

THE SELF ASSERTION IN THE WORKS OF  
WALT WHITMAN AND ALLAMA  
MUHAMMAD IQBAL

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## ABSTRACT

Comparing Whitman and Allama Iqbal is to do so by analyzing multiple labels that have been attached to both of them. While there is some merit associated with each label, these still do not encompass the complexity these poets might hold. Another important and interesting similarity between the two is that they both have been divinized as well as demonized. Although, quite divergent, these two approaches carry further the multiplicity and diversity of their expression and interpretation. What Whitman affirms in “Song of Myself” can be applied to both. In this regard, their choice of poetic form for the delineation of their philosophic and mystical concepts especially the concept of the self is also significant. It can be explained on the ground that an artist has a unique perception of things and art is the medium that the artist uses for searching his identity and self. So they both consider it the duty of the poet to open new vistas of meaning for the secrets of existence so that the process of betterment may continue. They want the poet to be dynamic with a vision that extends beyond worldly horizons, planets and space into the cosmos. The poet as a leader, seer and reformer creates new and beautiful forms and interprets the human aspirations. His thought is universal and all embracing and it contains material, moral and spiritual aspects of life. That is the reason that both these poets, Whitman and Iqbal, are as much concerned with the world of material values as with the world of spiritual and aesthetic values. The world of matter is as much important and significant as the world of spirit. These two worlds are interconnected and compliment each other.

This ideal of Whitman's is a critical ideal of workability, of direct use. Applying it here and now, I can think of only one living poet who in any way sustains the test, and almost necessarily he is not of our race and creed. I mean Muhammad Iqbal, whose poem "Asrar-i-Khudi": The Secrets of the Self, has recently been translated from the original Persian by Dr. Reynold Nicholson----.<sup>1</sup>

Oh Walter, Walter, what have you done with it? With your individual self? For it sounds as if it had all leaked out of you, leaked into the universe.<sup>2</sup>

Walt Whitman and Iqbal the central focus of this comparative study have poured out their creative genius by writing about the self in their own particular ways. Rather than much concerned with the nature of the self both these poets, though belonging to different countries and time periods, are more concerned, in common, with the consciousness and introspective awareness of the self. In both the cases this introspective awareness about self-consciousness does not clearly demystify the self. It does not also tell what the self is, other than its being the sort of entity that permits the consciousness of itself. It is more a mystical consciousness than a purely philosophical one.

The underlying purpose of this comparative study, between these diverse yet uniquely similar poets---Whitman and Iqbal, is an understanding and appreciation of the points of unification and departure in their concept of the self. This research mainly focuses on the background philosophy in the works of these two poets that also transmutes into their ethical and spiritual beliefs. Pluralism is the order of the modern-day world. In a pluralistic world, contact with other cultures, inevitably, leads to cognitive exchanges in which the ideas of each culture influence those of the other. Hence a comparative study of different poetic philosophies emerging from different springs and sources of inspiration becomes a self-rewarding experience.

One way of comparing Whitman and Iqbal is to do so by analyzing multiple labels that have been attached to both of them. While there is some merit associated with each label, these still do not encompass the complexity these poets might hold. Another

important and interesting similarity between the two is that they both have been divinized as well as demonized. Although, quite divergent, these two approaches carry further the multiplicity and diversity of their expression and interpretation. What Whitman affirms in “Song of Myself” can be applied to both:

I am large, ----- I contain multitudes.<sup>3</sup>

There are various dimensions of their philosophy of the self that are the outcome of their deeper reflection and wider experience.

In this regard, their choice of poetic form for the delineation of their philosophic and mystical concepts especially the concept of the self (the contention of the present study) is also significant. It can be explained on the ground that an artist has a unique perception of things and art is the medium that the artist uses for searching his identity and self. It is the medium in which he voyages for self-discovery. Iqbal holds in *Stray Reflections*:

The world spirit conceals the various phases of her inner life in symbols. The universe in nothing but a great symbol. But she never takes troubles to interpret these symbols for us. It is the duty of the poet to interpret these symbols for us. As for the poet and the world spirit, the former reveals what the latter conceals.<sup>4</sup>

Whitman also assigns somewhat similar role to the poet in Preface to 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass (LG)*:

Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man--- he is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key --- As he sees farthest he has most faith --- Faith is the antiseptic of the soul--- He is a seer—<sup>5</sup>

So they both consider it the duty of the poet to open new vistas of meaning for the secrets of existence so that the process of betterment may continue. They want the poet to be dynamic with a vision that extends beyond worldly horizons, planets and space into the cosmos. The poet as a leader, seer and reformer creates new and beautiful forms and interprets the human aspirations. His thought is universal and all embracing and it contains material, moral and spiritual aspects of life. That is the reason that both these poets, Whitman and Iqbal, are as much concerned with the world of material values as with the world of spiritual and aesthetic values. The world of matter is as much important and significant as the world of spirit. These two worlds are interconnected and one compliments the other.

Though Whitman inherited the transcendental spirit from Emerson yet there are instances that prove Whitman’s debt to

Upanishad and Gita (Indian mystical philosophies). Edward Carpenter, the famous biographer and critic of Whitman, found the parallel between *Leaves of Grass* and the *Upanishads*. In *Maha Yogi: Walt Whitman*, K. Nambiar elaborates a Hindu perception of Whitman's mystic adventure. In addition, Malcolm Cowley also in his introduction to the *Leaves of Grass* 1855 traces the elements of mysticism in his work. Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Future Poetry* compared Whitman to old Indian seers: "That which the old Indian seers called the *mahan atma*, the Great Self, the Great Spirit is the subject of some of his strains"<sup>6</sup>. Western Scholar Beongcheon Yu in his book *The Great Circle: American Writers and the Orient* surveys Whitman's affinity with the Indian thought.

Whitman's introduction of Vedic consciousness in American poetic exploration can not be under estimated. But there is essentially another side of Whitman's mysticism that aligns him with the dynamic Sufi philosophy of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi<sup>7</sup> and Iqbal. A lot work has been done in tracing the transcendental and Vedic roots of Whitman but Whitman's debt to Sufi phenomenon has not been focused much in Western and American academia. Although I dwell here on the transcendental and Vedic roots of Whitman but I would also draw an affinity between Whitman and Sufi thought through the triangle of Whitman- Rumi- Iqbal. Rumi is emphatically placed in the center because of the amazing convergence of his philosophy and that of Whitman. Similarly in shaping the creative genius of Iqbal no other influence (Western or Eastern) worked as significantly as that of Rumi. In his poetry we find a recapitulating of Rumi's thought.

In many ways Rumi seems well aligned to the American tradition; indeed his poetry reminds one of Whitman's verse in its exaltation of the Divine in everyday life, its defiance of convention and its celebration of language of common people. Iqbal's poetry also radiates with the spirit of Rumi in its aspiration for the Divine. Like Rumi, the speakers in Iqbal and Whitman's poetry are both brazen and humble, revealing their capacity for greatness, acknowledging their humility before God as in the following lines of Rumi:

I am small I can barely be seen,  
How can this great love be inside me?  
Look at your eyes. They are small,  
But they can see enormous things.<sup>8</sup>

Walt Whitman appeared on the American literary scene when the Americans were trying to solidify a national identity. In a way, Whitman and America together conducted the quest for the self. In

his poetry, Whitman's discovery of himself is the discovery of America. Whitman loved the world and the people in it and enjoyed traveling about America, singing the praises of its natural beauty and wealth, the vitality of its people, the pioneer spirit and the excitement of building a new nation on a new principle of individual freedom and vision. This discovery of potential in the American continent goes along with the discovery of the potential within his self and vice versa. The sense of pioneer ship, exploration, individuality and democracy equates Whitman and America. Whitman's poetry may certainly be read at the surface level but even a casual reading of Whitman's verse informs that there is much more to what its author says than a simple literal cataloguing of observation and experience.

Within the system of his dynamic meditations, he perceives the radiance of body and soul, of subject and object, of life and death and above all love. His *Leaves of Grass* though severely condemned because of its openness and so called homoeroticism reveals the depth of his insight and wideness of his outlook. His "Song of Myself" offers an insight into Whitman's quest for the self-discovery. Being the poet of "the open road"<sup>9</sup> he does not contracts but rather expands his self through his poetry.

Iqbal's poetry on the other hand appeared fairly early in the twentieth century--- a crucial time for the people of the sub-continent in the wake of British colonization and World War-I. He was deeply concerned with the revival of the lost identity and status of Muslims. Iqbal was despaired with the Muslim religious-philosophic tradition of his time which he termed in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* as "worn-out and practically dead metaphysics"<sup>10</sup> with its peculiar thought form and phraseology producing "a deadening effect on the modern mind" (Iqbal 125). His vibrant poetry stirred the dead into life and infused a renewing and rejuvenating sense of identity and self-manifestation in his readers. Conversant with Eastern as well as Western Philosophy and Mysticism, he believed in developing an understanding of relation between the self (man) and The Self (God). With his own peculiar vision, he extolled mysticism for demonstrating the inner experiences of the self on its way to finding the Higher Self.

This brief sketch of Whitman's and Iqbal's poetry foregrounds the fact that, in general terms, the poetic voice of the two had its seminal role in evolving the consciousness of their readers. Both performed the role of vitalists in urging their fellows to embrace life to the fullest by exploiting the unimaginable power of the self; both emphasized the synthesis of spirituality and active and vigorous life

in the world, both earnestly preached the ideal of human unity and brotherhood; both held firm faith in the infinite potentiality of the self.

More specifically, the concept of the self, the central focus of Whitman's and Iqbal's poetry, shares common as well as uncommon grounds. Both Whitman and Iqbal consider the self to be a composite of the physical and the spiritual but still there are terminological differences in their concept of the self. They hold almost the same conception of The Divine. Both of them have panentheistic strain rather than pantheistic one. Both believe that the human self for its complete development must be in tuned with the Higher or Divine Self. They use the same medium of intuition and love but the manner of getting in tuned with the infinite is altogether different. Whitman becomes one with the Higher Reality by absorbing the self in The Self. On the other hand, in Iqbal, the climax of the voyage of self-discovery is to absorb The Self in the self. On the poetic level, Whitman's poem "Song of Myself" depicts the mystical journey of the one individual self (the poet himself) that stands for all selves. Iqbal's poem *The Secret of the Self* does not depict the mystical journey in the traditional sense but rather explains the process of growth of the self-hood at a larger societal level and that stands for the individual self as well. (Details with analysis and examples in the coming passages).

Both Whitman and Iqbal depart from the traditional mysticism in their dynamic conception of the self-hood. It converges and diverges at many points with the difference in tone and temperament and in the sources of its inspiration. Iqbal, like Whitman, believes that a fossilized religious dogmatism could not generate an outlook that would lead to self-realization. Unlike the traditional mystical idea of self-negation propagated by dogmatic religious beliefs, Whitman and Iqbal propose a radical vitalizing concept of **"self-assertion as self-possession"**. They believe in a kind of balance between temporal and spiritual, as Whitman asserts:

I am the poet of body  
I am the poet of soul.<sup>11</sup>

And for Iqbal also the world of matter is not an illusion and if ignored all progress would cease. For him both the body and the soul are the expression of the same reality; they are constituted of the same stuff. He defines the relation of the body and the soul on the analogy of the relation of God with the universe. He states in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

It is not placed at some definite or particular point in the body. It is not identical with body either. It is related to it, is in contact with every atom of it, permeates and infuses it through and through and at the same time is over and above it. It is neither inside nor outside the body, neither proximate nor separate from it and yet it is in contact with its every atom.<sup>12</sup>

Hence the body is necessary for the expression and manifestation of the soul.

Whitman's notion of self-assertion is further evident in his Preface to 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass* where Whitman insists that his "enclosing purpose" is "to express, above all artificial regulations and aid, the eternal Bodily character of one's self".<sup>13</sup> The self that Whitman asserts is no doubt the transcendental / mystical / cosmic self but it can only be revealed through the physical self. Unlike the traditional mystics, Whitman did not regard flesh and matter as a hindrance in spiritual aspirations towards the ideal; he regarded the material reality as the glorious means of life: "He does not negate life but in his quest of self he has a 'lustiness', a hearty relish for life lived at all times to the fullest intensity".<sup>14</sup> For him, it is not just the spiritual self that comes in communion with the "over-soul"<sup>15</sup> but the physical and the spiritual self in their unison or totality get in tuned with the infinite during mystical experience.

Throughout his poetry, Whitman insists on the idea that it is through the physical that one achieves the spiritual. He evinces the charm and wonder of the body and its participation with the soul in achieving higher mystical ideals:

I will not make a poem nor the least part of poem but has reference to the soul-----  
Was somebody asking to see the soul?  
See, your shape, countenance, persons, substances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands---  
Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern, and includes and is the soul,  
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine, is your body, or any part of it.<sup>16</sup>

Here, Whitman emphasizes the fact that the soul is embodied in outward "shape" and "countenance". This embodiment lends a divinity to the body.

Whitman in "Song of Myself" considers body not only as an instrument of the soul but a full partner in the business of the living. He depicts the struggle of the self to achieve immortality in its union with "The Self" or "Over- soul":



I have said that the soul is no more than the body  
And I have said that the body is not more than soul,  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one 's self is.<sup>17</sup>

For Whitman, "the physical body and its senses are the receptors and interpreters of those mysterious signals, for without the senses the soul would not receive the information it needs to distill the latent truth of its experience".<sup>18</sup> He reiterates this fact again and again:

I will make the poems of materials  
For I think they are to be the most spiritual poems,  
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poem of my soul, and of immortality.<sup>19</sup>

Both, the body and the soul, are related to, and have their source in the same reality and execute the purpose of that reality as a single and indivisible whole. So for Whitman, as for Iqbal, the body owes its existence to the soul while the soul has its source in the Divine Reality.

The self that Whitman asserts in his poems is the spiritual self as after the divine synthesis of the body and the soul. This self is man's individual identity. Despite Whitman's celebration of the body: "I believe in the flesh and the appetites, /Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle."<sup>20</sup> He is at the same time aware that body is only a portion of what he is himself:

I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new washed babe, and am not contained between my hat and boots.<sup>21</sup>

These declarations do not appear as paradoxical when one realizes that this is a song of multilayered self and that Whitman's psychology understands the body as the way for the soul to function in nature.

The self after the synthesis of the body and the soul expands to encompass both space and time. In the course of his poems there is a clear indication of the assertion and expansion of the self into inclusive consciousness. As R.W.B Lewis in his book *The American Adam* states: "Traditional mysticism is a surrender of the ego to its creator--- Whitman's is the expansion of the ego (self) in the act of creation itself naming every conceivable object as it comes from the womb".<sup>22</sup> He loves the earth, the flora and fauna of the earth, the moon and the stars, the sea and all other elements:

I will make the poem of riches,

To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and goes forward  
is not dropt by death.

I will not make poem with reference to parts,  
But I will make poem, songs thoughts, with reference to ensemble---<sup>23</sup>

Whitman's emphatic declaration: "I will not make poem with reference to parts" projects his desire to engulf the totality within himself.

His concept of self is not to be confused with egotism. Whitman's pronominal assertion, his "I" in his poems is not egotistical self-assertion but has larger universal parameters that can be understood only by placing the self of Whitman in a vaster mystical and metaphysical context. The "I" of Whitman's verse, Whitman himself, we soon become aware is every man and every woman. Donald Hall interprets this assertion of Whitman as: "when he sighs of himself, he is far removed from egotism precisely through inwardness; the self that he observes through imagination become all selves; he is the multitude he called himself"<sup>24</sup>. The egotistical self of Whitman is, therefore, deconstructed to fit it in a larger canvass of a universal "I", a part of the Divine and hence not egotistical. To Whitman, all matter is as divine as the soul since the body is as sacred and spiritual as the soul. When he sings of the body or its performance, he is singing a spiritual chant. To quote the words of Paul Hourihan in *Mysticism in American Literature*: "the 'self' celebrated here is not the ordinary phenomenal self of Whitman but the transcendental 'I' Consciousness, the Mystical self, the Cosmic Mind while the radiance is still upon him who writes down his revelation"<sup>25</sup>. This Cosmic Consciousness is one aspect of Whitman's mysticism.

In comparison Iqbal, in his poetry, specifically in *The Secrets of the Self* encapsulates the idea of **self assertion as self-possession**, but from a slightly different stand point as that of Whitman's. In the dynamic perspective of his thought, the unflinching assertion of the self is the watchword:

Endeavor to surge and wrestle with the sea  
Oh expand thyself: Move swiftly!  
Be a cloud that shoots lightening and shed a floor of rain!  
Let the ocean sue for thy storms as a beggar,  
Let it complain of the straitness of thy skirts.<sup>26</sup>

Central to Iqbal's drama is his concern with human individuality. Rejecting Plato's static universe and those aspects of Sufism that denied the affirmation of the self in the world, Iqbal utilizes the Quran to develop a unique *weltanschauung* in his theory of self hood

that embraces all reality: the individual self, society and God. Every little stream of Iqbal's poetry falls into the mighty ocean of the self. In espousing his prolific volatile concept of the self, Iqbal profited from the Western and Eastern philosophers and mystics but never imitated any of them. In words of Robert Whittemore:

Iqbal is not merely another Asiatic turned Western eclectic. For Ghazali and Rumi also have been his teacher, The Prophet (P.B.U.H) and the Quran his constant source of inspiration. It is this fusion of patterns of philosophical and religious thought foreign to each other that constitutes Iqbal's Reconstruction.<sup>27</sup>

For Iqbal the climax of the long evolutionary development of the self-hood is reached, as he states in *Reconstruction*, "when the self is able to retain full self-possession, even in the case of direct contact with the all embracing Ego (self)".<sup>28</sup> It is the desire to conquer the nature that gives purpose to life and leads the self into creativity: "in great action alone, the self of man becomes united with God without losing its own identity and transcends the limits of space and time".<sup>29</sup> Hence life's affirmation and not its negation becomes for Iqbal the ultimate human value. He writes in a letter to Nicholson: "What then is life? It is individual. Its highest form, so far, is the Ego (self) in which the individual becomes a self contained exclusive centre" (Iqbal in Nicholson xix). In *The Secrets of the Self*, he affirms the same fact:

The form of existence is an effect of the self  
Whatever thou seest is a secret of the self.<sup>30</sup>

Consciousness of the self is the ultimate human goal. The continuation of individual life depends on the affirmation of the self:

Tis the nature of the self to maintain itself  
In every atom slumbers the might of the self  
Power that is unexpressed and inert  
Chains the faculties which lead to action  
In as much as all life comes from the strength of the self  
Life is in proportion to this strength  
When life gathers strength from the self  
The river of life expands into an ocean.<sup>31</sup>

Iqbal criticizes all notions of spirituality that preach renunciation of worldly life. He is against the concept of bifurcation of man into spirit and body. Like Whitman, for Iqbal, man is neither spirit nor body alone but an organic unity of the two. For the realization of the self, it is not necessary to discard the bodily needs. He should lead the worldly life in such a way so as to have his gaze fixed always on

the realization of the self. Iqbal, himself, explains the whole phenomenon in one of his lectures in 1937:

When I condemn self-negation I do not mean self denial in the moral sense; for self-denial in moral sense is a source of strength to the self. In condemning self-negation, I am condemning those forms of conduct that lead to the extinction of the “I” as a metaphysical force, for its extinction would mean its dissolution, its incapacity for personal immortality. The ideal of Islamic Mysticism according to my understanding is not the extinction of “I”. The ideal of Islamic Mysticism is a stage beyond the stage of extinction that is immortality which from my point of view is the highest stage of self-affirmation.--- Ethically the word “khudi” (self) means (as used by me) self-reliance, self respect, self-confidence, self-preservation: even self assertion.<sup>32</sup>

The crux that can be extracted from these sayings of Iqbal and Whitman is that the realization of the self through its assertion is the highest spiritual ideal of human life. And these poets are making their readers conscious of it.

Regardless of the geographical, cultural and chronological distances between the two poets, the notion of the self in inner cognizance of the truth brings them close to each other. As mystics, they versify unity through cosmic and universal forms of love celebrating every bit of creation and concerned with the elevation of the whole human race not of the few supermen like Nietzsche.<sup>33</sup> The fact is that both Whitman and Iqbal remain incomprehensible without the mystical stance. All their divergent modes can be brought into a unified whole by taking into consideration the mystical dimension of their work that has universal implications. This fact has been affirmed by Whitman himself in *Democratic Vistas*:

The culmination and fruit of literary artistic expression, and its final fields of pleasure for the human soul are in metaphysics, including the mysteries of the spiritual world, the soul itself, and question of the immortal continuation of our identity. In all ages the mind of man has brought up here and always will here at least, of whatever race or era, we stand on common grounds—those authors who work well in this field—though their reward instead of a handsome percentage, or royalty, may be but simply the laurel-crown of the victors in the Olympic games—will the dearest to humanity and their works however aesthetically defective, will be treasured for ever. The attitude of literature and poetry has always been religious—and always will be. The Indian Vedas, the Nackas of Zoroaster, the Talmud of the Jews, the Old Testament the Gospel of Christ, the Koran of Muhammad, the Edda of Suorro and so on towards our own day-----these, with such poems only in which (while singing well of persons and events, of the passions of man, and shows of the material universal), the religious

tone, the consciousness of mystery, the recognition of the future, of unknown, of Deity over and under, of the divine purpose, are never absent, but indirectly give tone to all—exhibit literature’s real heights and elevations, towering up like great mountains of the earth.<sup>34</sup>

Reflecting over this potentiality of Whitman’s work, Herbert Read in his article “Readers and Writers” comes up with an appraisal of Iqbal’s poetry. He thinks that Iqbal’s poem *The Secrets of the Self* is a continuation of Whitman’s “Song of Myself”. For Herbert Read, Iqbal’s *The Secrets of the Self* is a culmination of Whitman’s ideal:

This ideal of Whitman’s is a critical ideal of workability, of direct use. Applying it here and now, I can think of only one living poet who in any way sustains the test, and almost necessarily he is not of our race and creed. I mean Muhammad Iqbal, whose poem “*Asrar-i-Kbud*”: *The Secret of the Self*, has recently been translated from the original Persian by Dr. Reynold Nicholson and published by Messrs. Whilst our native poet masters were rhyming to their intimate coteries about cats and corncrakes and other homely or unusual variations of Keatsian theme, there was written and published in Lahore this poem----- that no nostrum, neither of the jingo nor of the Salvationist, has wrought this wonder, but a poem that crystallites in its beauty the essential phases of modern philosophy making a unity of faith out of a multiplicity of ideas, a universal inspiration out of the esoteric logic of the schools.<sup>35</sup>

So it is the mystical ideal of Whitman and Iqbal that brings them on one level. Whether it is Transcendentalism or Sufism of Rumi both espouse the view that the Divine permeates all objects and the purpose of human life is to get in tuned with it. To understand the deeper implications of their concept of the self, it is important to understand their concept of the Divine.

In their poetry, Whitman, Rumi and Iqbal, employ an image of God mostly in a mystical and transcendental way. The essential theme of their all encompassing and wide ranging poetry is their longing for union with the divine. For these mystics, human kind, nature and the whole universe are images or attributes of God- the Divine Unity. Such a cosmic and universal force has different terms in different creeds and schools, in Hinduism *Brahman*, in Sufism “The Ultimate Ego or Al-Haq” and in Transcendentalism “Santa spirita” or “Over Soul”. Whitman affirms it:

Santa spirita, breather, life,  
Beyond the light, lighter than light,  
Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,  
Beyond paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume.<sup>36</sup>

In Whitman's "A Persian Lesson", the greybeard Sufi gives his last lesson to the young priests and students. He teaches that God is everything:

Finally my children, to envelop each word, each part of the rest  
Allah is all, all, all--- is immanent in every life and object,  
May--- be at many and many-a-more removes-yet Allah,  
Allah, Allah is there---  
It is the central urge in every atom.<sup>37</sup>

Whitman's lines have an affinity with Rumi's lines in *Mathnawi* translated by Nicholson in *Selected Poems from Divan*:

The motion of every atom is towards its origin;  
A man comes to be the thing on which he is bent  
By the attraction of fondness and yearning, the soul and heart  
Assume the qualities of the Beloved, who is the Soul of the souls.<sup>38</sup>

And for Iqbal, God, the Ultimate Absolute Self, permeates in each and every object of the universe. Many verses of Iqbal affirm this fact. For instance he says in *Lala-i-Tur: Persian Couplet from Payam-e-Mashriq*:

Every flora and fauna bears His hallmark,  
Every flower-cup glows with his sparkling wine,  
His branded mark burns like a lamp in every heart,  
Thus he hasn't left a single soul in the dark.<sup>39</sup>

Iqbal's view of God differed from a traditional conception of the Divine. He believes that God has a creative dynamic life that is both permanent and changing as creation is the unfolding of the inner possibilities of God in a single yet continuing act. Greek Philosophy upheld a static concept of God as the one who had made the universe once for all and then retired into a merely passive supervision of the grand scheme of things. His concept of the Divine was inspired from the Quranic proposition: "God is the light of the Heavens and of the earth. His light is like a niche in which is a lamp-the lamp encased in a glass --- the glass as it were a star".<sup>40</sup> According to Iqbal, this verse strengthens the view of God as the Ultimate Ego. Iqbal considers God's creative energy as a dynamic driving force in the universe, revealing it every moment. God is present in full glory all the times. The concept of now and then, past and present and future lose meaning in Iqbal's understanding of God. So God is approachable all the times--- the means to approach though different.

Whitman follows transcendentalists' tenant in his rejection of the narrow orthodox Christian concept of God. Transcendentalism<sup>41</sup>

espouses a broader conception of seeing God in His creation and not only as the Creator and hence relocates god head in the self. Emerson who helped to form a major portion of the transcendentalist philosophy did not want to escape from the physical world into the spiritual world but believed in having a union of both. He wrote: “It is better--- to look upon external beauty as Michelangelo did, as the frail and weary weed, in which God dresses the soul”.<sup>42</sup> Whitman like transcendentalists emphasizes the divine potential within every individual. In a seemingly pantheistic<sup>43</sup> way, he sees God in the “faces of men and women”. He clearly chants his vision of God:

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each  
moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the  
glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the streets, and everyone is signed by  
God’s name  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that where so ever I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.<sup>44</sup>

He believes in the divine nature of the human self and the presence of the Divine not only in humankind but also in all creatures and nature they see and hear. His lines echo Emerson’s lines: “I become a transparent eye-ball, I am nothing, I see all, the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me, and I am part and particle of God”.<sup>45</sup>

In such a conception of the Divine he is also indebted to the Vedantic mysticism that aims at realization of individual soul’s identity with *Brahma* or Supreme soul which is alone transcendent and immanent. The Upanishad texts of ancient India describe a notion of God or Brahman that represents an all enfolding consciousness. The idea that God is every where permeates Whitman’s text. The above mentioned lines of “song of Myself” sounds similar to the idea of divinity expressed in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna: “The image was consciousness, the altar was consciousness, the door sill was consciousness, and the marble floor was consciousness-----all was consciousness”.<sup>46</sup> It is this consciousness that makes Whitman see the beauty in all things and the need to celebrate all things, from the blade of grass to the breaking waves.

Despite this seeming affinity with Vedantic mysticism and transcendentalism, Whitman in fact departs from both. He is a

mystic in his own right. There is a fundamental difference between Emerson and Whitman regarding their conception of the Divine:

Whitman experiences oneness within himself and ultimately a fraternal kinship with everything in nature and every other human being----- whereas Emerson gazes upward at stars and outward at the tranquil landscape----- Whitman's eye is drawn downward, his gaze so acute that he can see the brown ants beneath the leaves in the field.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly Whitman does not deny the reality of the physical world as Maya or deception of the senses nor does he relegate the reality of the body and the soul. For him the human self is not unreal. So where the yogis seek to abnegate the self to form a union with the Divine, Whitman asserts and celebrates. He is not a pantheist because creation for a pantheist is not merely the handiwork of the creator; it is really the substance of the creator itself. In Pantheism, the created is equal with the creator. On the other hand Whitman says:

I believe in you my soul-----  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that the kelson of creation is love.<sup>48</sup>

Whitman's use of the "brother of my own" implies the individual identity of the created rather than being the substance of the creator.

For Whitman seeks participation in divine nature of all creation considering physical world of nature and the human self as essentially good. Such a mystical perception aligns him with radical Sufism of Rumi and in turn of Iqbal, who postulate a revolutionary dynamic concept of the relation of the Divine (the Self) with the self eulogizing both material and spiritual. Hence Whitman is more prone to **Panentheism**<sup>49</sup> than **pantheism**:

O thou transcendent,  
Nameless, the fiber and the breath,  
Light of the light, shedding forth universe, thou centre of them,  
Thou mightier centre of true, the good, the loving,  
Thou moral spiritual fountain --- affection's sources-thou reservoir

Similar to Whitman, Rumi, as a panentheist, maintains that the divine can be both transcendent and immanent<sup>50</sup> at the same time. For Rumi, the material world itself is not illusion. This physical world manifests the eternal truths. In Rumi's view-point, God might be everything without being identical with everything. Rumi asserts the individuality of God (His otherness) in the face of mystical communion through image of a veil:



So he (man) does not see the Master at this moment without a veil. So it is with all desires and affection, all loves and fondness which people have for every variety of things—father, mother, heaven, earth, gardens, places, branches of knowledge, acts, things to eat and drink. The man of God realizes that all these desires are the desire of God, and all those things are veils.<sup>51</sup>

These veils and coverings become visible when man beholds the Divine. The very image or the metaphor of veil entails the separate identities of the human and the Divine.

The pantheistic strain is evident in Iqbal's early poetry and philosophy when he declared that the world in all its details "is the self-revelation of the Great I am".<sup>52</sup> The fact, that Iqbal was at one time drawn to pantheistic mysticism, is referred to by Dr. McTaggart in a personal letter to the poet: "Have you not changed your position much? Surely, in the day when we used to talk philosophy together, you were much more of a pantheist".<sup>53</sup> Later on Iqbal's views about the immanence of God underwent a profound change.

Iqbal emphasized the distinction of the finite ego (the self) from that of Infinite Ego (The Self) rather than the dissolution of the former into the latter. He challenged the pantheistic philosophy of wahadat-ul-wajood<sup>54</sup> (Unity of Being) that made its way into Sufism through Neo-Platonism.<sup>55</sup> The non-existence of the material world established by this philosophy led to the inevitable renunciation of the world. Iqbal vehemently rejected Plato and his influence on Sufi thought. For him "I" or the self or identity is the greatest truth. It does not belong to the realm of appearance and illusion. It is evident in Iqbal's verses in *Gabriel's Wings* cited by Pro. Muhammad Munawar in *Dimensions of Iqbal*:

If you say that the "I" is mere illusion-an  
appearance among appearances. Then tell me who  
is the subject of this illusion?  
Look within and discover  
The world is visible  
Not even the intellect of an angel can  
comprehend it;  
The "I" is visible and needs no proof.  
Think a while and see thine own secret.  
The "I" is the truth and no illusion.<sup>56</sup>

Since all life is individual for Iqbal so he believes in the dualism of The Self and the self. He affirms this fact in *Reconstruction*: "I have conceived the Ultimate Reality as an Ego (self) and I must add now that from the Ultimate Ego only egos (selves) proceed....."<sup>57</sup>

According to Iqbal, gnosis of God became dependent on realization of the self and maintenance of the self. In a way, The Self and the self become reciprocal to each other. In *Persian Psalms* he declares:

Far, Far from every other go,  
With the one Friend upon the road;  
Seek thou of God thy self to know,  
And seek in self hood for thy God,  
In the selfhood is hidden God head,  
Search O Ye careless.....<sup>58</sup>

The relation of the finite to the infinite is the one in which, as Iqbal says in *Reconstruction*, “true infinite does not exclude the finite but rather embraces the finite without effacing its finitude.”<sup>59</sup>

The ideal of the self-hood is hence not self-evasion and a move away from individuality but an assertion of it in the face of the Ultimate reality. In words of Robert Whittmore:

We can say Iqbal’s conception is not pantheism but panentheism, understanding by this latter “the doctrine that the world is not identical with God (pantheism), not separate from God (Deism) but in God (theism), who in His divine nature transcends it.”<sup>60</sup>

In his criticism of Pantheism, Iqbal points out that the self is real or existent and its end cannot be self-absorption in the Absolute, as the pantheists maintain. Dr. Ishrat Hassan Anver’s evaluation of Iqbal’s concept of the relation of the Divine or Ultimate Ego or The Self to the self expresses precisely Iqbal’ thought:

We must hold that the Ultimate Ego holds the finite egos in His own being without obliterating their existence. The Ultimate Reality must be regarded as of the nature of the self. But further this self does not lie apart from the universe, as if separated by a space lying between Him and ourselves. The Ultimate Self, therefore, is not transcendent, as is conceived by the anthropomorphic theists. He is immanent, for He comprehends and encompasses the whole universe. But he is not immanent in the sense of the pantheists of the traditional type because He is a personal and not an impersonal reality..... He is in short immanent and transcendent both, and yet neither the one nor the other. Both immanence and transcendence are true of the ultimate Reality. But Iqbal emphasizes the transcendence of the Ultimate Ego rather than his immanence.<sup>61</sup>

In many ways, Iqbal does not agree with pantheistic idea of union with God for its own sake. He holds that one should not annihilate one’s self into the ocean of unity. One should seek eternal life by asserting the self. He even goes to the extent of saying that one should absorb God Himself within oneself.

Iqbal's conception of the individuality of the self in relation to the Divine and his idea of absorbing God in himself and supplementing the on going creative process is also found in Rumi. Rumi believed in personal immortality and individuality and says that man does not get absorbed in God like a drop of water in the ocean. Instead he retains his individuality like the lamp light in day-light. The idea of fortification of the self and assertion of "I" is found beautifully in the verses of Rumi translated and cited by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf in *Iqbal as a Thinker*.

If thou art a grain, little birds will pick thee up;  
If thou art a bud, children will pluck thee off,  
Conceal the grain and be wholly net; keep thy bud hidden and be the  
grass that grows on house tops.<sup>62</sup>

And Iqbal following Rumi espouses in the following verses of *Zabur-e-Ajam* cited by Abu Sayeed Nurudin in *Iqbal's Attitude towards Sufism and His Unique Philosophy of Khudi- Self*:

O' traveler, live eternal die eternal,  
The world which comes affront ---besiege it.  
To be lost in His Ocean is not our end,  
If thou behold Him, that is not annihilation  
It is real perfection for the self to maintain its own.<sup>63</sup>

The mystical renderings of Whitman, Rumi and Iqbal coordinate on the point that it is through the realization of the Divine and a supreme experience of self-realization that the human being achieves immortality. All the three aspire for immortality. Whitman achieves this immortality and the culmination of the self by absorbing himself in God and yet retaining his identity. "This is not just 'negative capability', in Keats' famous phrase: a loss of the self in the being of another, an act of total immersion and projection. It is as Whitman presents it, a discovery of the self in the other....."<sup>64</sup> Moreover this union with the Divine does not result in the annihilation of the self because this unification as Annmarie Schimmel describes it is "nothing but unification in the consciousness and not in being. This consciousness is not presential but acquired".<sup>65</sup> The union comes in the realm of consciousness and spiritual perspective. Rumi and Iqbal find this culmination by absorbing God in their own self and so retaining their identity. The idea of absorbing God in the self means the cultivation of the attributes of God in the self.

For both Whitman and Iqbal, the main reason for existence is to journey from the outward, the world without, to the inward, the world within, to return to the origin; to the transcendental centre.

What can be inferred from their perception of the Divine is that the relation of the Divine to the material world is both “transcendent” and “immanent”. They are prone to emphasize the transcendent aspect but in such a way that God does not become estranged and distant from His creation.

After the clear perception of the Divine, the next step for a mystic is to get in tuned with it ---to bring his self in communion with the Divine. On this pathway to divinity, one finds Whitman and Iqbal holding company at many points. Both reject “reason” for attaining the self hood. Leaving aside Rationalism and Empiricism, they turn to the inner depth of consciousness---- intuition.<sup>66</sup> It is in intuition that the self is realized and revealed in all its essence and nature. Just by trusting empirical knowledge, one cannot bring the self in connection with The Self. Such knowledge cannot explain this relation. This can only be discovered through intuition. Intuition of the self leads to the intuition of the Divine without obliterating our own self hood. In the act of intuition, the known is always apart from and other than the knower.

Following Emersonian lines, Whitman believes in intuition as a higher mode of cognition than reason, logic and science. Chales Mayo Eliss in his “Essay on Transcendentalism (1842) wrote:

The belief that we term transcendentalism maintains that man has ideas that come not through the five senses or power of reasoning but are either the result of direct revelation from God, his immediate inspiration or his immanent presence in the spiritual world.<sup>67</sup>

Hence the intuitive faculty instead of the rational one becomes the means for a conscious union of the individual self with the Divine Self. Indicating their being of the same mind, like Whitman, Rumi insisted that intuitive experience, not rational thought, brought him closest to God. In this regard, it’s interesting to view Rumi’s following poem:

Reason is the chain of travelers and lovers, my son;  
break the chain and the way is plain and clear ahead, my son.  
Reason is a chain, heart a cheat, body a delusion, soul a veil;  
the way is hidden from all these heaviness, my son....<sup>68</sup>

As pointed by Arasteh in *Rumi the Persian: Rebirth in Creativity and Love*, Rumi’s way of life emphasized liberation from instinctive acts, the utilization of reason for practical purposes, and its usefulness for transcendental man to follow his real self. Reason can only help him reach the door of wakefulness. Rumi reiterates that this stage is not

attained from knowledge gained in books or from listening to others.<sup>69</sup>

In Iqbal's mystical philosophy, intuition is that veritable reality that reveals the true nature of the self. He opens up the door of Islamic Mysticism for a direct revelation of God, the mysteries of the self, its immortality and freedom ---all this is possible only through an extraordinary experience which Iqbal calls intuition. The theoretical consciousness attempts to grasp the Ultimate reality but is unable to do so as was concluded by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Iqbal makes intuition as a more understandable idea by starting with the intuition of the self (bringing it closer to our experience) and this intuition leads to the intuition of the Ultimate Reality. Heart is the centre of this intuitive faculty. Iqbal says in his lectures in *Reconstruction*:

The heart is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of reality other than those open to sense perception. It is according to the Quran, something which "sees" and its reports if properly interpreted are never false. We must not, however, regard it as a mysterious special faculty; it is rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part. Yet the vistas of experience thus opened to us are as real and concrete as any other experience. To describe it as psychic, mystical or supernatural does not detract from its value as experience.<sup>70</sup>

Iqbal considers intuition superior to intellect as is evident in the following verse of Iqbal cited by Pro. Muhammad Iqbal in *The Poet's Vision and Magic of Words*:

Intellectual knowledge relishes research,  
Love and intuitive knowledge relishes creativity.<sup>71</sup>

He even dissociates himself from that philosophy that is the outcome of a distorted and incomplete vision or intuition of Reality. He once declared:

I am afraid; I have no philosophy to teach. As a matter of fact, I do not hate systems of philosophy nor do I trust principles and conclusions of philosophy. No man has condemned the human intellect more than I that is as applied to the ultimate realities of religion. No doubt I talk of things in which philosopher are also interested. But with me these things are matters of living experience and not of philosophic reasoning.<sup>72</sup>

So both Whitman and Iqbal believe in direct intuitive apprehension of the Reality ---- a mystical approach rather than the reasoning of the philosophers and logicians.

Another stepping stone for the realization of the self is love. Love is the light that guides and enlightens the path of the voyagers on the road of spirituality. To them, whatever they find and to whatever type of religion they attach themselves, they speak one language---- the language of love. It is the passion and force that harmonizes all discordant elements, resolves all contradictions and brings unity in diversity. Whitman's and Iqbal's mysticism has its primary goal to know love in all its forms. To them, it is the basis of all relations. Every human relationship is only a symbol of man's relationship to God-- the centre of Love. Again Rumi resonates in American tradition because his vision like Whitman's and Iqbal's reminds us of the radical love, overflowing openness and unquenchable aspiration that fervently fill in the pages of Whitman's and Iqbal's poetry. Rumi describes the feeling of oneness brought by love by "closing the language door and opening the love window."<sup>73</sup> In another verse, translated by Barks in *The Essential Rumi*, Rumi advocates:

Stop the words now  
Open the window in the centre of your chest  
And let the spirit fly in and out.....  
.....The Fount of Immortality  
In love is found.<sup>74</sup>

Immortality of the self can be attained by the spark of love in Rumi's metaphysics.

Whitman's poetry is also an exuberant celebration of love — a cosmic force in all its forms and manifestations. The love of man for man, as well as man for woman forms a striking element in his poetry but indeed with Whitman love reaches out all boundaries beyond humanity into the cosmos. The tie that is to bind men together in spontaneous solidarity is love. Nowhere one pays tribute to love in an all embracing manner as does Whitman in *The Mystic Trumpeter*:

Blow again trumpeter and for thy theme,  
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the setting,  
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,  
The heart of man and woman all for love,  
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all diffusing love, —  
I see the vast alembic ever working; I see and know the flames that heat  
the world,  
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—love, that mocks time,

Love that is day and night, that is sun and moon and stars,  
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume,  
No other words but words of love, no other thought but love.<sup>75</sup>

For Whitman, love makes man's accession into wholeness possible. In the kingdom of love:

All is one, all is love, even hate is love; even flesh is spirit — Whitman is drunk with the new wine of love—with the strange wine of infinitude— it is man's maximum state of consciousness, his highest state of spiritual being— it is reached through embracing love: And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks, to his own funeral drest in his own shroud.<sup>76</sup>

As a mystic, Whitman ascertains that it is through the realization of the divine love and seeking of supreme experience of self-realization that the human being dwells within the Supreme Being. God as the source of love is for the mystic a perfect image that can justify the concept of oneness and unity on universal scale. His verse speaks of universal harmony and love, optimism and joy and celebrates the outwardly mundane details of life through words electrified with love. The element of sexual love is unmistakably present and celebrated often:

I am he that aches with amorous love,  
Does the earth gravitate? Does not all matter, aching, attract all matter?  
So the body of me to all I meet or know.<sup>77</sup>

But it is an emotion directed beyond the singular human figure. This amorous love leads to an awareness of his unity with God, with others, and with nature. This unity is not attained by prayer or meditation (as is the case with Iqbal) but by sexual union which like poetry is a creative act. Whitman realizes the self through erotic acceptance of the body. This leads to the love of God and view of all humanity as one whole. The central structure in God's creation is love. Hence this emotion is interwoven with a divine element. It embraces an intimate and fecundating force incarnated with the human and yet it is beyond human. In words of Havelock Ellis in his essay "Whitman":

He has but to grasp love and comradeship -----He discovers at last that love and comradeship ----adhesiveness is, after all, the main thing, "base and final, too, for all metaphysics" deeper than religion, underneath Socrates and underneath Christ. With a sound insight he finds the roots of the most universal love in the intimate and physical love of comrades and lovers.<sup>78</sup>

This celebration of love through the use of erotic imagery is found frequently in Whitman's verse:

I mind how once we lay, such a transparent summer morning,  
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turned over  
upon me, ----  
Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass  
all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women  
my sisters and lovers,  
And that kelson of the creation is love.<sup>79</sup>

For a mystic like Whitman, God is incarnated in humanity and his love for humankind can be taken as a metaphor to epitomize the love for the Divine Beloved. Whitman is not the first to merge the mystical and the erotic; in his *Divan: Shams Tabraiz*, Rumi manages to mix mysticism and the deeply spiritual with an eroticism that approaches the sublime. In his book *Walt Whitman*, Fredrich Schyberge captures the relation of the symbolic lover and beloved of Whiman and Rumi; Rumi's symbolic lover merges with the "Beloved" by embracing his spiritual friend Shams Tabriz and Whitman's symbolic lover merges with the "Beloved" in his relationship with his "Great Camerado:

At the end of the road in "Song of Myself", as the conclusion of all the wandering, the transformations and visions, there stand the Great Comerado Whom Whitman mentioned in section 45. We cannot fail to recall the Persian Rumi who also described his reunion with a friend as symbolic of his union with God. By coincidence in world literature, the result of similarity in disposition and way of thinking is extremely noteworthy in the connecting links of literary history...<sup>80</sup>

So this realization of the unity of The Divine in terms of love serves as a milestone for the self in its journey towards The Self.

For Iqbal, journey to the self hood begins with love. Like Whitman, the word 'love' is used by Iqbal in a much broader and wider perspective. Love is an active force that is very seminal for strengthening the self. Iqbal defines it in his letter to Nicholson as "the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideals and it endeavors to realize them" (Nicholson xxv). Iqbal's philosophy is essentially a philosophy of love. Like Rumi, he reaches a dynamic idea of love leading to the attainment of human ideals as well as God's purpose in creation. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel writes in this connection:



To the problem of love a large part of Iqbal's poetical work is dedicated. Love is, in his terminology, the force, which brings man nigh to God and consolidates the ego (the self), and which sometimes even corresponds to intuition. It is the fiery elements which enables the growth of the personality, and without which real life cannot exist.<sup>81</sup>

From love, the self acquires vitality and radiance:

The luminous point whose name is the self,  
Is the life-spark beneath our dust.  
By love it is made more lasting,  
More living, more burning, more glowing  
From love proceeds the radiance of its being,  
And the development of its unknown possibilities  
Its nature gathers fire from love,  
Love instructs it to illuminate the world  
The hardest rocks are shivered by love's glance;  
Love of God at last becomes wholly God.<sup>82</sup>

Love is the fundamental urge of being. It is the pulsation and foundation of life. In "The Mosque of Cardoba" Iqbal pays tribute to love in the highest possible term:

Love is Gabriel's breath; love is Muhammad's strong heart,  
Love is the envoy of God; love is the utterance of God.  
Even our mortal clay, touched by love's ecstasy, glow;  
Love is new-pressed wine; love is the goblet of kings.  
Love is the priest of shrine; love is the commander of hosts,  
Love is the son of the road, counting a thousand homes  
Love is the plectrum that draws music from life's taut strings—  
Love is the Warmth of life; love is the radiance of life.<sup>83</sup>

Iqbal's perception of love differs from its conventional view in Persian and Urdu poetry in the sense that Iqbal's love does not have anything common with gross sensuality but "it is a creative passion, high emotion and divine spark, enthusiasm for an ideal, ardent self-dedication or the force that drives the individual to realize himself though wrestling with the world and with God" (Kiernan 106). Iqbal perceives it on a metaphysical level and categorizes three stages of love as i- Love of God ii- Love of Prophet ii- And love of perfect men.

Love of God is the highest attainable ideal for a mystic:

The hardest rocks are shivered by love's glance;  
Love of God at last becomes wholly God,  
Imbue thine heart with the tincture of Allah  
Give honor and glory to love; <sup>84</sup>

Love of the Holy Prophet is the jewel of a Muslim's heart:

In the Muslim's heart is the home of Muhammad,  
All our glory is from the name of Muhammad.<sup>85</sup>

A perfect man is an embodiment of the love of God and the love of Prophet, his love in turn is blessed and favoring:

Transmute thy hand full of earth into gold,  
Kiss the threshold of Perfect Man.  
His lovers are fairer than the fair  
Sweeter and comelier and more beloved.<sup>86</sup>

For Iqbal, without love, intellect and reason are meaningless and untamed. Love acts as guide to reason and intellect. In his poetry he denounces the purely intellectual and rational outlook towards life because if it is allowed to go unfettered, it would shatter the flow and continuity of forces that constitute life:

Love is the first guide for the reason, soul and vision,  
If there is no love, the religion and code of life all  
are the temples of ideas.<sup>87</sup>

Hence, love plays an important role in the development of the self; it is the power by which the self is fortified. It is this all embracing, broadening and ennobling notion of love that prevents the mysticism of Whitman and Iqbal from being narrow, orthodox, conventional and dogmatic. It is love that makes their appeal universal transcending the limits of cast, creed religion and even space and time.

The expanding and encompassing notion of love in Whitman's and Iqbal's poetry make them move from particular to general and general to particular respectively. And such a conception of love has led both to the vision of a "spiritual democracy" where the self becomes all selves and all selves become the self. Thus they become true spiritual democrats though there is an underlying difference in their manner and method of approaching the idea of spiritual democracy --- Whitman uses the inductive method ---moving from the individual (the microcosm) to the society (macrocosm) and in case of Iqbal it is deductive method moving from the community (the macrocosm) to the individual self (microcosm). They are eloquent advocates of spiritual democracy. This makes another point of connection between Iqbal and Whitman. Both emphasize individual virtue that can give rise to civic virtue. They aim at improving the masses by improving the individual and vice versa.

On the surface level, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is highly subjective but paradoxically it is one of the most objective books in all literature----- as vacillating between the "Me Myself" and the

“Kosmos”. The self of the poet is of universal import. The poet himself becomes a type for the whole human race; mystically his identity is fused with that of his thousands of fellows:

And what I assume, you shall assume;  
for every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you.<sup>88</sup>

He is a microcosm of humanity ---the fleshy poet of the sensual Body and the mystical poet of the soul, the poet of everyman and the poet of the people and the poet of American Democracy. The opening line of *Leaves of Grass* speaks of Whitman’s enterprise:

One’s-Self I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.<sup>89</sup>

Such utterances remarkably highlight Whitman’s awareness of the boldness and originality of his enterprise. He raises the question essential not only for the Americans of his time but also for all people, in all nations: how can one be a self, a separate person and at the same time be a citizen, a member of a group that also has an identity. This dual sense of the self: I celebrate myself.<sup>90</sup> And of the social whole indicated by En-masse (be it the United States or the whole humanity which he also loved) is central to the entirety of *Leaves of Grass*.

Throughout the “Song of Myself” Whitman simultaneously integrates the concept of himself as an individual, completely unique in the universe with a sense of himself as a composite of all life, of a kind of divine watcher observing the central oneness of everyone within the context of their own myriad individualities. “I am” is one of the most revealing phenomenon of his poetry, considers Ezra Greens pan, ---Whitman’s poetic “I” gave a new meaning to the concept of self determination. It effectively answered the question “who am I” with the response: I am anyone, any where, any time (Whether it be 1855, 1955, or 2055).<sup>91</sup>

In Whitman’s world, the individual is a microcosm of a macrocosm (society). Just as society can not reject a part of society and remain whole, the individual cannot reject a part of himself and remain whole. He explicates this through many analogies but one of the most powerful images is that of the grass ---that grows in single blades and clusters. “The grass thus becomes a graphic representation of Whitman’s central concept of democracy--- individuality in balance with the mass, distinguished singleness in harmony with massive grouping”.<sup>92</sup>

His idea of the self and the individual is also linked up with his idea of democracy. He is both a singer of the self as well as a trumpeter of democracy because he believes that the individual can attain self-hood only in a free society. Whitman has used the term “Personalism” in *Democratic Vistas* to indicate the fusion of the individual with the community in an ideal democracy. This idea is in accord with Whitman’s notion of the self. His notion of democracy deconstructs the subjectivity in Whitman’s poetry. Henry Alonzo Myers in his essay “spiritual Democracy, 1855-1856” enunciates the democratic ideas of Whitman by tracing and justifying their spiritual roots:

Out of American democracy of 1855, Walt Whitman constructed an inner complement to the outer world, a spiritual democracy governed by two principles, one the unlimited individual and, the other the equality of individuals ----- In society, obvious differences exist between the laborer and the President, between the Magdalen and the Madonna, these are however the surface turmoils and coverings; underneath them lies the community of equal and infinite souls, equal and infinite in that each soul is commensurate with the world: you and your soul all things regardless of estimation...<sup>93</sup>

For Whitman, democracy is the spiritual equalizing factor of the soul. In his gospel of democracy, the most appealing ideal is that of equality that leads to the fraternal relationship between the individuals and then the individual and the Over-Soul. His concept of democracy is utterly different from its common meaning. His democratic community is a community of men related by organic satisfaction in work, love and play. In the poem “Starting from Paumanok, he again upholds democracy in the highest sense:

Democracy! Near at hand to you a throat is now  
Inflating itself and joyfully singing  
Ma-femme! For the brood beyond us and of us  
For those who belong here and those to come.<sup>94</sup>

For him, the love of comrades paves the path for the spiritual democracy. In this poem “For You O’ Democracy”, he affirms:

Come, I will make continent indissoluble,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
With love of comrades,  
With the life long love of comrades----  
For you these from me, O Democracy----<sup>95</sup>

Whitman’s concept of democracy assures complete harmony between the individual and the society. But over and above, he is a spiritual democrat who sees in true democracy the seeds of universal

peace, tolerance and brotherhood. Karl Shapiro's remarks are significant in this regard:

A great poet is not merely the poet of his nation but a poet of all peoples. Whitman, who had little enough reward for his book, and has little enough today, looked beyond literature and beyond greatness of art. His true personality went out beyond America, beyond religions, and even beyond mankind.<sup>96</sup>

He was an uncompromising apostle of equality and fraternity. Although he always kept his feet firmly planted on the ground, his ideal of democracy was not absolutely earth-bound; he believed in the divine average and yet he wanted to work for the common salvation of his fellow human beings.

Iqbal's poetry also resonates with the democratic ideals of a higher order. A study of Iqbal's poetry and prose reveals his cherished ideal of a balance and harmony between the individual and the community. He aspires for a society in which the individual would be able to develop his personality to its fullest. Iqbal's perfect Man<sup>97</sup> is essentially a unique individual who can constitute unique society. Malik Iqbal Hafeez writes in this regard: "the individual personality must take a social path and devote itself to serve society. This does not at all mean the loss of its individuality on the contrary; the social path enables personality to realize itself".<sup>98</sup>

A deep reading of Iqbal's poetry reveals that the idea of self hood or ego was first conceived by Iqbal as a sociological notion. Afterwards he sought to provide an individualistic ground to it. His notion of the self has social connotation. But social does not mean that it is not applicable to the individual. But this very self hood of an individual has social implications. Unless the personality of individual is strengthened, a strong and stable society in its real sense cannot come into existence. The affirmation of one's self is also an affirmation of others. When the self is manifested; it automatically posits the presence of self other than one's own. The individual reflects in himself the diversity of society, and the diversity of society embodies its unity in the individual:

For man, belonging to society is a blessing.  
Society contributes to the perfection of his qualities.  
When man identifies with society  
He is like a drop becoming the ocean within the ocean  
The separate individual knows no goals or ideas  
And cannot find uses for his abilities.<sup>99</sup>

In *The Secrets of the Self*, he tries to awaken the sense of self-hood that is the sense of human identity in the individual as well as society. For his notion of the strengthening of an individual's identity should not be interpreted in the sense of imprisoning one's being with the walls constructed around the self and living in isolation, cut off from other human beings. Neither has it meant that one should lose identity among other selves in society. Rather an individual should live in close relationship with the society.

Similar to Whitman's notion of spiritual democracy, Iqbal states democracy "as a spiritual principle based on the assumption that every human being is a centre of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character" (Sherwani 124). Iqbal, by his spiritual democracy, means a democracy where laws of God Almighty are observed and enforced. Laws of God in their meaning and spirit are, nearest to man's nature. In his article "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam" he gives his definition of democracy:

Humanity needs three things today --- a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis ----<sup>100</sup>

As for the terminological difference between the concept of the self of Whitman and Iqbal, it can be deduced that for Whitman, the self is composite of the body and the soul. The soul has its manifestation in body and hence body is also sacred. The body becomes sacred by the infusion of the spirit of God. Whitman exuberantly proclaims:

Divine am I inside and out, and  
I make holy whatever I touch or touched from,  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,  
This head more than churches, bibles and all the creeds.<sup>101</sup>

For Whitman, the soul is immanent in and united with the body. Dualistic interpretation tends towards a division in which the soul is elevated as the spiritual, real essence of the individual and the body is denigrated as merely material. Whitman rejects this division and considers body and soul as equal:

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul,  
Lack one lacks both and the unseen is proved by the seen.<sup>102</sup>

He celebrates the body:

O my Body! ..... I believe the likes of

you stand or fall with the likes of the soul,  
(And that they are the souls).....  
And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?<sup>103</sup>

Hence for Whitman, the mystical truth is directly discerned through the union of the body and the soul -----this union is a pathway to divinity.

The self for Iqbal is a metaphysical reality. In Iqbal's own words: "It is an emotional unity of a bright thing of the conscience by which all the human ideas and inspirations are enlightened. This is an eternal reality which is a binding force for the scattered and unlimited mental states"<sup>104</sup> Iqbal considers the self as having two sides----"the efficient and the appreciative"<sup>105</sup> though it retains its "unity as totality".<sup>106</sup> The efficient side of the self deals with practical side of daily life and is related to ordinary space and time. The appreciative side of the self is the hidden "I" which appears only by deeper analysis of conscious experience. Iqbal explains it in his lectures as: "It is only in the moments of profound meditation, when the efficient self is in abeyance, that we sink into our deeper self and reach the inner center of experience".<sup>107</sup> The appreciative self, so to speak, is the centre of mystical enterprise.

Iqbal's use of the word "self" is different from its use in Persian poetry as "vanity or pomp". He always uses it in metaphysical term: "Metaphysically the word self (khudi) is used in the sense of an indescribable feeling of "I" which forms the basis of the uniqueness of each individual".<sup>108</sup> Its only aim is self realization and self assertion.

Whether the self is composite of body and soul (in case of Whitman) or a metaphysical reality consisting of efficient and appreciative self (in case of Iqbal), both Whitman and Iqbal present the self as moving back and forth between the conscious and unconscious, between the spiritual and the physical, between itself and its immortal source—"the Over-Soul" or "the Ultimate Ego". Therefore the self celebrated in the poems of Whitman and Iqbal is a universal self. This metaphysical and the universal self provides the key to the most fundamental affinities between these poets.

## NOTES AND REFERENCE

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<sup>1</sup> Reads in Ishrat 141-42

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence 173

<sup>3</sup> SOM, Section 50, Line16. (All the textual references are from—Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1986)

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal 78

<sup>5</sup> Whitman in Bradley 714, 716

<sup>6</sup> Allen *Walt Whitman and the World* 396

<sup>7</sup> Rumi—a mystic poet of the 12<sup>th</sup> century produced a prolific range of inspiring and devotional poetry which encapsulates the Sufi experience of union with the divine. Rumi's poetry is a reflection of his inner consciousness ----- Love is frequent subject of Rumi's poems, descriptions of seemingly romantic love are an illusion to the all encompassing pure, divine love.

<sup>8</sup> Rumi in Barkses 279

<sup>9</sup> *LG: Song of the Open Road*, Line 1, p. 149.

<sup>10</sup> Iqbal 125

<sup>11</sup> *LG: SOM*, Section: 21, Line: 420

<sup>12</sup> Iqbal 135

<sup>13</sup> Whitman in Bradley 750

<sup>14</sup> J. Miller *Walt Whitman* 17

<sup>15</sup> Emerson's term for The ultimate Reality --- God

<sup>16</sup> *LG: Starting from Paumanok*: Section 12, 13, Lines.174-75,177-80

<sup>17</sup> *LG: SOM*: Section 48, Lines.1269-71

<sup>18</sup> Caddy 214-215

<sup>19</sup> *LG: Starting. From Paumanok*: Section, 6 Lines 70-74

<sup>20</sup> *LG:SOM*: section 24, Line.522-23

<sup>21</sup> *LG: SOM*, Section 7, Lines 133-34

<sup>22</sup> Lewis 52

<sup>23</sup> *LG: Starting From Paumanok*, Section 12, Lines 165-175

<sup>24</sup> Hall 7

<sup>25</sup> Hourihan 150

<sup>26</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, Lines 1309-1316. (All citations are from the translation of *Asrar-e-Khudi* as *The Secret of the Self* by Dr. Nicholson published by Sh. M. Ashraf. Lahore, 1920)

<sup>27</sup> Whittemore in Ishrat 439

<sup>28</sup> Iqbal 111

<sup>29</sup> Dar 398

<sup>30</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, II. 187-188

<sup>31</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 14-15

<sup>32</sup> Iqbal in Razzaqi 212.

<sup>33</sup> German thinker and writer, Nietzsche, was a multi-faceted genius. His conception of Superman presented in his theory of "will to power" influenced some of modern and postmodern philosophers. Dissatisfied with the Christian way of life, Nietzsche tried the secular philosophy of the day----- democracy, humanitarianism, socialism---but found them wanting. But in his conception of Superman, the idea of individual freedom is so overwhelming that the individual's relation to society and the universe becomes extremely vague. With Nietzsche, power is the only criterion and his conception of struggle for existence is cruel, pitiless and tyrannical.

<sup>34</sup> Whitman in Ishrat 241.

<sup>35</sup> Read in Ishrat 241-242.

<sup>36</sup> *LG: Whispers of Heavenly Death*, Lines 35-40, p. 445.

<sup>37</sup> *LG, A Persian Lesson*, Lines 7-10, p. 553

<sup>38</sup> Rumi in Nicholson 152.

<sup>39</sup> Iqbal in Umar 36.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Quran, Ch. 24 Verse 35.



<sup>41</sup> American Transcendentalism was an important movement in philosophy and literature that flourished during the early to middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1836-1860). It began as a reform movement, in the Unitarian church, extending the views of an indwelling God and the significance of intuitive thought. Transcendentalism affirms Kant's principle of intuitive knowledge derived from the senses. But transcendentalists extended the concept of transcendental knowledge, in a way whose validity Kant had specifically denied, to include an intuitive cognizance of moral and other truths that transcend the limits of human sense experience. It is based on the concept of transcendence, the rising to a state beyond sense experiences.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.Journal of Philosophy 14html.com>.

<sup>43</sup> Broadly defined pantheism is the view that "God is everything and everything is God". According to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, "Several varieties of pantheism are acknowledged. Some strictly equate God and the universe. Of these, absolute pantheism defines God as the basic reality and the universe merely as the way he appears. Pantheism signifies the belief that every existing entity is, only one Being; and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it or identical with it."

<sup>44</sup> LG: SOM: Section 48 Lines: 1284-1288.

<sup>45</sup> Emerson in Joel 10

<sup>46</sup> Cowley 243.

<sup>47</sup> Joel & Saundra 173.

<sup>48</sup> LG: SOM: Section 5, Lines: 92-96.

<sup>49</sup> Panentheism' says that the universe is included in God but that God is more than the universe. It is used to describe the view that the world is a finite creation within the infinite being of God. Panentheism unlike pantheism, which holds to the divine immanence, maintains that the divine can be both transcendent and immanent at the same time. In other words, God might be in everything without being identical with everything. In addition, the panentheist focuses his/her worship on God in the mind and soul. Panentheism is the doctrine that God includes the world as a part, though not the whole, of "his" being

<sup>50</sup> 'Transcendence' and 'Immanence': these terms describe the manner in which God is related to the world. 'Transcendence' indicates that God cannot be identified with the world but is infinitely above and beyond it. There are different forms of transcendence: Firstly, God is ontologically transcendent, meaning that God is a self-contained reality that is not dependent on anything else for its existence. Ontological transcendence also describes the nature of God's, being unlike that of his creation, eternal and infinite. Secondly, God is epistemologically transcendent; meaning that God's essential nature remains incomprehensible to humankind, for a human's mind is simply incapable of grasping the Divine. Epistemological transcendence is expressed theologically in terms of holiness, mystery and incomprehensibility. 'Immanence' denotes God's indwelling and omnipresence in the world. Since the world is utterly dependent upon God, his constant presence is a necessity for its continued existence. Theologically, equilibrium must be established between two poles of transcendence and immanence, for if immanence is too heavily emphasized there is a danger of pantheism, and if transcendence is emphasized God is in danger of becoming too distant from His creation.

<sup>51</sup> Arberry *Discourses of Rumi* 46.

<sup>52</sup> Chaghatai 224.

<sup>53</sup> Wahid 80-81.

<sup>54</sup> *Wahdat al-wujud* (Oneness of Being or Unity of Existence): a technical term of Sufism, which, it is said, has historical connections with the school of Ibn al-Arabi, the great Andalusian Sufi theosophist. The expression is built from two words: *wahda* and *wujud*. Islamic theory and practice is grounded in the *shahada* or the giving witness that “there is no god but God” (in Arberry 1995, 54) it is the statement through which God’s Unity is declared. The basic sense of *tawhid* or declaration of God’s Unity is that everything in creation derives from God, who is One Reality.

<sup>55</sup> Neo Platonism came into existence as an independent school of thought in the third century A.D by way of interpretations and explanations of the thoughts and ideas of the old Greek Philosopher Plato. This philosophy holds: Existence is actually one and that existence is the main source of all other existence ---it maintains that all things of the world have emanated from “One Being” as a manifestation of “One Being” --- God Himself is the Universe.

<sup>56</sup> Munawar 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> Iqbal 67.

<sup>58</sup> Ashraf 104.

<sup>59</sup> Iqbal 27-28.

<sup>60</sup> Ishrat 446

<sup>61</sup> Enver 72-73.

<sup>62</sup> Ashraf 183.

<sup>63</sup> Nurudin 36.

<sup>64</sup> Gray 20.

<sup>65</sup> Schimmel 92.

<sup>66</sup> Intuition is held to be a faculty of knowledge which is unique and is of different kind from thought and perception that made some to doubt its validity. But the fact is that it is the faculty of knowledge like other faculties. It is qualitatively of the same nature as our ordinary faculties. It is as objection to sense perceptions.

<sup>67</sup> [http:// www.transcendentalism.com](http://www.transcendentalism.com).

<sup>68</sup> Arberry *Mystical Poems of Rumi* 115.

<sup>69</sup> Arasteh 117.

<sup>70</sup> Iqbal 15.

<sup>71</sup> Iqbal 109.

<sup>72</sup> Chaghatai 173.

<sup>73</sup> Rumi in Barks *The Soul of Rumi* 127.

<sup>74</sup> Barks 35.

<sup>75</sup> LG, *The Mystic Trumpeter*, Section 5, Lines 30-43, p. 469-470.

<sup>76</sup> Bradley 845.

<sup>77</sup> LG, *I am He that Aches with Love*, p. 109.

<sup>78</sup> Bradley 809.

<sup>79</sup> LG. SOM: Section 5, Lines 88-95.

<sup>80</sup> Schyberg 93.

<sup>81</sup> Schimmel 102.

<sup>82</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 28.

<sup>83</sup> Kiernan 38.

<sup>84</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 29.

<sup>85</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 29-30.

<sup>87</sup> Iqbal in Nuruddin 45.

<sup>88</sup> LG: SOM: Section 1, Line, 2-3, p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> *LG, One's Self I Sing*, Lines 1-2, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> *LG: SOM: Section 1*, Line 1.

<sup>91</sup> Greenspan 102.

<sup>92</sup> J. Miller *Walt Whitman* 115.

<sup>93</sup> Budd 41.

<sup>94</sup> *LG, Staring From Paumanok*, Section 12, Lines 156-58.

<sup>95</sup> *LG, For You O Democracy*, Lines 1-5.

<sup>96</sup> Bradley 951.

<sup>97</sup> Iqbal considers the Perfect Man as an evolutionary stage in the progress of the whole human race. Man according to him is progressing towards divinity. And more individual and unique Man is the more he partakes of God's qualities. Physically and spiritually, man is a self-contained centre but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God less is his individuality.

<sup>98</sup> Hafeez 273.

<sup>99</sup> Iqbal in Hafeez 273.

<sup>100</sup> Munawar *Iqbal: On Human Perfection* 138.

<sup>101</sup> *LG: SOM: Section 24*, Lines 525-28.

<sup>102</sup> *LG: SOM: Section 3*, Lines 52-53.

<sup>103</sup> *LG: Sing Body Electric*, Section 1.

<sup>104</sup> Nuruddin 32.

<sup>105</sup> Iqbal 48.

<sup>106</sup> Iqbal 48.

<sup>107</sup> Iqbal 48.

<sup>108</sup> Iqbal in Razzaqi 211