

Qur'anic Revelation in Song of Myself

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Abstract

Al-Qur'an, a message from the Almighty Allah, is an accurate and immutable guideline for human being in this world. It is a doubtless index of human life. It is not specially for Muslims, but for all mankind created by Allah. Except this, every message is man-made or partially true and has limitation and shortcomings. But Al-Qur'an is abundant of absolute thoughts from Allah which are sent through our great and second to none human being, Hazrat Muhammad (SAWS). On the other hand, Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" is one of the profound poems of Leaves of Grass, the forerunner of free verse literature. This poem celebrates the poet's indistinguishable individuality by melting away into the abstract "Myself". Through his 'Myself' definition, Whitman unveils the comprehensive and absolute truth of Al-Qur'an. The cardinal themes of Al-Qur'an—the accurate revelation of human creation, the confirmation of the existence of Our Creator, the ever presence of Him, inseparable bonding of all Muslims, direction towards the liabilities of human existence in the world, signifying fellow-feeling and inevitability of eternal life find exposure in "Song of Myself". Though he is an American poet, he, in his poem, "Song of Myself", he reveals these Qur'anic applications in a very astounded way. This paper explores how the important obligations of Al-Qur'an are revealed in a non-Muslim's writing, "Song of Myself" and the significance of these matters in human life.

Key Words : Walt Whitman, poem- "Song of Myself", revelation.

Introduction

Walt Whitman, an American non-Muslim poet, in his grand poem, "Song of Myself", exposes some Qur'anic themes which are the proofs of Al-Qur'an's truth and the world's creator, Allah (SWT)'s existence. Though his poem, "Song of Myself", is centred on the definition of individual self, some important and basic themes of Al-Qur'an – information on human creation, the proof of the existence of God, the ever-presence of our Creator and immutable circle of birth and death- are exposed

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through his ‘Myself’ analysis. The observation of nature and every other object along with human body in the world urges us to realize the existence of our creator, Allah and the ever-presence of Him as described in Al-Qur’an. In the same way, Whitman through noticing the sprouting grass and all other seen objects in the world visualizes and admits the existence of Our Creator and His demonstration. The immaculate description of human creation revealed in Al-Qur’an is exact in “Song of Myself”. The Qura’nic utterance- all Muslims are under one umbrella irrespective of various nations— finds a confirmation in this Whitman’ poem through his concept— oneness of all human beings in the world. The everlasting cycle of life— birth and death- and the reward and punishment after death which is the main purpose of creation of humans by Allah finds acknowledgement in “Song of Myself”. In “Literary Articles”, a section of which titled “Use of symbols in Song of Myself by Whitman”, it is exposed that “grass is also a symbol of the continuity inherent in the life-death cycle” ([http:// literary-article. blogspot.com /2009/03/ use-of-symbols-insong-of- myself- by-whitman. html](http://literary-article.blogspot.com/2009/03/use-of-symbols-insong-of-myself-by-whitman.html)). Walt Whitman uncovers the themes of Al-Qur’an absolutely as an exact way in his fifty- two section poem, “Song of Myself”. These themes prove the uniqueness, absoluteness and omnipotence of Allah (SWT).

Biographical Sketch of Walt Whitman

Walter Walt Whitman born on May 31, 1819 was an influential American poet, essayist. He spends his childhood on a little farm on Long Island in America. Later, in Brooklyn, he passes the rest of his life. Since he receives little institutional education, he gathers huge knowledge from his various professions- as office boy, printer, carpenter, reporter, teacher of a school, editor of a small newspaper. His journey, like a vagabond, from Ohio to New Orleans and returning Brooklyn on foot by the way of Great Lakes and Canada shapes his view on human creation and the creator. He perceives the ever presence of the creator of the word and the bonding of universal brotherhood. When he acquires a small position in a Government office, he for his fellow-feeling spends his spare time to serve the suffering soldiers at hospitals in Washington during that American Civil War. His decaying physical health and his vanishing physical sensation force him to realize the presence of immortal soul in human body. So, his writings view humanism, transcendentalism and realism. He is renowned for the collection of

poems, *Leaves of Grass*, which is prose-like and a collection of unusual images and becomes a landmark of literature. It is said that “Whitman is among the most influential poets in the American canon, often called the father of free verse (Wikipedia). The images of God who is immanent and transcendent and the immortality of human soul are exposed here. His principal works are *Drum-Taps*, *Passage to India*, *Two Rivulets*, *Good-bye My Fancy*. At last, Whitman died of bronchial pneumonia on March 26, 1892.

Synopsis of “Song of Myself”

“Song of Myself”, one of the grand and prominent poems in *Leaves of Grass*, celebrates the poet’s individual self with every other individual self. In “Song of Myself”, it is exposed that “As Walt Whitman, the specific individual, melts away into the abstract “Myself”, the poem explores the possibilities for communion between individuals. Starting from the premise that “what I assume you shall assume” Whitman tries to prove that he both encompasses and is indistinguishable from the universe” (<http://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/whitman/section2.rhtml>). Through the analysis of the individual self, the poet emphasizes on equality of every human being and mystical creation of everything in the earth through the use of many symbols— grass and myself. Moreover, he recognizes in his poem the everlasting circle of life and death and the immortality of human soul which reduce the fear of death, among many other themes. By the use of many symbols, he expresses his unique view on democracy, creator, and spirituality of self and fellow-feeling.

Qur’anic Views in “Song of Myself”

The Commencement of Human Creature

Human being is the most important and purposeful creation of Allah (SWT). Other than human being, everything in the world is created by Allah (SWT) for the service of mankind. So, human being in this world is created in a unique and scientific way by Allah (SWT). The description of creation of human being in Al-Qur’an is seen in Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself”. Human body is created from soil. He says that “My tongue, every atom of my blood, form’d from this soil” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1974) which is similar to Al-Qur’an’s announcement:

He it is Who has created you from clay, and then has decreed a (stated) term (for you to die)... (Al-Qur'an 6 : 2).

Pair Method in Allah's Creation

The miracle of Allah (SWT)'s creation is that everything in the world including human being is created in pair for vegetation, Whitman says in "Song of Myself", "By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979:1990) as we see in Al-Qur'an :

... He made Zawjain Ithnain (two in pairs— may mean two kinds or it may mean: of two varieties, e. g. black and white, sweet and sour, small and big). He brings the night as a cover over the day. Verily, in these things, there are Ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.) for people who reflect (Al-Qura'an 13 : 3).

Everything on Earth for Human

Moreover, everything in this world has a special purpose and importance— for the well being of human life, Whitman utters in his poem "Song of Myself" that "None an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none/ shall be less familiar than the rest" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979: 1976). Al-Qu'ran also presents:

And We created not the heaven and earth and all that is between them without purpose! That is the consideration of those who disbelieve!... (Al-Qur'an 38 : 27).

Allah as the Absolute Creator

Allah (SWT) is the actual creator and owner of all things in the world and outside the world. Even a particle or grass, Whitman says in "Song of Myself", "is the handkerchief of the Lord" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1977), "I assume you shall assume/ For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1974) and "you shall possess the good of the earth and sun" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1974). Al-Qur'an reveals :

And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, all that is between them. He creates what He wills. And Allah is able to do all things (Al-Qur'an 5 : 17).

Abbas Ali Khan in his book, *Mrtiryu Jabanikar Opore*, utters that “ The world, the sky and all that are between them, even the things in the lower strata of the earth and in the bed of the sea have a creator who is the Almighty Allah” (Khan 23). In Weekipedia titled “Walt Whitman”, it is exposed that “God, to Whitman, was both immanent and transcendent and the human soul was immortal and in a state of progressive development” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Whitman).

Demonstration of the Creator, Allah

We, human being, believe in Allah (SWT) by observing His creations because the real things show its creator, Allah(SWT) ,Whitman says in “Song of Myself” that “the unseen is proved by the seen”(Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1976) and his perfect fitness and equanimity of things” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979:1976) shows the existence its creator, “The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close their junction, The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head, The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1992). In “Literary Articles”, at a section titled “Use of symbols in Song of Myself by Whitman”, it is exposed that “nature is an emblem of God, for God's eternal presence in it is evident everywhere” ([http:// literary-article.blogspot.com/2009/03/use-of-symbols-insong-of-myself-by-whitman.html](http://literary-article.blogspot.com/2009/03/use-of-symbols-insong-of-myself-by-whitman.html)). Even human body is the proper proof of its creator, Allah (SWT) and itself is the answer of disbeliever of Allah, Whitman says in “Song of Myself” that “I carry the plenum of proof and everything else in my face/ with the hush of my lips I wholly confound the Skeptic” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1992) and “each part and tag of me is a miracle” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1991).

Al-Qur'an exposes :

Then tell Me (about) the (human) semen that you emit. Is it you who create it (i.e. make this semen into a perfect human being), or are We the Creator? We have decreed death to you all, and We are not outstripped, To

transfigure you and create you in (forms) that you know not (Al-Qur'an 56 : 58-61).

Above all, we also, Whitman says in "Song of Myself", "hear and behold God in every object" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979: 2014). Al-Quran expresses :

It is He Who made the sun a shining thing and the moon as a light and measured out for it stages that you might know the number of years and the reckoning. Allah did not create this but in truth. He explains the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail for people who have knowledge (Al-Qur'an 10 : 5).

R. A. Nicholson in his, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, opines that "... the creator (al-Haqq) appears in the form of the creature (al-Khalaq), and conversely the creature in the form of the Creation" (Nicholson, 1998 : 97).

No Demarcation in Human-being

Everyone in the world is equal though the world makes the dichotomy and hierarchy of every sector but to Allah (SWT), everyone is equal, Whitman expresses in "Song of Myself", "I do not call one greater and one smaller/ that which fills its period and place is equal to any" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 2010). Al-Qur'an's word is :

The believers, men and women, are Auliya (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one Another; they enjoin (on the people) Ai-Maruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid (people) from Al-Munkar (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden), and give the Zakat, and obey Allah and His messenger... (Al-Qur'an 9 : 71).

All-embracing Brotherhood

Since Allah (SWT) has created us in an equal way and for the same purpose, all Muslims are gathered in one umbrella of universal brotherhood. Whitman in his "Song of Myself" tells that "All the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women, my sisters and lovers" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1977). Al-Qur'an's saying is :

And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an), and be Not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace. You become brethren (in Islamic Faith), and you are on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations etc.), clear to you, that you may be guided (Al-Qur'an 3 : 103).

So, human being concerns not only about himself but he has been "ever regardful of others" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1985). Al-Qur'an's saying is :

The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy (Al-Qur'an 49 : 10).

Moreover, human being without considering his caste, religion, nation, rank, profession is unified under one roof, "Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion/ A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentlemen, sailor, quaker/ Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979:1985). Al-Qur'an's announcement :

And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one Ummah [nation or community (following one religion i.e. Islam)], but they will not cease to disagree) (Al-Qur'an 11 : 118).

That's why, a Muslim cannot harm any Muslim in anyway and does not jealous of his brother., Whitman says in "Song of Myself" that "Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, any brother, my sister?" (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979:2010). Al-Qur'an exposes:

O Mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allah through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship)... (Al-Qur'an 4 : 1).

Miller, James E., Jr. in “Song of Myself [1855]” opines:

Held in the trance-like grip of the soul from beard to feet, the poet suddenly awakens to the “peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,” a fragmentary but certain knowledge: “that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,” “that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,” “that a kelson of the creation is love.” These sweeping affirmations trail off into what seems a heap of incoherent images— “limitless”, “leaves,” “brown ants,” “elder, mullein and poke-weed.” In effect, the incomprehensible multiplicity of nature, in its smallest manifestations, is also embraced in the all-inclusive affirmations of God and brotherhood.

Infallible Circle of Life and Death

Human life is bound to the circle of life and death. Anyone who is in the cradle today is in death bed or grave tomorrow because we are, Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “lucky to be born? And just as lucky to die” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1978). It is said in “Whitman Archive” that “he proclaims death and life so inseparably bonded as to render one unimaginable without the other” http://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/encyclopedia/entry_52.html

Al- Qur’an shows :

And Allah has created you and then He will cause you to die (Al-Qur’an 16 : 70) and ... when death approaches one of you, Our Messengers (angle of death and his assistants) take his soul... (Al-Qur’an 6 : 61).

Though death is, Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “bitter hug of morality (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 2015), human being has to enter into this stage of life. Allah (SWT) will reward the deserved or good person with heavenly pleasure because, Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “seas of bright juice suffuse heaven” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1992) and punish the disbeliever of Allah (SWT) with hellish punishment perpetually, Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “And whatever is done or said returns at last to me” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979:1990) and “The pleasure of heaven are with me and the pain of hell

are with me” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1988). Al-Qur'an expresses :

Then they are returned to Allah, their True Maula [True Master (God), the Just Lord (to reward them) (Al-Qur'an 6 : 62).

And

... And only on the Day of Resurrection shall you be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful... (Al-Qur'an 3 : 185).

Death does not mean long sleep or is not chaos, but Whitman says in “Song of Myself” “it is form, union, plan— it is eternal life— it is Happiness” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979: 2016). After death human being is starting his perpetual journey. Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “I launch all men and women forward with me into the unknown/ the clock indicates the moment— but what does eternity indicates?”(Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 2010). In “Stan.tk Study Guide: Walt Whitman, Song of Myself”, it is revealed that “the poet is not afraid of death because death, too, is a creation of God and through it one may reach God. The culmination of the poet's mystical experience is revealed in his vision of eternal life. Life is neither chaotic nor finite; it is harmonious” (anglistika. files. wordpress. com / 2008/.../ by-whitman-song-of-myself.p).

Al-Qur'ans' announcement is :

And this life of the world is only an amusement and play! Verily, the home of the Hereafter- that is the life indeed (i.e. the eternal life that will never end), if they but know (Al-Qur'an 29 : 64).

and:

To Him is the return of all of you. The Promise of Allah is true. It is He Who begins the creation and then will repeat it, that He may reward with justice those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah— Islamic Monotheism) and did deeds of righteousness. But those who disbelieved will have a drink of boiling fluids and painful torments because they used to disbelieve (Al-Qur'an 10 : 4).

Abbas Ali Khan also has asserted that “in the Day of Judgment whoever will be successful will be placed in Heaven which is the place of unlimited happiness. Moreover, whoever will be unsuccessful will be in Hell which is eternal inflamed furnace. After the judgment, human being who is in which place— Heaven or Hell is to live eternally in there” (Khan, 2001 : 25).

Distinguished Human Creature and his Liability in the Earth

Allah (SWT) has created human being as a sensible creation, but not animal as a sensible one, so animals, Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “do not lie alike awake in the dark and weep for their sins/They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1996). Al- Qur’an exposes:

And it is Who has made you generations coming after generations, replacing each other on the earth. And He has raised you in ranks, some above others that He may try you in that which He has bestowed on you (Al-Qur’an 6 : 165).

That’s why, everything in the world is given to human being from Allah (SWT) as deposit, Whitman says in “Song of Myself” :

My brain it shall be your occult convolutions

Suns so generous it shall be you!

Vapours lighting and shading my face it shall be you. (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1991).

Al- Qur’an presents:

And whatever you have been given is an enjoyment of the life of (this) world and its adornment, and that (Hereafter) which is with Allah is better and will remain forever. Have you then no sense? (Al-Qur’an 28 : 60).

So human being has to believe firmly in Allah (SWT) without any question like, Whitman says in “Song of Myself”, “a word of the faith that never balks” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979:1989) and “I accept Reality and dare not question it” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979 : 1990). Al- Qur’an gives a word from Allah (SWT) :

The Messenger (Muhammad (SAAS)) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers (they say), “We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers”— and they say, “We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all) (Al-Qur’an 2 : 285).

Moreover, he should lead a life in clean and pure way. Whitman says in “song of Myself”, “Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch’d from” (Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1979: 1991). Al-Qur’an gives proofs :

Those whose lives the angels take while they are in a pious state (i.e. pure from all evil, and worshipping none but Allah Alone) saying (to them): Salamun Laikum (Peace Be Upon You) enter you Paradise, because of that (the good) which you used to do (in the world) (Al- Qur’an 16 : 32).

As Allah (SWT) has sent mankind in this world with duties and responsibilities of Him, He loves the good-doers very much, Whitman says in “song of Myself”, “you have given me love— therefore I to give love!” Al-Qur’an shows:

And spend in the Cause of Allah (i.e. Jihad of all kinds) and do not throw yourselves into destruction (by not spending your wealth in the Cause of Allah), and do good. Truly, Allah loves Al-Muhsinun (the good-doers) (Al-Qur’an 2:195).

Conclusion

“This is the Book (the Qur’an), whereof there is no doubt, a guidance to those who are Al-Muttaqun [the pious believers of Islamic Monotheism who fear Allah much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden) and love Allah much (perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained)” (Al-Qur’an 2 : 2).

So, it is revealed that the message of Al-Qur’an is undoubtedly true to everyone in the world, that’s why, some points truth are exposed in non-Muslim’s writing, “Song of Myself”, since Al-Qur’an exposes :

[Say (O Muhammad (SAAS)] “Shall I seek a judge other than Allah while it is He Who has sent down unto you the Book (the Qur’an) explained in detail (Al-Qur’an 6 : 114).

And:

And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can change His Words (Al-Qur’an 6: 115).

The basic themes of this indisputable guideline of human life, Al-Qur’an—the way of human creation, the existence and the proofs of Our Creator, the kinship among all Muslims, the meaningful dwelling of human being in the world, infallible circle of life-death, the Day of Resurrection and Judgment and the rewards of true believers— find proper acknowledgement in Whitman’s poem, “Song of Myself”. The description of these themes in this poem demonstrates the inevitability and universality of these concerns in all humans’ life. So, knowingly or unknowingly Walt Whitman gives a true account of the universal truth of Al-Qur’an which is an attempt for disbelievers or skeptic of Allah (SWT) and His Al-Qur’an to believe in Allah (SWT). So, it is great opportunity for all human beings to understand these themes through proper proof in Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” and not to raise any question to our only and accurate guideline, Al-Qur’an.

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