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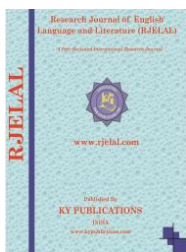
UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY IN DIVERSITY IN ISLAM AND IN THE WRITINGS OF WHITMAN AND EMERSON: A THEORETICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The diverse philosophies of two great American scholars-- Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson have exposed in their various writings especially their concept of universal brotherhood and unity in diversity. Harmony and unanimity are highlighted in the writings of Emerson when he differentiates the functions of a single individual and wholeness in order to shape a man into a true scholar. Universal peace, brotherhood, unity are common phenomena in the writings of Walt Whitman also. Besides, their view of sameness and indivisibility pervading the inner essence of all things in this universe mirrors the very notion of eternal peace. However, Islam is a religion of peace, harmony, brotherhood, and unity. Theoretical and practical practices of Islamic injunctions indicate clearly all these aforesaid notions. This paper aims at focusing the intellectual thoughts of Islam and the philosophies of those writers with a view to depicting the similarities of the facts which are universal in all ages. It also explores the magnitude of these notions in establishing peace and in fading all sorts of violence, aggression, and hostility.

Keywords: diverse philosophy, unity, harmony, self, Islam, universal brotherhood

Mankind, currently in deep crisis, is continuously in search of eternal peace. Though the modern world fulfilled all the human needs and desires by focusing on materialism, scientific advancement, and technological knowledge, it failed to provide a single ray of light to satisfy our spiritual needs. It failed not because of advancement and progress in science and technology but because of moral perversion and absence of mutual cooperation. This anomaly gives rise to individualism, leads the repudiation of social responsibilities, and heads towards the disintegration of the social system, family structure and above all, the fragmentation of humanity. American writers, Walt Whitman and Emerson, never believed in those false views which obliterate the peace and happiness of

mankind and act as a mark of differentiation. Whitman conveys all people to universal brotherhood and unity negating this volatile situation and Emerson emphasizes the whole entity discouraging the solitary side of a person. The philosophy of American writers especially Walt Whitman and Emerson conforms to the very teaching of Islam as Islam never divides humanity on the grounds of these hollow slogans, rather it perfectly safeguards humanity from fragmentation and discord. The fragmentation of humanity on the basis of nationality, color, language, or caste closes the doors of social relations on one side and denigrates the concept of universal brotherhood and unity of Islam on the other.

Unity in diversity is a rhetorical combination of two antonyms - Unites "unity, oneness" and varietas "variety, variousness". It's a concept of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation" that shifts focus from unity based on a mere tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological and psychological differences towards a more complex unity based on an understanding that difference enriches human interactions. The idea and related phrase are very old and dates back to ancient times in both Western and Eastern Old-World cultures which were used by both the indigenous people of North America and Taoist societies in 400-500 B.C. In pre-modern Western culture, it has existed in an implicit form in certain organic conceptions of the universe that developed in the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. "Unity in diversity" has applications in many fields, including ecology, cosmology, philosophy, religion, and politics. It is used as a popular slogan or motto by a variety of religious and political groups as an expression of harmony and unity between dissimilar individuals or groups. However, it is to benefit each other in the sense that the diversity has its own purpose for human beings to learn the different things, new ways, various thoughts, and diverse experience which does not allow stagnation in life for having the same way of thinking or the same looks and feelings. (Unity in Diversity)

Universal brotherhood means the whole world is your brother and there is no difference in religion, caste and other factors don't matter. It is described as the term refers to the teaching that all human beings are brothers and sisters, whose parent is God. All people, without a single exception, were created by God the parent as equal children of God, and they live by borrowing a body from God, the parent and receiving the same providence of God, the parent. All people in the world are, indeed, members of one and the same family, and they are all beloved children of the same parent-God. ("Universal Brotherhood")

In Whitman's *Song of Myself*, he enlarges the scope of democracy and enhances universal peace, brotherhood, unity, equality, and tolerance through his concept of the 'self' which does not

differentiate him from others but identifies him with fellow beings. As a prophet of democracy, he sings in his poetry freedom of the individual that there is no subjugating of anything to anything else in all of their many roles. He believed that what he assumed, he applied to the entire mankind, what he thought, were the thoughts of all people of all ages, whatever belongs to others is to be found in his 'self'. In this sense, his all-inclusive selfhood stressed on the reciprocal identity of views between human beings; established a friendly rapport between him and the others; and proclaimed all-embracing universal brotherhood, unity, and equality. In a word, his self-celebration waves a web of associations and includes the collective self of the universe through the perpetual use of 'I'---

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good
belongs to you." (*Baym, and wallace*)

According to Islam, brotherhood is a tie and the pre-requisite for the establishment of a bond among the believers who believe in the oneness of Allah, in the messenger ship of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and in the Quran. The Quran clearly proclaims that all men are equal on some grounds - firstly, all human beings are the servants of Allah as in Surah Fussilat, Allah says, "We will show them our signs in the horizons and within themselves". (The Quran) Interpreting the verse Allama Ibn Kathir says "within themselves" means what the mankind is made of, what is inside and outside of them, it also may be defined their various types of peculiar physical structures. (Ibn Kathir) As the greatest signs of Allah, all these things convey us to be united in one thing as His servants-the worship of Allah and secondly, we all are created from a single pair as in the Holy Quran Allah says, "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women." (The Quran) This verse clearly indicates that the origin of the human being is one man and woman i.e. one soul but they are divided into too many tribes and communities with an undeniable similarity of the fact- the fact of mankind. All this declaration of the equality of human beings wipes out altogether hatred and discord that subsists among us which is

also the very principle of universal brotherhood. Rejecting groupings on the basis of color, caste or nationality; Islam reckons such a distinction the outcome of sheer ignorance, discards fragmentation of humanity, encourages to enlightening the whole society with the pearls of harmony, tranquility, and peace and invokes human being to save humanity of the world from corruption, deviation from the right path and absolute infidelity. While highlighting the significance of these luminous bonds, Allah says:

“The believers are nothing else than brothers.”
(*The Quran*)

Whitman believes that each individual personality should be developed to shape a whole entity inculcating the entire mankind within itself and may produce a harmonious picture. In the essay “The American Scholar”, Emerson also emphasizes the vitality and originality of One Man who is the summation of all other men in society. He conceives that One runs through the many and the many constitute the One Whole. Through the philosophy of One Man, he tries to show that each individual person as a part of the whole society performs different functions acting in many capacities like a priest, scholar, soldier, farmer, teacher. His functions have been divided among many kinds of individuals, and each of whom does his share of the work of the whole man in which he is not only a farmer, a scholar, a statesman, a producer, a soldier but all parts of One Man. But unfortunately, this original unit, One Man, is so minutely sub-divided that the different individuals can't form the whole but as ramifications or branches, they suffer amputation from the trunk-One Man and exist separately. In “A Study Guide to American Literature”, it is described as “the breaking of One Man into too many, each individual man has been shorn of his vitality, the originality, the liveliness and vigor that produce new things and make new inventions. Human society has come to a dead stop as a result of such division of One Man into many. Machine-like, a man is performing his task as a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, without having the consciousness of the possession of life, , and originality.”(Haque) In his essay, Emerson says that “Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things.” (Baym, and Wallace)as man becomes a farmer instead of ‘man on the farm’, merchant

becomes a slave to money, a priest becomes a mere formal dress, an attorney becomes a mere law-book, a mechanic becomes a mere machine, a sailor becomes a mere rope of the ship and a scholar becomes the delegated intellect instead of Man thinking. Consequently, an individual person can't act as the single unit of the whole thing and the whole society can't be structured with the help of each individual. The condition is highlighted in “Viva Modern Critical Interpretations” by Harold Bloom as “When Emerson set out to define The American Scholar, in 1837, he began with ‘the old fable’ of One Man, taking this vision of a primordial being from Plutarch’s Platonizing essay on ‘Brotherly Love’. Characteristically, Emerson saw the division and fall of man as reification and as an undoing by the trope of metonymy.” (Bloom)

Whitman’s ‘self’ includes people of all types, class, every status, and every religion as well as it belongs to the sky, to the earth. To him, though there is diversity in nature, there is yet a harmony in it pervading the whole universe and vice versa. He encourages his readers to have direct communion with objects of nature and all other creations of God –animals or human beings or trees, great or small which are equally important and sacred and symbolize the greatness and glory of the creator. In the following lines, he reveals that he, his parents, grandparents were formed out of the same objects of nature and thus, they belong entirely to nature. Actually, the inner essence of all things is one and indivisible and there is no essential difference between him and the various objects of nature but essential unity in all creations:

“My tongue, every atom of my blood, formed
from this soil,

This air.

Born here of parents, born here from parents
the same,

And their parents the same,” (*Baym, and
Wallace*)

Emerson also becomes conscious of unity in diversity. According to him, since the dawn of history, there has been a constant accumulation and classification of facts in the universe in which every separate thing is circular power returning into itself and joined by one law- law of nature, the law of human mind and law of

God but not chaotic and foreign. When individual things are tied, anomalies are diminished, roots are discovered; it results that contrary things cohere and issue from one stem i.e. classification turns into accumulation and accumulation leads into classification.

According to Whitman and Emerson, each and every element of this universe has diverse feature or character but they are equal in the sense that they are part of this universe. The very idea of unity in diversity is also apparent in Islam. Islam says that all human beings of the world are equal. Our Prophet Muhammad (sm) tried to bring the whole humanity towards concordance when he views non-Muslims as the potential allies of the Muslims in spreading peace and justice in the society and acknowledges the potential qualities of the human beings irrespective of their affiliations. He also conveys people to have a combined effort to eliminate atheism, materialism, and other vices that corrupt society. Like Emerson, he holds that man's superiority is concealed in his 'elevated qualities', 'comprehensive abilities' and 'universal worship'. His own life coupled with this teaching signifies that he aimed at a better and prosperous society for one and all.

He says: "None of you believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."
(*Al-Bukhari*)

Simultaneously, whole human beings commonly and the believers specifically have diverse opinions as they possess different class, religion, and nationality. But it should not create any division among them. In this connection, Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"O Mankind! We have created from a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another."
(*The Quran*)

Turkish great scholar, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, expressed his views in this regard that living in unity in diversity for the entire mankind is the combined effort of existence in the diversification of the entire Universe and the creation of creator identical to the function of a body whereas all organs are different and are made of billions of small different cells and

have different functions but they are united to make the whole body set properly. (Ajmol) Likewise, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were believers in unity in diversity as they believed that overages multiple streams of cultures and civilizations have met in India to form a unique ocean. Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, a recent Padma Shree awardee, said that their country was passing through a critical phase of history where it is imperative to retain communal harmony than before. Referring to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Maulana Azad, he said that the two Indian stalwarts who were the products of two critical periods in Indian history concurred on many issues, including communal harmony and peaceful co-existence among communities.

Unity and universal brotherhood are the best components of social development as well as establishing peace in the whole world encompassing all people irrespective of caste, color, and religion. In the Age of Peace Maulana Wahiduddin Khan says about peace, "The truth is that Islam in the full sense is a religion of peace. In no way is it a religion of war. In Islam, peace is the rule and war is only a rare exception" (Khan) He also says, "Peace is like the soil. Without the soil, there can be no tree. Similarly, without peace, there can be no social development." (khan) All scholars are united in this declaration. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, the author wishes to establish orders by conveying nationalism with global views and highlighting the fact that all the particular or regional challenges and problems lead to global or universal confinement and thwart peace. To him, powerful is the light of unity that can illuminate the whole earth which is apparent in Robi's disgruntled take on borders and nationalism when he suggests "why don't they draw thousands of little lines through the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name? What would it change? It's a mirage; the whole thing is a mirage." (Ghosh)

In a nutshell, the message of Whitman and Emerson and injunctions of Islam are proximal on the grounds of unity and universal brotherhood. They all try to drive fray from the world, question the fixity of culture and boundaries demarcated by maps and want to establish unity, peace, and harmony. It reminds us the revolutionary zeal of Shelley who in his "Ode to the West wind" appeals to the west wind

to become one with him and to scatter his dead thoughts over the universe in order that there will neither be evil nor injustice nor suffering among human beings and the golden age will commence. He says,

“Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among
mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken earth.
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, wind,
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?”
(Allison, and English)

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