CHAPTER - I

CHAPTER-I

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1.Life and Works of Khalil Jibran

1.1 A Short sketch on his life

1:1 (i) Jibran's early Life

Jibran Khalil Jibran was the greatest novelist, poet, and artist of 19th century. He was born in a Christian family January 6 in the year 1883 in a Village of Busharri, as the sacred valley in the north east of Beirut.[1] His mother's name was Kamila Rahmi, daughter of a priest and father's name was Khalil, who was an alcoholic tax collector as a government servant. His mother Kamila Rahmi married third time with his father. They had given birth of three children, Khalil Jibran including his two younger sisters- Mariana and Sultana were begotten by Kamila Rahmi at the age of thirty. And Peter a loving boy who was Jibran's only step brother.

At the age of three he had torn of his clothes and used to run out into the fierce storms bad lashed the mountain. Jibran's mother was very much worried of his change and she would carry her body putting him into her arms to the house, where his frozen body would be rubbed with alcohol. But since he was a fugitive and talented child he used to go outside into the stones to enjoy the awesome majesty and beauty of the nature. Jibran's childish actions with natural calamities or stones were innocent during the time. But these actions were reflected in the writings and paintings of him. One of his writings 'The Title', 'The Tempest', Set amidst Ragging Storm, Ahermid

[1]-Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *'Khalil Gibran: Man and Poet'* Oxford: One World, 1998, P-24

reveals his wisdom to a young man, which were closely related to his childish game with storm of nature.

At the age of five Jibran was given a corner of their small house. When he used to fill and design it with nice stones, rocks and plants with different coloured pencils. And when he used to draw on paper, the young artist improvised and continues his drawing keeping in the wall.

> "One of Jibran's greatest delights was to cast images in lead using old sardine tins. He used to put the lead on the fire to melt and then fill the two halves of the can with fine moist sand. Then pressing the image in between the two, he would scrape away the sand that squizzed out, put the two halves together again and pour the lead into the mold until the image had cooled the innovative and curious little boy always inventing, planning, creating."[2]

At the age of six Jibran was given some old prints of Leonardo Da Vinci by his mother Kamila.[3]

At the age of eight, Jibran's father was accused of tax evasion and was sent to prison in 1891and the Ottomon authorities stripped of all his property in 1894 and left them homeless. The family went to live with relatives for a while; however, the strong-willed mother decided to immigrate to the United States in 1895, seeking a better life and following in suit to Jibran's uncle who immigrated earlier. The father was released in 1894, but being an irresponsible head of the family he was undecided about immigration and remained behind in Lebanon.[4]

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[2]-Ibid. P-30
[3]-Ibid. P-30
[4]-Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and Other American Prophets'*, 2006, P-3

On June 25, 1895, Jibran embarked on a voyage to the American shores of New York.

When Jibran was nine years old, his parents took him to Baalbek 'the city of the Sun' where his family camped for four days nearby a forest. Once in a morning Jibran met with a solitary stranger sitting on the drum of a fallen column and staring into the east. Jibran boldly addressed the stranger and asked him, "what you are doing?" the stranger replied "I am looking at life". Jibran expressed, "Oh, is that all?" and again the stranger said "Isn't that enough?" This conversation of Jibran with the stranger in the Sun City provoked himself throughout his life. And even it was reflected in his early writings.[5]

Jibran settled in Boston's South End, which at the time hosted the second largest Syrian community in the U.S. following New York. The culturally diverse area felt familiar to Kamila, who was comforted by the familiar spoken Arabic, and the widespread Arab customs. Kamila, now the bread-earner of the family, began to work as a peddler on the impoverished streets of South End Boston. At the time, peddling was the major source of income for most Syrian immigrants, who were negatively portrayed due to their unconventional Arab ways and their supposed idleness.

Growing up into another impoverished period, Jibran was to recall the pain of the past few years, which left an indelible mark on his life and prompted him to reinvent his childhood memories, dispelling the

[5]-Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *'Khalil Gibran: Man and Poet'* Oxford: One World, 1998, P-31

filth, the poverty and the slurs. However, the work of charity institutions in the poor immigrant areas allowed the children of immigrants to attend public schools and keep them off the street, and Jibran was the only member of his family to pursue scholastic education. His sisters were not allowed to enter school, thwarted by Middle Eastern traditions as well as financial difficulties. Later on in his life, Jibran was to champion the cause of women's emancipation and education and surround himself with strong-willed, intellectual and independent women.

With Kamila's hard work, the family's financial standing improved as her savings allowed Peter to set up a goods store, in which both of Jibran's sisters worked. The financial strains of the family and the distance from home brought the family together, with Kamila providing both financial and emotional support to her children, especially to her introverted son Jibran. During this difficult period, Jibran's remoteness from social life and his pensive nature were deepened, and Kamila was there to help him overcome his reservedness. The mother's independence allowed him to mingle with Boston's social life and explore its thriving world of art and literature.

Jibran's curiosity led him to the cultural side of Boston, which exposed him to the rich world of the theatre, Opera and artistic Galleries. Prodded by the cultural scenes around him and through his artistic drawings, Jibran caught the attention of his teachers at the public school, who saw an artistic future for the Syrian boy. They contacted Fred Holland Day, an artist and a supporter of artists who

opened up Jibran's cultural world and set him on the road to artistic fame.[6]

Jibran met Fred Holland Day in 1896, and from then his road to recognition was reached through Day's artistic unconventionality and his contacts in Boston's artistic circles. Day introduced Jibran to Greek mythology, world literature, contemporary writings and photography, ever prodding the inquisitive Syrian to seek self-expression. Day's liberal education and unconventional artistic exploration influenced Jibran, who was to follow Day's unfettered adoption of the unusual for the sake of originality and self-actualization. Other than working on Jibran's education, Day was instrumental in lifting his self-esteem, which had suffered under the immigrant treatment and poverty of the times. Not surprisingly, Jibran emerged as a fast learner, devouring everything handed over by Day, despite weak Arabic and English. Under Day's tutelage, Jibran uttered his first religious beliefs, when he declared "I am no longer a Catholic: I am a pagan," after reading one book given by Day.

During one of Fred Holland Day's art exhibitions, Jibran drew a sketch of a certain Miss Josephine Peabody, an unknown poet and writer who was to later become one of his failed love experiences; later on, Jibran was to propose marriage and be met with refusal, the first blow in a series of heartaches dealt to Jibran by the women he loved.

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[6]-Ibid. P-45

Continually encouraging Jibran to improve his drawings and sketches, Day was instrumental in getting Jibran's images printed as cover designs for books in 1898. At the time, Jibran began to develop his own technique and style, encouraged by Day's enthusiasm and support. Gradually, Jibran entered the Bostonian circles and his artistic talents brought him fame at an early age. However, his family decided that early success could cause him future problems, and with Jibran's approval, the young artist went back to Lebanon to finish his education and learn Arabic.

1:1 (ii) Education

Jibran was a solitary and pensive child and spent most of his waking hours in the rugged cliffs, escading falls and the thick cedar groves. This early impression of nature left a symbolic influence to writings and drawings later in life. Though he was deprived of any formal education, he regularly visited the Village Priest who taught him the essentials of religion and the Bible and also Syrian and Arabic languages. With time, the Priest realized that Jibran was not an ordinary child and very soon open the World of history, science and language to him. The conditions of Jibran's family were not well, and poverty run's to a certain conditions which presented Jibran from acquiring formal primary education.[7]

In1895, Jibran started on a voyage to the American shores. They settled down at Boston's south end, which played a host for the

[7]-Ibid. P-24

second largest Syrian community in the United States, following only New York. Jibran's artistic curiosity exposed him to the rich world of theatre, opera and other artistic galleries of the city. Within two months of their arrival, on September 30, 1895, Jibran enrolled at Quincy Public School where he was placed in the special English class to learn the language. He finished his elementary education in two years.

However, at the time of enrollment his name was mistakenly anglicized as Kahlil Jibran. Very soon, Jibran caught the eye of his teachers with his sketches and drawings, a hobby that emanated ever since he was in Lebanon. They contacted Fred Holland Day, a supporter of artists and an artist himself. This happened to be a grand opening of Jibran's cultural world and set him on the road to artistic fame.

During that time the charity institution allowed the children of immigrants to attend public schools for education, where Khalil Jibran got scope to have his primary scholastic education. His other sisters were not allowed to school for education. In the school, due to a common registration mistake his name was changed from Khalil Jibran into Kahlil Jibran. And for that in the some source we find his name as Kahlil Jibran. He was admitted in the school on 30th September 1895, it was merely after two months of his arrival in the U.S. There was a special system for the immigrants' children in the school to learn English from the scratch, and Jibran was placed in an un-graded class to adopt the non-formal education.

With hard work Kamila Rahmi improved her family's financial condition and she saved a part of her income which helped her son Peter to open up a shop, where other two sisters of Jibran Mariana and Sultana used to work for supporting their family. The financial strains of the family and the distance from home brought the family together. But Kamila were providing both financial and emotional support to her children specially to Jibran for pertaining education. Kamila's restless and creative efforts allowed Jibran to mingle with Buston's social life and explore its thriving world of art and literatury talent.

Jibran's curiosity led him to the cultural side of Boston, which exposed him to the rich world of the theatre, opera and artistic activities. Jibran's deep feelings of cultural picture of the time had developed his artistic drawings and he drew attention of his teachers, they observed all the qualities of a good artist and when they had seen it in Jibran they felt happy and made a contact with a great artist name Freed Holland Day who inspired Khalil Jibran to develop his brilliant artistic feelings for his carrier. And finally he was enabled to publish some of his drawings in the year 1904 in Buston, at Day's Studio; Jibran prepared his beautiful drawings for exhibition. At the time of exhibition Jibran acquainted with a distinguished senior most lady named Mary Elizabeth Haskell. Both Jibran and Haskell developed their relation with a good friendship, which helped Jibran's rest of the life with a good correspondence of friendship. Haskell influenced Jibran's personal life as well as his career with a vibrant inspiration

Jibran went to study art with Auguste Rodin in Paris in 1908 and there he met with a person Howayek who become his partner.

Most of the famous works of the studio Jibran willed to Mary Haskell. There she discovered her letters to him and she initially thought to burn them but considering their intimacy and historical value she preserved them in University of North Caroline at Chapel Hill Library before she died in 1964. In the year 1950 Mary Haskell donated around one hundred original art collection of Jibran from her own personal collection to Talfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia. Haskell's gift to the Telfair is the largest public collection of Jibran's visual art in country, which reflects influence in the symbolism.

After school Jibran used to go to Dennison House, an area where people read poems and performed short plays. Later, he started reading simple English stories. His teacher was happy with his progress in English; hence, she gave him stories to read, like Uncle Tom's Cabin. The setting in this story was similar to the humble home Jibran used to live in. Jibran was touched. He left Quincy on September 22, 1898. He had enrolled at an art institute, where he soon stood out among his classmates. Shortly after his enrolment, Miss Florence Pierce, his art teacher, realized his distinguished genius in drawing and encouraged him to enrich his talent.

Among the members of the said art institute was Jessie Beale, who was greatly impressed by Jibran's remarkable talent. She wrote to her wealthy friend, Fred Holland Day, and pled with him to take close

care of Jibran. Day was a rich man with an eccentric character, and a keen interest in artists. He was also a professional photographer who delighted in taking unconventional photographs. « His first meeting with Jibran kindled his interest in caring for him. This interest grew even more when he saw the eastern features on Jibran's face. He was also very influenced by legends and spiritual practices of the East.

1:1 (iii) Jibran as Exile and Lover

There is evidence that Jibran started to see things open eyes during his student years. For example, he took a position against "enforced" man-made laws; he had frequent arguments with school authorities, and as early as the age of nineteen he was not only excommunicated from the Maronite Church, but also was sent to exile in France as a punishment for propaganda of his anti establishment ideas.

In Paris, Khalil Jibran learned of his sister Sultana's death in April 1902. Soon after his return to America, family tragedies succeeded. In March his half brother Peter died, who like Sultana had tuberculosis. Then in June of the same year his beloved mother died of Cancer. Jibran received a lot of sympathy from Josephine, and their relationship became deeper to deeper. They shared with letters and he showed her his drawings.

The young man was so in love with Josephine, he considered her a guiding light in his life was an artist. But this love was one-sided, Josephine saw him rather as a friend or fellow artist. She continued to

introduce him to interesting people because she believed he was a genius, and even a Prophet.[8]

During the exhibition, Jibran met Mary Haskell, a Wealthy Woman and the Principal of a private school in Boston. She was impressed by his talent and interested in his work. One of the questions she asked Jibran was, "do you draw the bodies always naked?" to which the young artist replied, "Because life is naked, a nude body is the truest and the noblest symbol of life. If I draw a mountain as a heap of human forms, or paint a waterfall in the shape of tumbling human bodies, it is because I use in the mountain a heap of living things, and in the waterfall a precipitate current of life."[9]

Mary invited Khalil Jibran to join her circle of Artists and educated friends. She soon became his confidante and was to follow him as his "guardian angel". She was so willing to cultivate his talents that she later paid for him to attend an art school in Paris and fulfill his aspiration to be a symbolist painter.

Jibran stay in Paris was an important phase in his life, a phase of growth and self discovery. He read Balzac and Voltaire and became more familiar with Rousseau and Tolstoy. Furthermore, he mats prominent figures like the French Romantic sculptor Auguste Rodin who announced the young artist "the Blake of the 20th century".[10] He

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[8]-Water field, Robin, *'Prophet. The life and Times of Khalil Gibran'*, New York; St. Martin's Press, 1998, P18

[9]-Mikhail Naimy, *Khalil Gibran. A Biography*, Beirut, 1964, P-59

[10]-Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-6

also became friend with Ameen Rihani, a Lebanese writer and political thinker he admired.

Jibran started to contribute to Al-Mohajer (The immigrant), a prominent Arabic language newspaper in New York. Its publisher, Ameen Goryeb, had met Gibran and was impressed by his prose poems recorded on his notebook. Jibran column had a popular appeal and was entitled "Tears and Laughter", the pieces of which later formed the basis of his book 'A Tear and a Smile'.

Jibran's relationship with Mary veered toward romance. His letters became increasingly intimate and he gradually shifted addressing a mentor and a friend to expressing warm feelings. But upon his return to the states, they both remained undecided about the direction of their relationship. Eventually Mary confessed to Jibran her desire to keep him only as a friend and to bring his potential as an artist and man of letters to its fullest.

Naimy writes: "what of Mary? She loves him dearly, values his talents, understand his ambitious and aspiration and looks condolingly on his weaknesses and sins".[11]

In Boston, Jibran made a living through his sketches, poems, and prose-pomes. He started to contribute to other Arabic news papers like *'Mir'at al Gharb' (the mirror of the west)*. In 1905, Al-Mohajer published his first Arabic book entitled *(Nubah fi fan al Musiqa)* (on

[11]-Mikhail Naimy, *Khalil Gibran: A Biography*, Beirut, 1964, P-99

Music, a pamphlet) which eulogizes music and was probably inspired by Jibran's visit to the Opera.

Jibran's writing, however, started to reflect a rebellious spirit against human oppression and injustice. *'Arai's al-Muruj'*, published a year later and translated as 'Brides of the Meadows or spirit Brides', but referred to Jibran's *'Nymphs of the Valley'*, expresses the young writer's anti-feudal and anti-clerical convictions. The book is a collection of three allegories which take place in Northern Lebanon.

Much in the same tone is *'Al-Arwah Al-Mutamarridah' (spirit rebellious)*, another collection of four stories published in 1908. The book criticizes the power that both the Church and the state display and was burned in public in Beirut for its revolutionary ideas. "Khalil the Heretic" is particularly defiant. As the title of the story suggests, Khalil is condemned by authority in the village for questioning the monks' wealth in relation to the poor peasants, and for encouraging the later to reject the authority's control over their lives.

Through his publications and the political awareness he developed during his stay in Paris, Jibran became well-known within the American Syrian community. He was invited by the Syrian student club to give a talk and he joined 'Al-Halakat Al Dhahabiyah' (the Golden link society), an international Syrian organization with U.S. Branches, the purpose of which was the improvement of the lives of Syrian around the world.

1:1 (iv) A Journey toward Greatness

Jibran moved to New York in 1912 with encouragements of Mary and his friend Ameen Rihani who had already moved there and for whom Jibran had done the illustrations in his book 'The book of Khalid'. Jibran, also was convinced that a wider audience awaited him.

In New York Jibran cultivated his contacts and was introduced to dealers of the galleries of art. He exchanged visits with Mary who remained his financial, intellectual, and emotional support for the most part of his life, Mary indeed, saw Jibran as a higher person with prophetic qualities. In 1913, she encouraged him to move to a bigger studio so that he would be able to work more comfortably, and she paid his rent.

'The Broken wings', which was published in Arabic in 1912 and dedicated to Mary Haskell, increased Jibran's fame in the Arab world. Then the Arabic news paper *'Al-Funun'* founded in 1913, furthered his literary career. Its editor Nasib 'Arida, a close friend of Khalil Jibran, published his poems, prose-pomes, essays and parables including a collection entitled 'A Tear and a Smile' which won him a further public acceptance. Through *Al-Funun*, Jibran also met Mikhail Naimy, another Lenanese immigrant writer who was to become his closest friend.

Jibran expanded his influential acquaintances painters, poets, and playwrights. He became a popular member of the poetry society

where he sought favorable reception of his English writing by English speaking readers. Jibran would read his parables that would become *'The Madman'* and *'The Forerunner'*, and then later pieces that would make *'The Prophet'*.

Among other members of the poetry society was Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, a sister of Theodore Roosevelt and an established poet. She, who had described his read pieces from *'The Madman'* as "distractive and diabolical stuff contrary to all forms of morality and true beauty"[12], became a fan of Jibran and an admirer of his writings.

Jibran also met the novelist and poet James Oppenheim who led him to become a member of the advisory committee of *'The Seven Arts' (1916)*. This was a widely acclaimed literary journal which published Jibran's work along with other prominent writers like Sherwood Anderson, D.H. Lawrence etc. it was therefore a vehicle for Jibran's success in the English speaking world, especially that he was the first immigrants to join its board.

Jibran was also developing as an artist. He started to work with wash drawings but remained faithful to a symbolist style that focused on naked human bodies delicately inter wined (and for which Jibran became famous, even though his art has received much less attention than his literary work.)

Starting from 1914 and with Mary's help, he arranged exhibitions in New York and Boston, and every time he was satisfied with the

[12]-Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-9

results. The painter Albert Pinkham Ryder is said to have visited Jibran's exhibition of December 14, 1914, and to have praised the young artist's work saying; "Your pictures have imagination, and imagination is art".[13]

Jibran continued to give talks to the Syrian audience in New York which welcomed him as a writer and also as a spokesman for their causes, especially Arab nationalism and Syrian's independence from the Ottoman Empire. Jibran, indeed, was an advocate of Syria relying on herself and her resources to solve her own problems as well as unity among his people rather than sectarian divisions.

After the breakout of World War I, Jibran's political activism increased. He worked with the Syrian-Mount Lebanon Volunteer committee, advising Syrian residents in the United States on how to join the French army involved in the war, and advocating Arab independence from the Ottoman Empire. This goal, Jibran maintained, should be achieved through revolution rather than "Patience" which he called "The Oriental Poison".[14]

Jibran also conducted fundraising activities after the war to help his starving people in Lebanon in addition to writing political pieces. His two war poems of 1916 reveal a bitter tone of an angry young man: "Dead Are My people" mourned his dying countryman and "in the dark night" appealed for help from the west His English book *"The Madman"*, published in 1918, and included a famous short-prose-

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[13]-Ibid. P-9

[14]-Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins, *'Khalil Gibran: Man and Poet'* Oxford: One World, 1998, P-134

poem entitled *"Defeat, My defeat"* in which Jibran converts his failure into a sharp sword:

"Defeat, my defeat, my shining sword and shield.

In your eyes I have read that to be enthroned is to be enslaved,

And to be understood is to be leveled down.

And to be grasped is but to reach one's fullness.

And like a ripe fruit to fall and to be consumed.

Defeat, my defeat, my deathless courage,

You and I shall laugh together with the storm,

And together we shall dig graves

For all that die in us,

And we shall stand in the sun with a will.

And we shall be dangerous.

From 1915 onwards, Jibran's writings started to reflect a more universal and metaphysical discourse. Jibran, indeed, developed what water field refers to as an "evolutionary philosophy".[15] He started to preach the role of poets and artists in developing human consciousness and helping the human soul in its journey towards a higher order, a more divine realm.

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[15]-Water field, Robin, *'Prophet: The Life and Times of Khalil Gibran'*, New York; St. Martin's Press, 1998, P-195

Jibran always thought of himself as poet. He told Mary once: "Better a poor thought, musically said, than a good thought in bad form".[16] From the 1920S, he adopted the role of poet as *Prophet,* confirming Josephine and Mary's thought of him as a messianic figure. Jibran eventually became a mystical and isolated hermit; especially that he had already called his studio in New York "The Hermitage". In a sense he isolated himself from society on the strength of his idealism.

His short story *Al-Awasif,* published in 1920 and translated as *'The Tempests'* or the storm, celebrates withdrawing from society and civilization and joining the natural world. The book criticizes humanity and advises it to seek self transcendence towards a divine stage. Likewise, his famous volume of pictures entitled *'Twenty Drawings'* and which was published in 1919 reflects this philosophy.

Jibran started to write in English, and Mary was his main consultant. 'The madman: His parables and poems' (1918) was his first book originally published in the English language. Writing in English definitely increased English speaking readers recognition of Jibran's abilities as a writer, since now they started reading his original work rather that a translated one.

Critics argue that *'The Madman'* represents a turning point in Jibran's career also in terms of the writing style; the sense of pessimism and irony in it reflect Jibran's own disenchantment following the war. The book embraces the Sufi notion of the poet as an isolated figure whose

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[16]-Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-10

madness is a sign of wisdom. For Jibran, the madman in his book was "(his) only weapon in this strangely armed world."[17]

The following year *"Al-Mawakib" (The Procession)* came out. It is a long philosophical poem accompanied by eight drawings by Jibran. It rejects civilization and suggests a simpler "recipe" for humanity to step into a better life. *'The forerunner*: His parables and poems' followed in 1920 and is a reminder of the human's potential for progressing towards a greater self.

Jibran's studio had become a meeting place for leading Arab-American intellectuals who were known as 'Al-Mohajer'or immigrants writers' like Nasib Arida, Mikhail Naimy and Abd al-Masih Haddad. In 1920, they formed a literary society called Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyya, translated as the pen club or the pen league and sometimes the pen Bond, which furthered their fame in the Arabic speaking world. Jibran was elected president, and Naimy a secretary.

The members would meet to talk about common goals like Arab nationalism and Renaissance of Arabic literature. Naimy talked about the first meeting when "the discussion arose as to what the Syrian writers in New York could do to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and intimation and to infuse a new life into its

[17]-*Beloved Prophet*, The love letters of Gibran and Mary Haskelled, Virginia Hilu, NY Knopf, 1972, P-89

views so as to make of it an active force in the building up of the Arab nations."[18]

Jibran worked hard to keep the Pen league group together, but he started to be less openly involved in politics. Indeed having told Mary "perhaps the best form of fighting is in painting pictures and writing poetry", he wrote a famous prose-poem in 1920 entitled "You have your Lebanon and I have my Lebanon" the publication of which was banned by the Syrian Government. In the poem Jibran contrasts the Lebanon he envisions, of beautiful nature and peace between its people, with the current Lebanon of political turmoil, the Lebanon he describes as the "Chess game" between Church and state.

Jibran relied less and less on Mary as editor and financier, but they stayed close friends even though their collaboration came to an and with the publication of 'The Prophet' in 1923. In the same year Jibran told Mary in one of his letters; "I care about your happiness just as you care about mine. I could not be at peace if you were not."[19]

It is worth mentioning at this point that Jibran was involved in a twenty year literary and love relationship with Mary Ziadeh, an established Lebanese writer living in Egypt. The two, however, never met, their relationship was carried on wholly by mail and Jibran wanted to keep it secret.

In the beginning, Jibran and Ziadh addressed one another as literary critics, seeking comments on each other's work. From 1919, their

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[18]-Mikhail Naimy, *Khalil Gibran: A Biography*, New York, 1950, P-154
[19]-Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-12

letters became more intimate, more passionate. Ziadeh came to replace Mary's role as consultant, editor and conversant. She became for Jibran a remote soul mate and another guiding spirit in his life. He idealized her as a "spiritual being almost an angel rather than a human being."[20]

Jibran started to contribute to a new magazine, The Dial, which became his main vehicle for reaching the western audience after the demise of 'The seven arts'. Jibran was also still writing pieces for the Arabic newspapers and maintained solid relationship with the Syrian community both in the United States and abroad.

In 1923, Jibran's most famous book 'The Prophet' was published and immediately received favorable reactions. Jibran know it was his greatest achievement and the most important book he never wrote. He had kept the manuscript for years before he had it published, seeking further moments of inspiration. He planned it to be the first of a trilogy; the second book was to be 'The garden of the Prophet' and the third, 'The Death of the Prophet', was left a fragment.

Barbara Young, a writer and a friend of Jibran, tells the story of her gathering with friend on January 6th, in remembrance of Jibran's birth day. Each person was to tell her first encounter with "The Prophet". Young writes:

> The was a young Russian girl named Marya, who had been climbing in the Rockies with a group of friends, other young people. She had gone aside from them a little and sat down or, a rock to rest, and beside her she saw a black book.

[20]-Water field, Robin, *'Prophet: The Life and Times of Khalil Gibran'*, New York; St. Martin's Press, 1998, P-163-164

> She opened it. There was no name, no mark in the book. It was the Prophet, which meant nothing to her; idly she turned the pages, than she began to read a little, then a little more.
>
> "Then" said Marya, telling us the story, "I rushed to my friends and
>
> Shouted-I shouted, "Come and see what I have all my life been
>
> Waiting for-I have found it-Truth!"

Another young woman, a teacher in a private school, who is also a fine poet, had a curious story; the room in which she was teaching was a hall and was short distance from the outer door. One morning as she stood before her class the door of the room opened and a man, a stranger, entered holding an open book in his hand.

Without preliminary he said, "I have something to read to you, something of most vital importance", and he read aloud, for in with, the chapter on children from 'The Prophet'.

> "The young woman was so amazed at the proceeding, the swiftness and ardour or the visitor, as well as the words that she heard coming from his lips, that she was unable to utter a word. He closed the book and left the room. Thus had she come to know of the little black book."[21]

Three years after 'The Prophet' and at the height of Jibran's success, 'Sand and Foam' was published in English. It is a book of beautiful sayings accompanied by seven illustrations by Jibran. Sand and Foam was followed a year later by another collection of aphorisms under the little of 'Jibran Khalil Jibran'.

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[21]-Barbara Young, *'This man from Lebanon'*, New York: Knopf, 1945, P-64-65

At the time, Jibran started also to contribute articles and drawings to a quarterly journal entitled 'New orient' and which had a universal appeal for East-West understanding. The journal echoed Jibran's message of peace and unity in diversity, and gave him a more international exposure.

In 1928, the longest book Jibran ever wrote Jesus, the son of Man was published. It was widely, acclaimed as his second most important book, after *'The Prophet'*. It portrays the life of Jesus and its human rather than supernatural aspect, and reflects Jibran's inspiration by the teachings of the Christ. Then *'The Earth Gods'* came out in 1931. It is a dialogue in free verse between three titans on the human destiny. Jibran also wrote a play in English, *'Lazarus and his Beloved'* and 'the Build', but it was not published in his lifetime.

In the later years of his life, Jibran suffered from a fatal disease, cirrhosis of the liver. He started to seek refuge in heavy drinking and solitude in his studio. The man strong in mind and spirit became increasingly weak and know that his abilities as a writer were fading away. In a 1930 letter to May Ziadeh he confessed: "I am a small volcano whose opening has been closed. If we were able write something great and beautiful, I would be completely cured. If I could cry out, I would gain back my health."[22]

By 1931, Jibran spent most of his time in bed. According to Naimy, Jibran refused an operation that might have saved his life. He instead waited for death, and it came to him at the hospital on April 10, 1931,

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[22]- Khalil Gibran, *A Self Portrait*, trans. Anthony R. Feris NY Citadel Press, 1959, P-91

at the age of 48, among other people close to Jibran, his sister Marianna and his best friend Naimy were by his side.

Jibran left behind a rich literary production and four hundred pieces he drew and painted. He bequeathed a considerable amount of money to the development of his homeland, Lebanon. His people mourned his death and honoured him with a hero's funeral. The Lebanese Minister of Arts paid homage to his body with a decoration of fine arts. Jibran's body was buried in his birth place, Busharri, and his belongings and books were later sent to the Jibran museum in the Mar Sarkis monastery.[23]

1:2 Works of Khalil Jibran

1:2 (i) Jibran the Romantic

Khalil Jibran's unique poetic expression, characterized by beauty and spirituality, became known as 'Jibranism'. His language touches the inner souls of readers and his parables teach them spiritual lessons. His early short stories, prose-poems, and later collections of aphorisms made him widely acclaimed as the greatest of Arab Romantics.

Mikhail Naimy recorded his fascination with his friend saying:

> "Who shall inscribe the name of the present generation in the scrolls of time, who they are and where they are? I do not find them among the many 'nightingales of the Nile and the warblers of Syria and Lebanon; but among the few whose lips and hearts have been touched by a new fire, of those some are

[23]- Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-14

> still within the womb of creative silence; some are breathing the air we breath, and trading the ground we tread. Of the latter ....nay, leading latter...is the poet of night and solitude, the poet of loneliness and Melancholy, the poet of longing and spiritual awakening, the poet of the sea and the tempest Jibran Khalil Jibran."[24]

Many critics think that Jibran's poetic genious predominantly lies in the use of metaphor. Jibran indeed creates beautiful images that are charged with emotions and that expand the reader's vision and imagination. He addressed various subjects about life and humanity like love, beauty, truth, Justice, good and evil.

For example, he described a kiss that is "a goblet filled by the Gods from the fountain of love" and talked about love as "a trembling happiness" and poetry as "a flash of lighting; it becomes more composition when it is an arrangement or words" or as "a deaf of Joy and Pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary."

The Love for Nature:-As Jibran's interest shifted to mysticism and primitivism, his writings returned again and again to the beauty and purity of Nature. He romanticized nature and found in it an inspirational power for his poetry. He identifies the divine essence with the natural world, a pantheism he had absorbed from his readings under Fred Holland Day's tutelage.

Jibran's writings establish a mystical union with nature, a relationship of Love and harmony. The natural beauty of Jibran's home village Busharri was a strong source of inspiration and nature to his

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[24]- Mikhail Naimy, *Khalil Gibran: A Biography*, New York, 1950, P-159-160

imagination. His poetry is nostalgic of the magnificent scenery of his childhood. It potrays Jibran rejoicing in peace and freedom among the immortal cedars of Lebanon, the famous holy valley of Qadisha, and the mountains of Sannin and Famm al-Mizab.

Yet, inspired by Rousseau's ideas on the innocence of the natural man as opposed to the man corrupted by civilization and materialism, Jibran repeatedly points out to the contrast between the natural world and the human world. In the former there is peace, harmony, and innocence whereas in the latter there is chaos, injustice, and sorrow.

In a letter to Mikhail Naimy 1922, he writes "....the future shall find us in a hermitage at the edge of one of the Lebanese gorges. This deceptive civilization has strained the strings of our spirits to the breaking point. We must depart before they break."[25]

The Poet as Prophet:-According to Mikhail Naimy, Jibran Khalil Jibran once said: "I shall be happy when men shall say about me what they said of Blake"; "he is a madman". Madness in art is creation. Madness in poetry is wisdom. Madness in the search for God is the highest form of worship."[26] Such is Jibran's poetic expression: a spiritual and prophetic one.

Jibran's Romantic Philosophy was influenced by what water field called "the Platonizing Stream."[27] As we have already seen, the

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[25]- Mikhail Naimy, *Khalil Gibran: A Biograpy*, Beirut, 1964, P-255

[26]- Mikhail Naimy, *Khalil Gibran: A Biography*, New York, 1950, P-89

[27]-Water field, 1950, P-226

autobiographical tone of his writing depicts him as a poet Prophet with a sacred mission to humanity.

In one of his aphorisms in *'Sand and Foam'* Jibran compares himself to Jesus saying: "crucified one, you are crucified upon my heart, and the nails that pierce your hands pierce the walls of my heart. And tomorrow when a stranger passes by this Golgotha he will not known that two bled here."[28]

Jibran often depicts himself as a lonely poet who is more sensitive than other people and who is capable of revealing eternal truths. Again in *'Sand and Foam'* he writes; "There lies a green field between the scholar and the poet; should the scholar cross it, he becomes a Wiseman; should the poet cross it, he becomes a Prophet."[29]

This more elevated role that Jibran started to play continued to live with him. It however, reached its profoundest expression through *'The-Prophet'* in which Al-Mustafa seems to voice Jibran's own spiritual teachings. Indeed when in an interview Jibran was asked how he came to write *'The-Prophet'*, he answered; "Did I write it? I wrote me."[30]

Jibran's writings are known for their prophetic tone against the evils that reigned in his beloved homeland at the time and against other evils that bring humanity to decadence. His message is a healing one.

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[28]- Khalil Gibran, *Sand and Foam*, NY Knopf, 1922, P-61-62
[29]-Ibid. P-64
[30]- Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-17

He asserts that his modern world, corrupted by conventions, oppressions, and hatred is redeemable through love, good will and freedom.

Jibran embraced the American transcendentalists like Whiteman, Emerson and Thoreau, his work bears the influence of these ideas of self-reliance and the presence of a greater self that each individual is able to grow into. For Jibran human beings are able to progress toward a divine world. He repeatedly celebrates joining the metaphysical realm as the key to better understand the world and discover higher meaning of life.

Together with Nietzsche, William Blakes works also contributed in shaping Jibran's religious ideas. From an early age, he started to Question the religion of his birth and the role priests. He never questioned the existence of some kind of God and continued to be fascinated with Jesus throughout his life.

Jibran found in Christ a sore of inspiration, an idea that was recurrent in his earlier stories like "Khalil the Heretic" and then later in his English book Jesus, the son of Man (1928). He considered Jesus a lasting leading figure of human kind. He once wrote in a letter to Mary Haskel; "My art can find no better resting place than the personality of Jesus. His life is symbol of humanity. He shall always be the supreme figure of all ages and in Him we shall always find

mystery, passion, love, imagination, tragedy, beauty, romance and truth."[31]

Although there are critics such as Najjar (1999) and Hawi (1972) who suggest that Jibran's writing, which is characterized by a romantic mystical style, had little influence on American letters, his impact particularly on Arab American literature is recognizable.

1:2 (ii) Jibran's Contributions to Arabic Literature

Social disparity forms the main theme of Jibran's short stories. Other refrains are a return to nature and its simplicity as compared to the corruption of the societies. Many of Jibran's stories are arranged in two contrasting parts- the first revolving round the happiness of an innocent and simple life and the second relating to the evils of civilization with its attendant misery.

Jibran's *Arais al-Muruj*, one of the first collections of Arabic short stories was published in early 1906. It contains three stories about life and social problems in the Lebanon of which the most moving is *Marta al banaiyya (Matha of the Village of Ban)*. An innocent village girl is seduced by a rich man from the town.

In *Al-Arwah al-Mutamaridda*, the second collection of short stories, Jibran lashes out against religious and political vested interest. Khalil al-Kafir (Khalil the Heretic), is the story of a shepherd in a

[31]-Ibid. P-18

monastery. He eats dry bread and sleeps among the pigs, while the priest live in the erring priest and is branded a heretic.[32]

It is to Jibran's credit that he linked literature to life at a time when it was more or less ignoired in Arabic work. However, a sence of romantic exaggeration overrides his plots and destroys the natural flow of events. The action in the novel seems secondary to the imaginative renderings, dialogues, delicate, figures of speech.

Al-Ajniha al-Mutakasirra is inspired by Jibran's love for the girl of his dreams whom he meets on coming to the Lebanon from the U.S. Salma reciprocates his love, in this case a local archbishop forces her to marry her nephew. Jibran describes his wounded feelings "sorrow linked her spirits and mind, as if each saw in the others face what the heart was feeling and heard the echo of a hidden voice. God has made two body in one and separation could be nothing but agony".[33]

Jibran started contributing articles to the Arabic-speaking émigré newspaper called *Al-Mohajer (The Emigrant),* in 1904 marking his first published written work. His first publication was called 'Vision', a romantic essay that portrayed a caged bird amid an abundance of symbolism. Despite spending four years in Lebanon learning Arabic, Jibran's written Arabic left something to be desired.

Jibran's first Arabic written work came out in 1905 with the publication of *Nubthah fi Fan Al-Musiqa* (*Music*), a book inspired by his brother playing and Day's several invitations to the Opera. During

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[32]-Ismat Mahdi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 1900-1967, P-149
[33]-*Ibid. P-149*

that year, Jibran started a column in *Al-Mohajer* called 'Tears and Laughter'', which was to form the basis of his book *A Tear and a Smile.* While writing in *Al-Mohajer,* a certain Arabic émigré writer called Ameen Rihani, wrote to the magazine lauding Jibran's article which attacked contemporary Arab writers for imitating traditional writers and using poetry for financial gain. Rihani was to become an important Arabic writer and a friend of Jibran's, whom he later left for the life-long friendship of Mikhail Naimy. At the time, Jibran published several Arabic poems and wrote in newspapers, about various subjects relating to love, truth, beauty, and death, good and evil. Most of his writings had a romantic edge to them, with bitter and ironic tones.

In 1906, Jibran published his second Arabic book called *Arayis Al-Muruj (The Nymphs of the Valley)*, a collection of three allegories, which take place in Northern Lebanon. The allegories- *'Martha'*, *'Yuhanna the Mad'*, and 'Dust of Ages and the Eternal Fire'- dealt with issues relating to prostitution, religious persecution, reincarnation and pre-ordained love. The allegories were heavily influenced by the stories he heard back in Buharri and his own fascination with the Bible, the mystical, and the nature of love. Jibran was to return to the subject of madness in his English book '*The Madman,*' whose beginnings can be traced to Jibran's early Arabic writings. What characterized Jibran's early Arabic publications was the use of the ironic, the realism of the stories, the portrayal of second-class citizens and the anti-religious tone, all of which contrasted with the formalistic and traditional Arabic writings.

Jibran published his third Arabic book *Al-Arwah Al-Mutamarridah (Spirits Rebellious)* in March of 1908, a collection of four narrative writings based on his writing in *Al-Mohajer*. The book dealt with social issues in Lebanon, portraying a married woman's emancipation from her husband, a heretic's call for freedom, a bride's escape from an unwanted marriage through death and the brutal injustices of 19th century Lebanese feudal lords. These writings received strong criticism from the clergy for their bold ideas, their negative portrayal of clergymen and their encouragement of women's liberation. Jibran was to later recall to Mary the dark period in which *Spirits Rebellious* was written, during a time when he was haunted by death, illness and loss of love. The anti-clerical content of the book threatened Jibran with excommunication from the church, with the book being censored by the Syrian government. Seeking to promote his Arabic writings, Jibran asked the owner of *Al-Mohajer* to publicize his writings.

In New York, Jibran began to work on his next book *The Broken Wings*, a work he had started in 1906 and which was published in January 1912. According to Jibran, *The Broken Wings* was a spiritual biography, despite recalling to Mary that the experiences in the book are not his. The book, the longest of his Arabic novels, dealt with the story of Selma Karameh, a married woman, and her ill-fated love affair with a young man, with the end leaving Selma dead at childbirth.

The story of Selma Karameh was linked to Jibran's love affair with a Lebanese widow, Sultana Tabit, during his education in Lebanon.

Jibran was to tell Mary of his story with this young widow of twenty-two, with whom he exchanged love, poetry and books, only to die and leave him mementos of herself in form of jewelry and clothes. Other critics allude to another doomed love relationship with a Lebanese teenager related to his childhood mentor Selim Dahir. Another influence is revealed in Josephine's one-act play called *The Wings,* written in 1904 during Jibran's close relationship with her.

In 1911, Jibran was to draw a portrait of the Irish poet W. B. Yeats, one in a series of portraits, which Jibran was to call the Temple of Art series. This series featured face-to-face portraits of renowned figures such as Auguste Rodin, Sarah Bernhardt, Gustav Jung, and Charles Russell. Jibran's political activity began to capture his attention as he joined the Golden Links society, a group of young immigrant Syrian men, who worked for the improvement in the lifestyle of Syrian citizens everywhere.

During this year, Italy had declared war on Turkey and this incident revived the hope among the liberal Syrians of a free home rule in the Ottoman occupied countries. Jibran's dreams of a free Syria were fueled when he met the Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi, the grandson of the grand Italian general. With Garibaldi, Jibran fantasized about him heading a legion of immigrant Syrians to overthrow the Ottoman rule. Later on, during the World War I era, Jibran was to become a great advocator and instigator of a unified Arabic military action against the Ottoman rule.

Jibran began to enjoy the new attention he was receiving in New York, especially with Mary's financial backing providing him with a secret source of income, in addition to Mary's artistic contacts, which worked to promote Jibran's works. Jibran was great a socializer and an intriguing personality who captured the attention of his hosts. In 1913, Jibran joined the board of the newly founded Arab émigré magazine *Al-Funoon*, a periodical published by the Arabic-speaking community of New York and dedicated to the advancement of literary and artistic issues. The magazine's reflection of Jibran's liberal approach to style and taste led him to contribute several articles, which later on formed the basis of his first English book, *The Madman*.

Meanwhile, the love relationship between Jibran and Mary dwindled as quarrels over money, sex and marriage led to an interesting development. Soon Mary was to become Jibran's mentor and editor, initiating a tutorial course which was aimed at improving his English writing and developing his cultural education. Jibran had started working in 1913 on *The Madman*, a subject which fascinated him eversince he learned about the history of treating the mad in Lebanon; in his hometown of Buharri, he heard how the mad were thought to be possessed by the spirit of the jinn (the devil), with the church in charge of exorcising the devil out of the possessed people.

As early as 1908 when Jibran wrote *Spirits Rebellious*, he had tried translating his Arabic works to English, in order to attain Josephine's opinion. In 1913, Jibran attempted to translate his works, now for

Mary to read and edit. Jibran was frustrated with the difficulties of translating and the language barrier which prevented Mary from helping him improve his writings. Mary, who uselessly tried to learn Arabic, devised a tutorial course for Jibran, aimed at improving his written English and educating him culturally. At the same time, Mary was encouraging Jibran to drop translating his Arabic works and concentrates instead on writing directly in English. Nonetheless, Mary urged immigrants to retain their mother tongue while pursuing their second language education. Mary's educational program worked. In no time, Jibran began to get over his grammatical mistakes, spelling errors and adopt a reading appetite. During this time, Jibran took a liking to Nietzsche's style and his will-to-power concept, which went against Jibran's interpretation of Christ. To Jibran, Christ was not the weak person portrayed by Nietzsche, but an admirable mortal to whom he dedicated his longest English writing *Jesus, The son of Man.* Meanwhile, Mary and Jibran worked together on editing and revising *The Madman.* In 1914, Jibran published his fifth Arabic book *Kitab Dam'ah wa Ibtisamah (A Tear and A Smile)*, an anthology of his works based on his column in *Al-Mohajer* newspaper.

The relationship between Mary and Jibran took an interesting twist, when the issue of sex was raised again. During a poignant moment, Mary undressed in front of Jibran as he assured that she has a beautiful body. He tenderly kissed her breast, but they did not have sex, admitting that a physical relationship would Jibran's first English book *The Madman* came out in 1918 and received good reviews from

the local press, who compared him to the Indian writer Tagore, famous for bridging the gap between East and West, and the English poet William Blake. *The Madman*, a collection of parables which was illustrated by Jibran, revealed the influence of Nietzsche, Jung and Tagore. Following the success of *The Madman*, Jibran's popularity began to soar and gradually Jibran started losing touch with his old acquaintances, Day, Josephine, and now he dissolved his relationship with Rihani. Jibran relished the aura of mystery that he evoked among people, given his undisclosed accounts of his oriental background and his personal reserve. In 1919, Jibran published his Arabic poem *'Al-Mawakib'*, which received little success from the Arab press. During the same year, Jibran joined the board of yet another local magazine *Fatat Boston,* to which he contributed several Arabic articles. Throughout his life, Jibran joined societies and magazines such as *Al-Mohajer*, *Al-Funnon*, The Golden Links Society and *Fatat-Boston*, in order to create a mouthpiece for avant-garde Arabic writing and unite Arabic literature abroad. However, Jibran's success as an Arabic writer remained limited. Ironically, his Arabic language was still not up to standards and received little success in the Arabic press.

Khalil Jibran was among a younger generation of Arab-American writers who contributed to the ongoing Arabic literary renaissance. This movement had started by the end of the 19th centenary with revivalist figures in the Arab world like Butrus al-Bustani, Khalil Mutran, Al-Aqqad, among other who were attracted to western poetry and particularly English Romanticism.

Living in the American environment undoubtedly helped Arab American literati in their quest to revolutionize the classically conservative Arabic literature. In a way, they reflected the culture of freedom they found themselves in. they freely developed new styles whereas their counterpart modernizers in the East had to moderate them. Arab American modernists were highly influenced by western cultures in attempting to reform the traditional use of Arabic language and applying new ideas to Arabic literature. They developed the prose-poem and also introduced Western themes like romanticism, individualism, humanism and Secularism.

It is interesting that Ameen Rihani was a pioneer of this revolution before Jibran, but Al-Najjar or pen league writers turned to Jibran's own ideas and experimentation with language as a source of inspiration. His literary belief shaped the views of colleagues. Indeed Abd-Al-Masih Haddad, a member of the Pen League, described Jibran's input on the issue as "the awakening of spiring in a barren land."[34]

It is worth emphasizing at this point that before even the formation of *'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyya'*, *Al-Funun* contributed widely to the Arabic literary renaissance. Its main goal, indeed, was to lift Arabic literature from the stagnation it fell into. *Al-Funun* became the main channel for Jibran's Arabic writing as well as the work of other Lebanese immigrant writers. The journal sought to promote new forms of literature for the Arabic-speaking world. It spread a new

[34]- Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006, P-19

orientation towards the renewal of the Arabic language, and drew attention to what Arabic literature should be like, not what it currently was like."[35]

Jibran as well as other members of the pen Bond did not promote a radical linguistic reform of the Arabic literature or a destruction of the "Sanctity" of formal Arabic. He rather advocated breaking out of traditional patterns in favour of an individual style. As Popp puts it, "(it) was not to be equated with the falling of a tree, but the pruning away of the trees dead branches and leaves."[36]

In a prose poem entitled "You have your language and I have mine, "a response to the old school Arab critics' attack and what they labelled as "excessive sentimentality ....and weak style.[37] Jibran writes:

> "You have of the Arabic language whatever you wish.
>
> And I'll have what pleases my thought and emotions.
>
> You have its words.
>
> And I'll have its hidden powers.
>
> You have its preserved shift corpse.
>
> And I'll have its soul.
>
> You have its dried up rules of grammar.
>
> And I'll make of it melodies that echo in the mind and

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[35]-Mikhail Naimy: *An introduction*, American University of Beirut, 1967, P-112-13
[36]-Richard A. Popp, *Al-Funun: The Making of an Arab American literary Journal*, 2000, P-132
[37]-M.M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Poetry*, New York; Cambridge University, 1975, P-182-183

over whelming dashes of affection that calm the senses."[38]

Jibran's early works written in Arabic popularized the already burgeoning romantic tradition. They are considered crucial to the development of modern Arabic literature as they paved the way to a new kind of creativity. Critics even went further in drawing a similarity between Jibran's impact on 20th century Arab romantic writers and that of 19th century western romantic figures on their fellow writers.

His writing did not match traditional forms of the part that the neoclassical poets of the 19th and early 20th century's were faithful to. For example, Jibran rejected complex grammar, flamboyant rhetoric as well as meters of classical Arabic poetry. In his Arabic poem *'Al-Mawakib' (The procession)* for example, Jibran promoted the idea of using more than one meter in a single poem. The delicate tones of the lines are deeply felt.

Jibran challenged what was considered to be criteria of great poetry. He preferred a free and spontaneous verse, and blended classical Arabic with colloquial Arabic. He embraced a simplified diction and a language that unsophisticated audience could understand and relate to.

Yet, his simple style is elegant, resonant, and able to communicate profound thoughts. It touches on aspects of our experience as humans. It appeals to our hearts as well as to our minds. Jibran's writings

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[38]-Qtd. In Nada Najjar, *"The Space in between: The Ambivalence of Early Arab American Writers"*, University of Toledo, 1999, P-93

strikingly create an element of timelessness and universality that penetrate even the translated work.

In *'The Broken Wings'*, for example, Jibran talks about love as: "the only freedom in the world because it so elevates the spirit that laws of humanity and the phenomena of nature do not alter its course."[39] Also in 'A Tear and a Smile', Jibran describes the poet as:

> "A link
>
> Between this world and the hereafter;
>
> A pool of sweet water for the thirstily,
>
> A tree planted
>
> On the banks of the river of river of beauty,
>
> Bearing ripe fruits for hungry hearts to seek.
>
> An Angel
>
> Sent by the Gods to teach man the ways of Gods.
>
> A shining light unconquered by the dark,
>
> Unhidden by the bushel
>
> Astarte did fill with oil;
>
> And lighted by Apollo."[40]

Jibran's early publications are also characterized by bitter realism, and unlike traditional Arabic writings, they dealt with challenging themes. For example *Arayis Al-Muruj (Nymphs of the Valley)*, reflects

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[39]- Khalil Gibran, *'The Broken Wings'*, trans. Anthony R. Ferris, New York: Citadel Press, 1957, P-35

[40]- Khalil Gibran, *'A Tear and a Smile'*, trans. H. M. Nahmad, New York, 1972, P-134-135

Jibran's anti-clerical ideas. One of the issues *'Martha'*, *'Yuhanna the Mad'*, and "Dust of Ages and the eternal fire" dealt with was religious persecution.

For Jibran, true religion is not an organized but a liberating and personal one. His poem "The crucified" echoes his lifelong belief that the mission of Jesus was not to build institutions and structures, but to build the human spirit. Jibran writes: "Jesus was not sent here to teach the people to build magnificent Churches and temples. He came to make the human heart a temple, and the soul an alter, and the mind a Priest." [41]

Nymphs of the Valley, in addition, addresses social injustices in Lebanon like the exploitation of women and the poor by the rich and the powerful. Jibran's early other Arabic writings also point out to the ignored rights of Arab women and call for their emancipation and education. *Al-Arwah Al-Mutamarridah (spirits Rebellious)*, for example, portrays a married woman's emancipation from her husband and a bride's escape from a forced marriage through death, themes that had remained untouched in Arabic literature.

Jibran's attempt at bridging the gap between Arabic and Western literature in terms of both from the concept presents him as a mediator between both worlds. Jibran communicated a message of reconciliation between his own heritage and the new environment he grew in. He imported Western themes and infused an element of

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[41]- Khalil Gibran, *Secrets of the Hearts*, UBS Publishing distributors Pvt. Ltd. Reprint, 2004, 1947, P-215

avant-garde experiment into Arabic literature, but he in return had something to offer to the west.

1:2 (iii) Jibran as an Artist

The first art exhibition of Khalil Jibran's drawings was held in 1904 in the city of Boston. During this exhibition, he met Mary Elizabeth Haskell, a respected headmistress and ten years elder to him, who not only influenced his career but his personal life as well. Their friendship, though publicly discreet, revealed traces of intimacy and lasted the rest of Jibran's life. In 1908, Jibran went to study art in Paris for two years and met his art study partner and a life-long friend Youssef Howayek. Most of Jibran's early writings were in Arabic language but after 1918, his work began to be published in English. His first book, called *"The Madman"* was a collection of aphorisms and parables and incorporated the writing style of something between prose and poetry.

The most common subject of Jibran's writings was Christianity and the spiritual meaning of life. Jibran's best known work was *"The-Prophet"*, a book comprising of twenty-six poetic essays. It gained popularity primarily during the 1960s with the unfold of American counter-culture and New Age movements. *"The-Prophet"* was first published in 1923 and has so far been translated in forty languages. Being one of the bestsellers of the 20th century, it has never been out of print since then. Among his several poetic ventures, the poem *"Sand and Foam"* is quite notable. The line "Half of what I say is meaningless, but I say it so that the other half may reach you" was

even used by John Lennon in the 1968 album of The Beatles. His poetry is noted mainly for its use of formal language and its deep insights on life, love and longing.

Jibran also played a role in politics through his writings. He was a major supporter for the adoption of Arabic as the national language and called for adoption of Arabic as a national language of Syria and introduction of Arabic throughout the school level. He also strived hard to free the Syrian lands from the clutches of Ottomans. His poem "Pity the Nation" dealt with this subject and was posthumously published in *"The Garden of the Prophet"*. When the ottomans were driven out of Syria during World War I, Jibran expressed his joy through a sketch called "Free Syria", which was published on the front page of a major daily. He also happened to have drafted a play, which defined his belief in Syrian nationalism, its independence and progress.

Jibran's precocious talent in drawing started at school where he often expressed his opinion of others by drawing them in caricature. Once he drew a caricature of Father Germanos, and when his father saw it, he slapped him and warned him against acting irresponsibly and foolishly.

Since he was a young boy, Jibran had been fond discovering what lay behind the regular standard of facts and matters. He once told Haskell about a bad experience he had suffered. He said, «My heart and neck are strong, and my hands; my shoulders are not because of the accident I had. When I was ten or eleven years old, I was in a

monastery one day with another boy – a cousin, a little older. We were walking along a high place that fell off more than a thousand feet. The path had a handrail, but it had weakened and path and rail and fell with us, and we rolled probably one hundred fifty yards in the landslide. My cousin fractured his leg, and I got several wounds and cuts in the head down to the skull, and injured my shoulders. The shoulders healed crooked - too high, and too far forward. So they pulled them apart again and strapped me to a cross with thirsty yards of strap, and I stayed strapped to that cross for forty days.

Day offered Jibran financial and educational assistance. He also lent him books to read, such as Treasure of the Meek, by Metarlink, and the classical Dictionary. These books, too, nourished his intellect, and channeled his artistic talents and values. Day then introduced Jibran to notables in the literati, and to artists in various fields. «He (Day) acted as Jibran's mentor and collected for him the royalties from his drawings which were printed on book covers.

The series of introductions and meetings with artists paved the way for Jibran to be eligible for admission to several restricted, aristocratic societies. This chance enhanced his self-confidence and urged him to sharpen his skill in painting. It also widened his horizon, and augmented his charisma among certain noble women he had been introduced to. Day was still collecting photographs of Jibran in different eastern attire and in various postures. He once said, I could picture him in his beautiful fresh clothes, always carrying a book. He gleamed with intelligence and was overwhelmed with sedateness.

Jibran was extremely contemplative, and full of love. Among all his friends, Jibran was known for his elegance.

1:2 (iv) Jibran and 'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyya'

The second decade of twentieth century is most productive period of Jibran's life and also saw him reach a peak as a writer in Arabic. This time Khalil Jibran became a founder President of a literary society called *'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyya'* (The Pen League). The original members of Al-Rabitah were all leading Arab-American writers as Mikhail Naimy, Naseeb Arida, Nudra Haddad, Rashid Ayyub, Illia Abu Madi and Jibran himself. The society was to exert enormous and lasting influences on the renaissance in Arab letters, both in American but in other parts of the globe including the Arab world. In particular, its members developed a unified approach to Arabic literature and Art. Fired by Romantic ideals of individual inspiration, patheism and universal love, they revitalized a great literary language by bringing it closer to the colloquial.[42]

'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyya' was noted for its psychological studies, spiritual techniques and moving short stories and novels. The émigrés of South America did not reach the high level of their northern counterparts in prose. The concentrated on the poetic genres and distinguished themselves in epics and mythological points.[43] The eminent critic Isma'il Adham evaluates the contribution of the Pen Association in the field of prose. "It created a strong movement in

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[42] -Khalil Gibran: *His life and his works*, P-157

[43]-Ismat Mehdi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 1900-1967, P-141

Arabic literature and was successful in presenting the best that has been written in the form of novels, short stories and plays."[44]

Khalil Jibran played a crucial role in the lives of *'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyya'* poets in North America, not so much because of his talent as a poet, which not possess his range of knowledge and experience. Although Jibran probably the most widely known Arab author outside the Arab world, this is because of the books he wrote in English such as *'The-Prophet'*, 'Jesus son of man', 'The wanderer' and 'Sand and foam', books which have enjoyed a wide readership, particularly in America.

Jibran has anticipated by Naimy's letter that the main trigger behind the movements. He introduced the first annual collection of *al-Rabitah* produced in 1921, and wrote extensively on literary criticism in this respect he acted as the theoretician and literary expert. *Al-Rabitah* with its well defines aim quickly and forcibly struck by Arab world as an independent literary school, an 'Academy of Arab Letters' in New York. Newspapers and magazines in the Arab world's especially Al-Hilal in Egypt, excited by the novelty and revolutionary spirit of *al-Rabitah* literature began to reproduce it at home. The movement started to symbolize a new literary era.[45]

Willium Catzeflis himself a founding member of *al-Rabitah* wrote; "purism was the god of the writers and poets. Steeped in traditionalism of the narrower sort, there were hundreds of versifiers

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[44]-Ibid. P-141
[45]-Ibid. P-192

but few poets. The sacrificed substance to form and no one dared to deviate from the trodden path."[46]

Jibran's pervasive influence on his colleagues in *al-Rabitah* made them reassess their own work, and his romanticism answered a latent need in them to liberate their own romantic expression. This yearning sprung not only from expatriation, although exile undoubtedly helped them release its dynamism, for in truth they had always carried its seeds from whom.[47]

Al-Rabitah has been the focus of much debate and conjecture since its formal inauguration in 1920.The question that is still asked whether *al-Rabitah* was a political organization under the guise of an academy of letters, and whether Jibran was a political activist with a specific political agenda. Many years later Naimah says that Jibran joined *Al-Rabitah* with a hope of participating in the process of education and enlightening the immigrants to achieve the liberation of Syria....this was a sufficient impulse for Jibran to join *Al-Rabitah*. He never had a political affiliations or intentions.[48]

1:2 (v) Jibran: Briding East and West

Jibran, indeed, brought to his adopted land flowers of Eastern spirituality which balanced American's emerging values of materialism and progress. Inspired by his own experience as an immigrant writer, Jibran aimed at uniting East and West and creating

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[46]-Ibid. P-192
[47]-Ibid. P-193
[48]-Ibid. P-193

an intercultural reconciliation that transcends the barriers of language, religion and politics, through his contributions to magazins and journal, 'The New orient' in particular, Jibran advocated peace and understanding between the Arab and western world. Syrud Hussain, editor of 'The New orient', wrote about Jibran: "There is no more sincere and authentic or more highly gifted representative of the East functioning today in the West than Khalil Jibran."[49]

Jibran considered himself as a spokesman of both cultures. He admired America's achievements and its values of individualism, dynamism and freedom. On the other hand, he praised the Arabs contributions to the world, but advised them to evade the past and build one's own future and adapt the good aspects western civilization instead to blind imitation. Jibran appealed to the new generation of Arab American's to be proud of both their Eastern and their Western background. In his famous poem "I believe in you", also known as "To young Americans of Syrian origin" 1927, Jibran Writes:

"I believe that you have inherited from your forefathers an ancient dream, a song, a prophecy, which you can proudly lay as a gift of gratitude upon the lap of America.

I believe you can say to the founders of their great nation, "Here I am, a youth, a young free from the hills of Lebanon, yet I am deeply rotted here, and I would be fruitful."

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[49]-Qtd. In Gibran and Khalil Gibran: *His life and World*, 1981, P-382

Barbara Young recorded Jibran's impact on the Arab-American community saying: "To the younger generation of his countrymen, those born in the west of parents who had grown up on their native soil, Jibran was one of the elect of God. They went to him in their perplexities, and he met their problems with quick understanding and divine gentleness that won their undying gratitude and devotion." She added: "I have never entered one of these (Syrian) restaurants without hearing some mention of him, without someone knowing, and saying, 'you are the friend of Jibran?"

Water field argues that the cultural dualism Jibran experienced made him act out different roles among his western friends of literary circles and his Syrian compatriots. The first were often radicals and socialists, whereas the latter were rather nationalists. He describes Jibran as a "chameleon" who adapts himself to the demands of both worlds.[50]

Nevertheless, it could be argued that Jibran balanced both the Eastern and Western sides of his identity and came to resolve his cultural division. Mostly in his early Arabic writings, such as *'The Broken Wings'* and *'A Tear and a Smile'*, Jibran perfectly blended his being an exotic Easterner with being a wounded romantic. But, broadly speaking, he harmoniously merged his mystic beliefs in a senesce of continuity among various faiths and in an inner, personal experience of the divine with his romantic ideals of universal love and unification of the human race. As a firm believer in the "Divine Unity", his work addresses the common and the universal.

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[50]-Water field, Robin, *'Prophet: The Life and Times of Khalil Gibran'*, New York; St. Martin's Press, 1998, P-169

This can be traced to the poet-Prophet image that Jibran started to evolve into in the 1920's. For Water field this "Romantic fusion of poet and prophet was undoubtedly Jibran's best opportunity for bringing east and west together.[51] This is because Jibran is known in the Arab world mostly as a sensitive poet, whereas to his English speaking readers, he is rather a wise Philosopher, a Prophet.

In his life time Jibran created his own spiritual philosophy that relates to different faiths and religious. He called for cultural and religious tolerance and a Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular. Bushrui points out that "Jibran's name, perhaps more than that of my other modern writer, is synonymous with peace, spiritual values and international understanding."[52]

Also Robert Hillyer, an American poet and critic who occasionally visited Jibran in his studio recorded his memory of him as "a man who had devoted his life to contemplation, to peace, to love, to the life of the soul and the myriad forms of Beauty."[53]

Jibran's finest work, *'The-Prophet'* for example, is written in the language of unity in diversity. It carries with it themes of unity of religious and oneness of mankind. Al-Mustafa's message in the book, as Bushrui asserts, is a passionate belief in the heading power of universal love and the unity of being."[54]

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[51]-Ibid. P-238

[52]- Suheil Bushrui B. *'Khalil Gibran of American'* The Arab American Dialogue (7.3) 1996, P-4

[53]-Robert Hillyer, *'Thoughts of a Mystic'* The New York Times Book Review, 1949, P-7

[54]-Suheil Bushrui B. *'Khalil Gibran of Lebanon'*, Gerrarda Cross: Collin Smythe, 1987, P-68

Mary critics point out to the autobiographical dimension of *'The-Prophet'*. The fact is there is evidence that Al-Mustafa is a mouthpiece for Jibran's own teachings. According to Mary Haskell's Journal, Jibran said, while in the process of writing the book, "In the Prophet I have imprisoned certain ideals, and it is my desire to live those ideals...just writing them would seem to me false."[55] This however not seem to be a turning point in Jibran's life. As early as 1912, he had told Mary: "I have to live the absolute life, must be what I believe in, practice what I preach, or what I practice and what I preach is nothing."[56]

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[55]- Sana Mecharek, *'Khalil Gibran and other Arab American Prophets'*, 2006 , P-24
[56]-Ibid. p- 24

CHAPTER - II