

## ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to study the concept of the self, not only on theoretical grounds but also on account of its poetic expression in some of the selected works of the American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and the Eastern poet-philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938). A true understanding of the concept is not possible without first defining the parameters of the self. In this context, I review the concept of the self in Philosophy, Mysticism (and Sufism) and Psychology. The self that I reflect upon is basically the mystical self represented in the works of Walt Whitman and Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

My thesis draws on some of the similarities and differences of the mystical philosophy of the self in the poetry of Whitman and Iqbal. Whitman's narrative poem "Song of Myself" in his Leaves of Grass offers a peculiar blend of the oriental mystical trends with the American democratic idealism of Whitman's times. Many critics of Whitman have traced the oriental roots of Whitman's "Song of Myself". They have compared his thought to that of the Hindu Mysticism; but his affinity with the Muslim Sufi thought has not been focused much. In this research, I document this amazing convergence of concepts between Whitman's "Song of Myself" (18.55) and Iqbal's thought provoking poem The Secrets of the Self to highlight the Sufi concepts visible in the works of these poets. Both expound a dynamic interpretation of the concept of the self. In their own manner and style Whitman and Iqbal base their views on an individualism that emphasizes self-realization. My research informs that Rumi, the Persian poet and sufi of the thirteenth century, also bases his ideas on self-realization in cognizance of the higher truth. I pick on Rumi and place him in the centre to view the development of the self in Whitman and Iqbal. I also try to find out whether the notion of the self bears the same terminological and ideological meaning for both the poets under study?

In deeper analysis of the text of the poems, I also apply Abraham Maslow's (A psychologist belonging to the Humanistic school of thought) "Theory of Self-actualization" to the concept of the self. Maslow's theory with its Humanistic and mystical stance has a striking relevance to the processes of attaining self-hood delineated in the verses of Whitman and Iqbal. The major purpose of this study is to explore how the poet philosophers like Whitman and Iqbal shape and influence the consciousness of their readers. Although these mystical luminaries emerge from different cultural backgrounds, their essential outlook merges in terms of universal love. I, therefore, highlight how these poets transcend narrow concerns of life to promote the eternal message of love for humanity.