poet, Philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal and American Modern Poet, Wallace Stevens. These poets belonged to two cultural backgrounds yet they are contemporary as well. The researcher probes into the democratic vision of selves in the poetry of Allama Muhammad Iqbal with special reference to his book 'Secret of the Self' and from some of the selected works of Wallace Stevens that are relevant to the topic. An important aspect in relation to the qualitative research is to lay bare how human consciousness and imagination work in understanding and influencing the democratic vision of self. The object of the research is also that an individual self develops by the influence of community and divinity. The research shows how Iqbal and Stevens' autonomies develop throughout their life span. These two epoch-making and influential poets mingle their visions of self with the universal love. The researcher, therefore, throws light on how these poets take up the common man's vision of life to promote the lasting and universal message of love and peace for humanity. This is the essence of the message of two poets under study.

Imaginative poets like Iqbal and Stevens reveal a more democratic and humane view of the divine and reality respectively than, say, do theologians or even philosophers. A theologian may reflect as a rather rationalistic scholar of religion and often inclined to conceptualize God in terms of the history and literature of a given religion, he possibly is intended to characterize the divine. An imaginative made a world through his imagination but a democratic individual shines with his liberal views although restricts to his limit. Democratic poets like Iqbal and Stevens humbly gear up to democratize, humanize and universalize the divine and reality respectively. They are indeed democratic poets in their respective genres. Iqbal suggests the democratic vision of self in a verse of “The Call of the Caravan Bell, The Rise of Islam, Translated by Matthews.”

You are the secret of creation, see yourself in your eyes
Share the secret of your own self, become the spokesman of God
Immerse yourself in yourself, my forgetful one, this is the secret of
life Come out from the fetters of evening and morning, become
immortal¹

Stevens’ democratic vision of self reflects in these verses of his book, “The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens”, poem “The Idea of Order at Key West”,

She sang beyond the genius of the sea. The water never formed to
mind or voice, Like a body wholly body, fluttering Its empty sleeves;
and yet its mimic motion Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,
That was not ours although we understand,
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.²

Iqbal sees the democratic vision of self in divinity as well. He sees ‘Self’ as an inimitable supernatural force. It is an exceptional spiritual existence that earth, heaven, and the universe are in its excess. This spiritual force when connects with God then divine attributes appear in an individual, he becomes the Vicegerent of Allah (God), then with his spiritual force destiny changes, this happens when a force operates in a Vicegerent of Allah (God). It is that vision which is advocated by Iqbal. Harvard Crimson, Wallace Stevens’ greatness as a poet is recognized through his democratic vision of self in relation to reality. His major achievements are as the expression of the democratic vision of

self in all its amplitudes, in this respect, he writes in the impressive tradition of romantic poetry. Ironically, his stratagem and maneuver are splitting, his use of wide characters, opening philosophical gambit, his impersonal voice serves to objectify and make authentic deeply personal sources, a feeling and thought.

Literature Review

Rumi investigates the democratic vision of self in his book “Rumi’s Little Book of Life: The Garden of the Soul, the Heart, and the Spirit”, his views about self are:

Come back my soul, do not waste Time with the cold-hearted
They do not know your worth. Why do you seek water
When are you the stream?³

James discusses the democratic vision of self in his book “The Principles of Psychology”, with the title “The Ego and the Self in the Thought of Sigmund Freud.” He argues three types of life, of self:

Material Self: Bodily appetites and instincts, love of adornment, foppery, acquisitiveness, constructiveness, love of home, etc.
Social Self: Desire to be pleased, be noticed, admired, etc.
Sociability, emulation, envy, love, a pursuit of honor, ambition etc.
Spiritual self: Intellectual, Moral and religious Aspiration, Consciousness.⁴

Moses and Pharaoh’s democratic vision of self is delineated in their own way. It depends on one’s own choice. In order to know the best understanding of the democratic vision of self in Iqbal and Stevens, it is necessary to analyze the spiritual and psychological vision of self in the light of Islam and West.

In this relation, Hayati argues in his article, “Concepts of the Self in Islamic Tradition and Western Psychology: A Comparative Analysis”. He detects that: In the Qur’an and Islamic culture, self has three major dimensions, Nafsi Ammara (Source of Evil), Nafsi Lawwama (Blaming Evil), Nafsi Mutmainna (Possessor of Serenity and Tranquillity). In Western psychology, Sigmund Freud divides the personality or self into three elements. These are Id, Ego, and Superego.

Nafs (Self) has been used in The Qur’an as the meaning of soul: “... Discharge your Anfus (Souls)!...” (Al-An’am, 3/93). Generally, Islamic scholars take Nafs (Self) meaning as spiritual self, self-consciousness, and self-awareness. In The Qur’an Nafs (Self) has divergence meaning. The evil side of Nafs (Self) from The Qur’an that, “Nay, I swear by the reproaching Nafs (Self)” (Al-Qiyamah, 75/2). The virtuous side of Nafs (Self) that, “O serene soul! Return to your Lord, well pleased and pleasing (to

your Lord). So enter among My (righteous) servants and enter My Paradise” (Al-Fajr, 89/27-30). These are two opposing sides of Nafs (Self). Iqbal and Stevens, reflect the vice and virtuous vision of self in their poetry.

According to the Qur’an Nafsi Ammara (Source of Evil) has the inclination of the body to natural desires and needs. It is equal to ‘Id’ of Sigmund Freud. Nafsi Ammara (Source of Evil) is extreme in its demand, therefore, it is very near to ‘Id’s description in a Freudian triangular model of mind. Prominent psychologists are unanimous in their views that ‘Id’ is similar to Nafsi Ammara. The ‘Id’, it is natural, instinctual element and libidinous energy. No logical laws apply on ‘Id’. The ‘Id’ is the major portion of the unconscious mind. It has passions and provides the energy for the unconscious. It requires immediate satisfaction. It has repressed material, but not everything in the ‘Id’ is repressed. In Nafsi Ammara or Freud’s ‘Id’, the devil is a hidden enemy of man. He attacks in the dark. He uses different shapes, sometimes attacks in the form of a beautiful woman, sometimes in the form of a trustworthy friend like Pharaoh’s Minister Hamaan and sometimes attacks in the form of a virtuous man. He attains great power, he is like an eagle and the most virtuous man is just like a chick, a man could be saved only by the blessing of God.

‘Sex’ exists in Nafsi Ammara or ‘Id’, but its excessive use detracts an individual. On the issue of ‘sex’, Islamic scholars and Freud have a difference. According to Freud’s theory that there is an instinct of sexual lust in the base of human behavior, on the other hand, Islamic scholars understand that sexuality is not lust but it is a desire. Even Freud’s followers as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Karen Horney have criticized Freud’s excessive stress on sexuality. This criticism on Freud shows that the scholars of Islam have a better approach to this issue. It is conceived from the discussion that sex is a desire, not lust.

The second element of self is Nafsi Lawwama in Islamic perspective and in the Freudian term it is Ego. It means blaming evil. Islamic scholars define Nafsi Lawwama as an essence that lightens with the heart’s light to warn people when they commit evil deeds. The culture of Sufism (Mystics) charges Nafsi Lawwama with a kind of auto control duty to fight with Nafsi Ammara (Source of Evil) too.

The third element of self is Nafsi Mutmainna or Superego, to psychologists, the Superego is part of the mind. It is frequently characterized as an internalized code, serves as a judge over the

thought and action of the Ego. In the Freudian tripartite model of the psyche, the superego is a replica of ethical conscience. Aydin in his article, "Concept of the Self in Islamic Tradition and Western Psychology: A Comparative Analysis", quotes Freud that, "The superego is a precipitate of the child's prolonged dependency on his parents and their demands with regard to driving restriction and socialization".⁵ The influence of parents is not enough. The Superego has been shaped by society, mythology, friends, and above all is religious faith that plays the most vital role on superego's development. Tranquility in the self comes from faith and religious practices. In The Qu'ran, "Those who believe and find peace in their hearts from the contemplation of God" (Al-Ra'd, 13/28). In this state Nafsi (Self) receives a complete serenity from God. This state of Mutmainna (Complete Satisfaction) achieves when evil eradicates from self and the devil has no power on self. Aydin's article reflects the importance of Superego that society and religion develop the psyche and origin of Superego in an individual.

Discussion

The Democratic vision of self is the more secret phenomena in Iqbal's poetry. His boundless imagination hovers on the earth and the sky, but initially, he was feared to show his self to this ignorant world.

Surmising himself a particle, but still, thousands of mornings exist within him. Eventually, Iqbal's vision of self comes into view and he depicted in his book "Asrar-e-Khudi" (Secret of The Self) translated by Nicholson, that:

Within my bosom are a hundred dawns. My dust is brighter than
Jamshid's cup

It knows things that are yet unborn in the world⁶

Three dominant eras are present in identifying the democratic vision of self in Iqbal's poetry. The first period (1901-1908) was platonic, in which he conceives God as Eternal Beauty. The sun, the moon, the stars are expressions of this Eternal Beauty. In comparison with God, these expressions are like a drop in the ocean, a spark in front of the sun, they are perishable and the whole of existence is transitory. The second period (1908-1920), in which Iqbal's democratic vision of self provides the foundation for his concept of God. Irfan Iqbal in his article "Iqbal's Concept of God" quotes that, "Under McTaggart, Ward and Rumi initially Iqbal is a thorough-going pantheistic mystic, a claim supported by Iqbal himself".⁷ In this state of mind Iqbal started to study Nietzsche and his will-to-power, Bergson and his elan vital, and

MacDougall's social psychology. After 1920, in the third period, Iqbal's vision of self touches the climax of the intellectual development. He leaves behind the rationalistic and mystical observations and took God as alpha and omega in the universe. Stevens' democratic vision of self is delineated even in the beginning of his poetry in his collection of poetry book "Harmonium". It proved a prelude for many themes which explored in the later poetry of Stevens. "Harmonium" proved as both beginning and end. Hines argues in his book "The Later Poetry of Wallace Stevens: Phenomenological Parallels with Husserl's and Heidegger", that "It is a beginning in the sense that a number of ideas that are developed in the later poems are initially suggested or implied in the first volume. It is an end in the sense that Stevens explicitly rejected the kind of poetry that Harmonium came to represent to him".⁸

Iqbal's democratic vision of self considers prayer mandatory for convincing connection between an individual and God. The act of prayer is useful in creating a lasting relationship between an individual and God. The last goal of the prayer is not detachment from worldly affairs, but the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. The man's aim is to unite his will with the Divine will. When the man reached the climax of prayer, he experiences the infinite possibilities of God and may choose one of them and the granting him a new destination. An individual self runs through different stages of evolution to get closer to the Ultimate Ego. The name of this Ultimate Ego is God. Iqbal investigates Ultimate Ego is fully realized in its relationship to the human ego, in an act of worship self-revelation reveals the "Great I am". The Ultimate Ego consolidates the human ego in this act of worship. The prayer is an expression of man's inner yearning and is useful in affirming and negating itself. Irfan Iqbal quotes Iqbal in his article "Iqbal's Concept of God", that, Iqbal, says, American Psychologist William James on this point: "It seems probable that in spite of all that 'science' may do to the contrary, men will continue to pray for the end of time, unless their mental nature changes in a manner which nothing we know should lead us to expect".⁹

Stevens has the least concern with prayer but he seeks a kind of reality which would be his own. His reality concept is not permanent but traverse. Liberty has great values for Stevens. Stevens' democratic vision of self permits him to see God as his own creation. He advocated that the rightness about God may be approached with new knowledge of the mind. He contemplates

that God will never be again, but with new knowledge of mind, we may seek the same sort of solace in divinity. Stevens' views about divinity are perplexing. In "Sunday Morning", the conflict between divinity and the worldly bliss is presented with an artistic approach. Stevens' made a pungent criticism on divinity in these lines of his book "The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens" Poem 'Sunday Morning'. He wrote,

What is divinity if it can come

Only in silent shadows and in dreams? Shall she not find in comforts
of the sun,

In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else. In any balm or
beauty of the earth,

Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?¹⁰

In the democratic vision of self, Iqbal sees love and Intellect are part and parcel and not essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same origin and fill each other. The former fixes its gaze on the eternal, the latter on the mundane aspects of reality. When intellect and love join together in an individual he becomes a man and an angel at the same time. Stevens runs his vision of self towards reality and used intellect as a catalyst.

In the world of Iqbal and Stevens imagination makes self more concrete. Elements of love, faith, action, hope, intellect, and tolerance, which provide the ground in strengthening the self but imagination cater and sharpen these elements' intensity. The more the flight of imagination would be the more deepen self would be achieved. Iqbal's imagination is vivid, sharp, transparent, crystallize, thought provoking, sublime, knowledgeable, and mentor. Schimmel throws light on the imagination of Iqbal in her book "Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal", that "Iqbal's 'bird of imagination' was more practically minded: not in vain did the poet choose the falcon, the noble hunting bird, as his favorite symbol rather than repeating the traditional complaint of the nightingale".¹¹

Stevens' is always used his imagination to trace reality which would be his own. In this connection, Tomioka investigates in his thesis "Wallace Stevens' new Romanticism and English Romantic Poetry", Tomioko quotes Stevens' views about imagination and reality, Stevens says that "I come down from the past, the past is my own and not something marked Coleridge, Wordsworth, etc. I know of no one who has been particularly important to me. My reality- imagination complex is entirely my own even though I see it in others".¹²

A reliable source is present in Iqbal to gratify the democratic vision of self. The Khizr is an unseen mentor in the history of Islam. Iqbal used the symbol of Khizr in his poem. Rumi played the role of Khizr to Iqbal in projecting his vision of self. The “Khizr-i-Rah” is the last poem of Bang-e-Dara (The Call of the Way). Khizr is an unseen symbol to the believer in searching right path. Through this poem, Iqbal explores the death is a wayside station in the journey of life. In the context of this poem, Iqbal discovers the eternity of time. Time for Iqbal is ceaseless and evergreen. This theme of ceaseless time’s implications is found in his books “Secret of the Self”, “A Message from the East”, and the poem, “The Melody of Time”. Eternal time, fate, and the connection between the infinite and the finite are dealt by using the symbol of Khizr. Omar in his article, “Khizr-i-Rah: The Pre-Eminent Guide to Action in Muhammad Iqbal’s Thought”, he investigates the concept of Khizr in different ways. He wrote that, “Khizr appears in Iqbal in a variety of ways, sometimes in the context of “greening of the mountain tops” and sometimes referring to the foiled attempt of Alexander in finding the ‘Fountain of Life’; in all instances a sense of an untiring wanderer echoes evenly”. From poem Khizr-e-Rah Omar quotes:

Call these farmers the embodiment of Khizr of toil and labor As
they turn the mountain rocks into green
Give up searching for the living water as God knows whither O
Alexander, Khizr has hidden it¹³

Stevens’ democratic vision of self creates a new romanticism in his poetry which distinguishes him from other Romantics like Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge. Stevens’ vision of self is more realistic than romantics. Stevens drives romanticism towards a new direction where he gives dynamic modes and variety to the traditional way of romanticism. Wordsworth seizes imagination and reality in his poetry which reflects his instability of reconciliation. Coleridge’s vision of self is guilty and his doubts throw a shadow on his concept of imagination. In Shelley’s poetic vision of self, space is present between his imagination and reality. Stevens seeks an order from a chaotic world. This ordering force is necessary for the violent conflict of imagination and reality in Stevens’ democratic vision of self. ‘Earthy Anecdote’ is the depiction of his ordering force in his poetry.

The real miraculous power behind the towering personality of Iqbal is none, but ‘The Quran’. The ‘Quran’ influenced on his democratic vision of self with its enthralling charm and riveting excitement. He seeks a vision in divinity which is essentially

democratic. His mental approach is broad in terms of divinity. He collected the pearls of wisdom from the depth of the ocean of the celestial knowledge 'The Holy Quran'. The flower of the vision of self in Iqbal's poetry fulfilled his fragrance from the garden of 'The Quran'. The bud of Iqbal's intellect blossoms with the verses of 'The Quran'. The secret of the 'Secret of The Self' is 'The Quran' in Iqbal's poetry. It came to know why Iqbal writes and how he writes. This secret discloses that 'The Quran is the silent force behind the democratic vision of self in Iqbal. The difficult verse of 'The Quran' sometimes reveals from Iqbal's verse and sometimes difficult verse of Iqbal opens with the illuminating way of 'The Quran'. The Influence of 'The Quran' on the democratic vision of self of Iqbal is great and far reaching. Iqbal relates the success of both the world with love of Muhammad (PBUH). He narrates his scholarly vision in the following verse in *Bang-e-Dara, Tulu-e-Islam, (The Call of the Caravan Bell, The Rise of Islam, Translated by Matthews)*.

To my Muhammad be but true, And thou hast conquered me
The world is naught: thou shalt command, My Pen of Destiny¹⁴

Contrary to Iqbal Stevens did not accept any source for his democratic vision of self except some influences from Edgar Allan Poe, William Carlos William, and Emerson. His vision of self unfolds the reality. His views about reality are traverse and entirely his own. He is not indebted in this relation. Stevens does not talk about a divine aspect of reality, but the reality is a force to him not a static way but moving. With the passage of time he discovers new horizons in the world of reality. Layers after layers unfold to him. Stevens relates supreme fiction with reality in a more scientific way.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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