
MYSTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, SELFHOOD, AND UNIVERSAL IDENTITY IN WALT WHITMAN'S SONG OF MYSELF

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ABSTRACT

Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* stands as one of the most influential poems in American literature. Through its exploration of the self, nature, democracy, and spirituality, the poem presents a profound vision of human existence. This paper examines Whitman's concept of selfhood and its gradual expansion into a universal consciousness. The study highlights the themes of individuality, unity with nature, pantheism, immortality, and mystical experience that shape the poem's philosophical framework.

KEYWORDS: Walt Whitman, Song of Myself, selfhood, mysticism, pantheism, nature, universal identity.

INTRODUCTION

Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*, included in *Leaves of Grass*, is regarded as his most significant poetic achievement. Comprising fifty-two sections, the poem presents an extensive exploration of the human self and its relationship with society, nature, and the cosmos. Whitman celebrates individuality while simultaneously emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings. The poem reflects his democratic spirit and spiritual vision, making it a landmark work in world literature.

The Celebration of the Self

The poem opens with the famous declaration:

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself."

These lines establish the central theme of selfhood. Whitman's "I" is both personal and universal. While it represents the poet as an individual, it also symbolizes humanity as a whole. The self becomes a medium through which readers can discover their own identities and connections with others.

Self and Nature

Throughout the poem, Whitman portrays a close relationship between the self and nature. He rejects artificial social boundaries and seeks harmony with the natural world. The poet finds spiritual meaning in ordinary objects, particularly in the symbol of grass. Grass becomes a representation of life, death, regeneration, and the continuity of existence.

Pantheism and Mystical Experience

One of the most significant aspects of *Song of Myself* is its pantheistic vision. Whitman perceives divinity in every aspect of creation. The natural world is not separate from God but is an expression of the divine presence. This belief leads the poet toward mystical consciousness, where distinctions between self and universe dissolve.

The poem traces the speaker's spiritual journey from self-awareness to a state of universal unity. Through this mystical experience, Whitman transcends individual limitations and embraces the entire human race.

Universal Brotherhood and Democracy

Whitman identifies himself with people from all walks of life. Farmers, sailors, workers, women, and marginalized individuals all become part of his poetic vision. His democratic outlook affirms the equality and dignity of every human being. The poet's repeated identification with others reflects his belief that individual and collective identities are inseparable.

Death and Immortality

Whitman treats death not as an ending but as a continuation of life. The recurring imagery of grass and nature suggests that death is a natural phase in the eternal cycle of existence. This optimistic perspective transforms death into a symbol of renewal and immortality.

CONCLUSION

Song of Myself is a remarkable exploration of selfhood, spirituality, and human unity. Whitman celebrates the individual while simultaneously dissolving the boundaries that

separate people from one another and from nature. Through themes of pantheism, democracy, mystical consciousness, and immortality, the poem offers a vision of universal identity that continues to resonate with readers across generations. Its enduring relevance lies in its affirmation of the interconnectedness of all life and the limitless potential of the human spirit.

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