

## "Song of Myself" by WALT WHITMAN.

Introduction Walt Whitman was born in 1819 in Long Island. First he worked as printer's apprentice and founded his newspaper when he was 19 yrs. old. In 1818 he travelled to New Orleans to work for the Crescent. This journey brought about a complete change in his attitude. He came back with prophetic zeal ready to speak for America as whole. Influence by R.W. Emerson Whitman set out to give American poetry a distinctive voice, an identity which is America. His great work "Leaves of Grass" was published in 1855. Whitman's poetry projects a greater range and freedom, it is more realistic in nature. His 'Song of Myself' consists of 52 sections. Whitman's song is actually the song of America, the epic he continued to write and rewrite throughout his life. Like all epics there is the journey undertaken in the course of the poem. Whitman's journey however is a spiritual one, from ignorance to self-knowledge. The poem begins with a search for the self.

### Section :- 1

'I' is the important person here. 'I' and 'you' could be very well the 'self' and 'Ego', which is addressed to the reader. While observing a 'spear grass' as an integral part of nature he has to invite his soul. Nature gains a central place in

in loose music.

Here the poet chooses as his epic symbol a blade of grass. To him grass is representative of democracy and uniformity. The poet is rooted himself firmly in American's soil. Whitman composed this poem 'Song' at the age of 37 yrs old and hoped to make it a great poem throughout his life. The influence of creeds i.e. ancient belief and education would not be rejected but it would be next to Nature itself. The poet wants to make his spiritual journey through nature with a primitive experience.

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Song. Sec. 02.

The second section warning us of using perfumes. 'Houses and rooms are full of perfumes but the poet shall not let the perfumes intoxicate him. Here the poet speaks about temporal and permanent world. The temporal world is the world of houses and rooms and the permanent world is the world of pure Nature when he speaks of 'atmosphere' which has no taste of the distillation and is hence 'odorless.' It is this purity in orderlessness that the poet seeks

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and hence to absorb it he speaks of his longing to become 'undisguised and naked'.

A society is crowded with influences and derived ideas. The poet is not going to harm these influences but he is firm about learning from nature first. The outside air is without any influences. Hence it is fresh and free. The speaker looks ahead of the revelling of the body in its surrounding. The body's experience with nature sets off the first set of catalogues. There is a hint of pervading natural objects as well as body. His sensation would follow the motion of inhalation and exhalation.

The poet celebrates the things in nature as he identifies them. Numerous manifestations of the activated atmospheres are surrounded as a spirited breath runs through material forms, sound waves, ripples of wind on water etc. The poet's inclusive gaze takes place in everything — images and perception.

The poet moves towards the identification of self with the world. The poet wants to show there is sexual vitality within all things — the individual, the social community, the landscape etc. The poet finally exhorts to accept firsthand ideas instead of accepting secondhand ideas, to the readers. Experience with leads to knowledge. The poet's divine passion will enable him to see the origin of all truth.

### Section:- 3

In this section the poet dwells on the present time i.e 'now'. Whitman is not concerned about a 'beginning' or an 'end'. It is the 'now' of human life is the important to the poet. Instead of admitting division between past, present, and future, he tends to load the present movement because it shows the degree of urgency and it gives the poem a dimension of time and timelessness.

This section places the time 'now' in front of us. It is 'now' or never. At the same time the poet says 'now' is not a fixed time and hence an attribute of timelessness is introduced in the poem.

Next the poet speaks about sexual urge, sexual necessity and its justification in our day to day human life. Sexual union is seen as the first step to procreation and also seen as a union which knits the individual identity. Whitman remarks the fact of human sexuality stands by itself. It should be celebrated without shame or sensationalism. The knowledge of sexual vitality is in everything in nature.