Since March 2002
An International, Registered & Referred Monthly Journal : Arabic Literature
Research Link - 123, Vol - XIII (4), June - 2014, Page No. 18-20
RNI No. MPHIN-2002-7041, ISSN No.- 0973-1628

Khalil Jibran* and His Concept of Love in Arabic Literature : A Study

According to Jibran Khalil Jibran love is an endless journey to the human life as he explains that to experience love is to go on a journey and it is love itself who is the guide of the journey. The roads that love leads are might be difficult and painful, but one should follow them even embrace, an embrace which may lead to a stabbing in. He encourages the readers to love of its dangers and potential pain and suffering. At the same time he still tries to put across that it should not deter the readers from loving, for if the readers are not prepared to accept both the good and the bad sides of love then they will not live a life as rich and rewarding as the reader would have. Love shows us the way to enlightenment and helps us learn the lessons of life. However, we have to remember that we are not the ones who decide the destiny of our love, but it is indeed love that decides our destiny.

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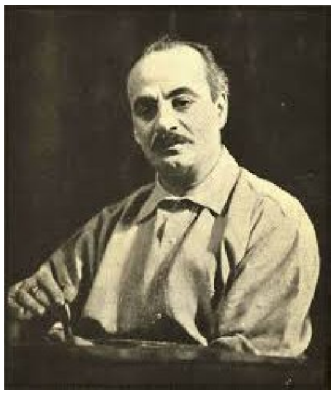
It is wrong to think that love comes from long companionship and persevering courtship. Love is the offspring of spiritual affinity and unless that affinity is created in a moment, it will not be created for years or even generations. **- Jibran Khalil Jibran**

From the ancient time, people were accustomed with love, faith and death. If we go through the ages, we will find many scholars, litterateurs and philosophers concentrated on love and contributed many outstanding works in form of books, articles and journals. Among the most successful philosophers and authors we may mention the name of Jibran Khalil Jibran who attracted by love throughout his literary career.

Jibran Khalil Jibran is considered to be one of the greatest authors, philosophers and litterateurs of Modern Age. He holds a unique position among the modern Arabic as well as English writers, in as much as he wrote well in both English and Arabic and was widely acclaimed in both cultures. Sitting astride two worlds, Jibran created his own unique literary style; one that has won fans in every generation. He was Lebanese-American philosopher, essayist, novelist, mystical poet and artist. In the 1930s the works of Jibran influenced especially American popular culture; his most famous book, "The Prophet" (1923), has been a bestseller from the 1920s. Jibran believed that if a sensible way of living and thinking could be found, people would have mastery over their lives.



Jibran Khalil Jibran was born in 6th January, 1883 in the village called Bisharri, in Northern Lebanon. He had two younger sisters and an older half brother. Khalil loved drawing but his father not only discouraged his art, but also forbade it and punished him severely if he was caught drawing pictures. Young Khalil did not attend school, though he was informally tutored by a local priest.

Jibran's father worked as an assistant at his uncle's pharmacy, but he was a hard drinker and gambler. When he was a kid of eight years, his father was thrown into jail for tax evasion and fraud. All family possessions were confiscated, and Jibran's family was bankrupt and homeless, staying temporarily with a relative. On the other hand his mother was a strong-willed woman and decided to immigrate to America

*(*The full name of Khalil Jibran (also spelled as Gibran in most of the English books but as for the Arabic style it spelled as Jibran, even Ismat Mahdi, the writer of Modern Arabic Literature, spelled as Jibran) is Jibran Khalil Jibran, the middle name being his father's name in keeping with the traditions of the Arabic East. He always signed his full name to his Arabic works but dropped the first name in his English writings.)*

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with her children, but without their father. When the father eventually was released from the jail, he had no interest to join his family there. Jibran along with his family settled in Boston, which had a large community of Arab immigrants, including a few relatives. At the age of 12 Jibran's brother eventually opened a hardware store, and his mother and sisters worked as seamstresses to make ends meet. But through a charitable gift, Khalil was able to attended school, where he was to learn, even master, English.

When Jibran was 15 years old he returned to Lebanon for better understanding of his heritage, where he enrolled at the Maronite College of Law namely 'Madrasat-al-Hikmah', and then perhaps the foremost Christian secondary school in the Arab world. This land of mystic beauty became his solace, his source of imagination, and in later years his object of yearning. After four years, he returned to Boston to face there in short succession the deaths of his sister Mariana, his half-brother and his beloved mother, all of who succumbed to poverty-induced illnesses. As he exclaimed "My God died with Sultana. How can I live without God?".

As a 17 year old, Jibran was developing a reputation in Boston within the art community, but his family felt it would do him good to reacquaint him with his own cultural roots. They sent him back to Lebanon to study at college there. He immersed himself again in Arab culture and language, and treasured it the rest of his life.

Jibran went through a period of mourning and grief, but it was just after those losses that he met Mary Haskell at a Boston art gallery that was showing his art.

Mary Haskell would become perhaps the most influential person in his life from then on. She was the headmistress of a girls' school. He was 20 years old and she was 30. She encouraged this young artist and became his benefactor, patron, and collaborator, and later editor of his writings in English. Their friendship spanned the gamut of feelings, and at one point Jibran actually proposed marriage to her, but she declined because of the differences in their age. Jibran would have many romances during his life, though he never married, but Mary Haskell always remained his most intimate relationship.

In 1909, Jibran spent two years in Paris studying art, and upon returning, he settled in New York City, where he would remain the rest of his life. In America, he was always deeply involved in the Arab-American community and founded an organization that promoted Arab literature and Arab writers around the world. He also wrote regularly for Arabic newspapers and publications abroad.

Jibran also took part in the New York Pen League, also known as the "Immigrant Literature" (Adab al- Mahjar), alongside important Lebanese-American authors such as Ameen Rihani, Ilya Abu Madi and Mikhail Nuwaimah. Most of the writings of Jibran deal with Christianity, especially on the topic of spiritual love. His poetry is notable for its use of formal language, as well as insights on topics of life using spiritual terms. Jibran's best-known work is The Prophet, a book composed of twenty-six poetic essays.

Jibran died of liver disease, possibly accelerated by alcoholism, in New York on April 10, 1931. Upon his death, his body was shipped back to his hometown in Lebanon, where alongside his tomb 'The Jibran Museum' was later established. In his will Jibran left all the royalties of his books to his native village.

In America Jibran was making a name for himself as an accomplished artist. Since in those early years he only wrote in Arabic, in the Arab world he was becoming well known as a writer. In 1913, at the urging of Mary Haskell, Jibran began writing books in English. Perhaps one of the most astounding facets of the legacy of Jibran Khalil Jibran is that English was, for him, a second language, and his writing displayed a mastery of the language that few native speakers could aspire to achieve. But one theme of Jibran's life, as well as his religious philosophy, was the blending of cultures and human differences. His friend Mikhail Nuwaimah, another Lebanese litterateur, spoke of his decision to write in English, as:

"Jibran, urged by the incessant calls for enfoldment of the twin sisters lovingly nursed by his soul - Poetry and Art - was far from being content with the small and slow conquests he was making in the world. To the American public he offered his art without his poetry. To the Arab public, his poetry is without his art. The English-speaking world could not read his Arabic poetry; the Arab-speaking world could not understand his Western art. The twins must be made to work as one team. For that he must write in English".

Jibran remained in New York the rest of his life. He moved in circles of the avant-garde artists and writers. But he died in heartbreaking circumstances in 1931 at the young age 48. The doctors detected liver cancer, but his deteriorating condition was complicated by the fact that in recent years, Jibran had succumbed to the same problem that afflicted his father using alcohol to numb the pain of disease, though making that disease worse.

His view of the divine was consistent with the tradition of American transcendentalism. When he spoke of God his description was indistinguishable from what he had to say about nature or about the best in human nature. He spoke of God with the same reverence with which he spoke of human worth and dignity, as if there were, in fact, no difference between the two. He wants to prove that all things in this creation exist within soul of the prophet and all things in the prophet exist in creation; there is no border between this two.

Concept of love is one of the major factors of Jibran's works. His works 'Al-Mausiqa' (The Music, 1905), 'Ara'is al-Muruj' (Brides of the Valley, 1906), Al-Arwah al-Mutamarrida (Spirits Rebellious, 1908), Al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira (The Broken Wings, 1912), Dam'a wa Ibtisama (A Tear and A Smile, 1914), Al-Mawakib (The Processions, 1919), Al-'Awasif (The Tempests, 1920), Al-Bada'i' waal-Tara'if (The New and the Marvellous, 1923), The Madman (1918), Twenty Drawings (1919), The Prophet (1923), The Garden of the Prophet (1933),

Lazarus and his Beloved (1933), Spiritual sayings (1962), Eye of the Prophet (1995), etc. are the core example of this kind, i.e. love.

Jibran Khalil Jibran personifies love in three distinct ways. Firstly, he describes love as a guide on the journey of love. Secondly, Jibran sees love as a king or an emperor, i.e. sovereign and thirdly, Jibran personifies love as a gardener. Now, I want to highlight the glance on Jibran's love.

Love is a guide to an Endless Journey :

According to Jibran Khalil Jibran love is an endless journey to the human life as he explains that to experience love is to go on a journey and it is love itself who is the guide of the journey. The roads that love leads are might be difficult and painful, but one should follow them even embrace, an embrace which may lead to a stabbing in. He encourages the readers to love of its dangers and potential pain and suffering. At the same time he still tries to put across that it should not deter the readers from loving, for if the readers are not prepared to accept both the good and the bad sides of love then they will not live a life as rich and rewarding as the reader would have. Love shows us the way to enlightenment and helps us learn the lessons of life. However, we have to remember that we are not the ones who decide the destiny of our love, but it is indeed love that decides our destiny. This can be compared to the work of a guide; it is the guide who decides the best route for the people he or she leads, not the other way around. We should follow the guide and trust his judgement. At the end of the journey we will reach our goal which is to be presented to God with all the knowledge we will have gathered during our journey. His book 'The Broken Wing' is the finest example of its kinds.

This concept consists of several elements which are mapped between the source and target domain, for example travellers of a journey are the lovers of the relationship, the vehicle is the relationship itself, the destination is the purpose of the relationship, the distance travelled is the progress made and the obstacles along the way are difficulties encountered in the relationship. Moreover, Jibran explains the element to his love as a journey metaphor: a guide who leads us on our way through life. Even if the guide may lead us through pain and suffering, he knows the route we will have to walk in order to fulfil our destiny and reach the goal.

Love is a Gardener and a Sovereign Feeling :

As philosopher of love, Jibran points out that the gardener not only grows plants, he prunes them as well. He does not do this out of spite but because he wants his plants to grow in the best possible way. The same is true of love. According to Jibran Khalil Jibran love is also a farmer who harvests the crop, and a baker who makes bread out of the harvest for God. The baker delivers the best bread which has gone through the processes of being gathered, threshed, sifted, ground, kneaded and finally baked. In other words, turning ourselves over to the will of love will prepare us with the knowledge and experience that God needs in afterlife. We will have to go through a process of maturing and developing in order to be refined.

Jibran explains outright that love is a threshing floor and that to love is to undergo a baking process. We are vulnerable when we love someone and the more we open ourselves, the more we are likely to get hurt by the person we love.

Such descriptions are found also in Arabic works. He took the raw materials for stories from the villages where the villas used to dwells. Human society accustomed with love. Without love, faith and believe a society never been formed so Jibran pursuit his love in village life. According to Jibran "It is wrong to think that love comes from long companionship and persevering courtship. Love is the offspring of spiritual affinity and unless that affinity is created in a moment, it will not be created for years or even generations".

Conclusion :

When it comes to the subject of love, Jibran uses unconventional conceptual metaphors as well as conventional conceptual metaphors, both those which have been developed by extension and those which have not been developed at all. Conventionally, Jibran sees love as a journey. However, he extends this metaphor by adding the element of a guide to it. Unconventionally, he sees love as sovereign, who can both crown and crucify people. He also personifies love as a gardener, farmer and baker who prepare us for meeting God.

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Since March 2002
An International, Registered & Referred Monthly Journal : Research Paper
Research Link - 126, Vol - XIII (7), September - 2014, Page No. 143-145
RNI No. MPHIN-2002-7041, ISSN No.- 0973-1628

Arab-American Literary Society : A Study

The researchers of the Arabic literature explained the success of the Arab Mahjar writers in different ways. According to some of them it was related with their close contact with the western literature, according to others the success was accomplished because of the works which were written in a new unique and original way, different from the traditional one. In both cases, describing the different sides of life and the society in a sensitive manner the Mahjar writers created rich heritage through bringing the innovations to the Arab literature. The migrant writers operated more organized with the societies they had created. The literary societies established both in North and South America played a significant role in the development, promotion and a closer recognition of the Arab literature in the West.

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Introduction :

The last part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century had seen a great literary movement in Arabic literature. During this period a group of young talents of Syria and Lebanon have immigrated to USA for some political and economic reasons. Some of them were migrated to North America and some of them were migrated to South America especially Venezuela and Argentina. These young talents have a deep interest towards their motherland and mother tongue, Arabic. They left no stone unturned for the development of Arabic language and literature even in foreign land. Aida Imangulieva writes: "Those Arab immigrants who succeeded in establishing themselves in America took a keen interest in the life of the homeland they had forsaken, and strove to preserve their national traditions and language. In order to unite still more closely in this foreign land the Arabs joined together in various clubs and societies and started newspapers and magazine" (Aida Imangulieva, Gibran, Rihani & Naimy, Inner Farne Press, Oxford, 2009, P: 20).

The literary and political forces of these immigrant Arab talents gathered around the periodical press and published many outstanding Arabic periodicals in America. The first of its kinds was' Kawkab Amrika' published from New York in between 1892-1909 edited by Najib Arbili. Some other example of these kinds of journals and magazines are 'Al-Ayyam', 1897, edited by Yusuf Ma'aluf, 'Al-Huda', 1898, edited byNahum Mukarzil, 'Mir'atul Gharb', 1899, edited by Najib Musa Diyab, 'Al-Muhajir', 1903, edited by Amin al-Ghurayyib, 'Al-Sayeh', 1912, edited by Abdul Masih al-Haddad, 'Al-Funun', 1913, edited by Nasib Arida, 'Al-Sameer', 1927, edited by Ilya Abu Madi, etc. These newspapers, journals and magazines were published mainly from New York, Boston, and Washington in two languages, Arabic and English.

These emigrant writers even founded some literary societies. Among these literary societies 'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah' (The Pen League), 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusia' (The Andalusian Society) and 'Al-Rabitah al-Adabiyah' (The Literary Bond) are outstanding.

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah (The Pen League) :

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah (The Pen League) was the first Arab-American literary society, formed initially by Nasib Arida and Abdul Masih al-Haddad in 1915 and subsequently re-formed in 1920 under the leadership of Jibran Khalil Jibran. Mikhail Nu'aima was chosen as the secretary and supported by a group of young writers who has been working closely since 1911.

Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah was the biggest Arabic literary society formed by the writers who were characterized with a new way of thinking. The first members of society were Jibran Khalil Jibran (president) Mikhail Nu'aima (secretary), William Katzeflis (cashier) Ilya Abu Madi, Nasib Arida, Rashid Ayyub, Abdul Masih al-Haddad and Nadra al-Haddad. However the famous Mahjar writer, philosopher and poet Amin al-Rihani who lived in New York at those times wasn't a member of this society.

The main objective of 'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah' was to preserve the Arabic language and literature in the 'New World', to bring it to the level which meets the requirements of the modern world literature, as well as to bring innovations and create the literature with release ideas. For better understanding the objective let us take a look at some of the statements written by Mikhail Nu'aima:

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"Everything which is written in ink on paper cannot be considered as a literary example. As well as not everyone who writes the articles and poems can be a writer. The literature feeds from the land, air and light of life. The real writer is one who is sensitive, attentive, has a clear point of view to all the processes which occur in real life and the ability to express all these in the right way. This 'new spirit' which tries to save the literature from backwardness and imitation, is the hope of today and the pillar for tomorrow… However, it would not be right to reject the classic literature completely for the functioning of the new literary spirit. There are the works of such authors which are used today and will be used as a valuable resource in future. The imitation of these works will bring only detriment to our literature. That's why it is necessary to bring new breath and spirit" (International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3 No. 14, Special Issue - July 2013, P: 201).

The members of 'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah' were in a favour of writing not in classic Arabic language, but in modern simplified one. Thus, they tried to clean up the Arabic language from archaic words. The statements of Jibran due to this fact are very interesting:

"You can take the Arabic language which Sibaveyhi Al-Asvad speaks, but leave me the language that mother speaks with her child, the lover speaks with his beloved" (International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3 No. 14, Special Issue - July 2013, P: 201).

The prose was dominated in the works of the members of 'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah'. The style, which expresses the release and emotional feeling, draws an attention in the prose works of these writers. Aside from the successful prose works, the members of the society created very beautiful examples of poetry also.

Al-Sayeh (The Traveler), an Arab-American newspaper, published in 1912 under the guidance of Abdul Masih al-Haddad became a press organ of 'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah'. This newspaper delivered important messages to the Arabic world from the American continent and managed to influence lots of writers. All members of the society published their articles and odes in this newspaper.

'Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah' was dissolved following the death of Jibran Khalil Jibran in 1931 and the returning of Rashid Ayyub, Nasib Arida, and Mikhail Nu'aima to Lebanon in 1932. One of the famous Mahjar writers Jibran Khalil Jibran being the writer, playwright and artist motivated other writers, artists, musicians. As a result, in 1990 in order to perpetuate the memory of a well-known writer the Memorial Garden of Poetry named after Jibran Khalil Jibran was laid out in Washington D.C. by the decree of George Bush.

Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya (The Andalusian Society) :

It is true that the immigrant Arabs who lived in South America succeeded to establish many societies, but 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' (The Andalusian Society) one that was created in the Brazilian city of San Paulo in January 1933 was the biggest one. 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' was founded under the leadership of Mishal Ma'luf. The other members of this society are: Dawud Shukur (Deputy Chieftain), Nazir Jaytun, Yusuf al-Bayini, etc. it was not a coincidence that the society was named 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' as it is seen from the name; this society has the distinction of the literature of Andalusia. It may be also mentioned here that Shukrullah Al-Jurr, a leading person of 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya', was impressed by the president of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kamal Ataturk.

The literature of Andalusia is formed at the junction of East and West and unites the features of East and West. The Arabs called Spain Andalusia. The settlement of Arabs in the early eighth century in Spain and establishing their literature and culture in the Western country for the first time was a significant event in the history of the Arab literature. It had a great impact on the formatting and future development of the Arab literature. The first arrival of the Arabs to Spain is associated with the name of Arabic commander Tariq Ibn Ziyad (711 year). Afterwards, when the supremacy of dynasty of Amavy was stopped by the dynasty of Abbasid in the year of 750, one of the Amavy princes Abdurrahman fled to Spain and in the year of 757 restored the Amavy Government there. The supremacy of Amavy caliphate in Spain lasted till the beginning of the eleventh century. In 1492 the last pillar of Arabs in Spain-Granada collapsed and Arab-Muslim rule in Spain came to an end.

The Mahjar writers as well as the Andalusian ones have always lived with the sense of longing to homeland. However, there are the differences in the expression of this sense between the poems of Andalusian and Mahjar poets. Thus, this theme in Mahjar poetry was expressed more frankly and deeply. They wrote about the living conditions and difficulties that migrant Arab writers faced in remote areas, their love and longing to their families and homeland.

The other Mahjar writers also expressed their longing for their homeland in a sincere manner. George Saydah in many of his odes writes about his sense and feeling to the Damascus. A special place of Damascus in his heart cannot be denied.

The Mahjar poets Rashid Ayyub, Shafiq Maaluf, Ilyas Farhad who lived in South America also wrote poems about the beauty of nature. As it was mentioned, the Mahjar literature disseminated the Andalusian literature so much, that Mahjar literature was considered as a continuation of Andalusian literature by many professors. However, one significant difference should be taken into account. Thus, the representatives of Andalusian literature were attentive about the form of the poem. Unlike them, the Mahjar poets managed to show the inner world of person much better. That is why the Mahjar literature has wider range of themes of poems.

In fact, the Mahjar writers who lived in South America also wrote about the similarity between them and those who arrived to Andalusia (Spain) in the VIII century. Thus, as the representatives of Andalusian literature brought differences

to the form and contest of poems in the Arabic literature, so did the Mahjar writers. Muvashah and zajal forms of poem were created by the representatives of Andalusian literature and had a big place in Mahjar literature as well. 'Aganil Andalus' (The songs of Andalusia) by Fawzi Al-Ma'luf includes the poets in Maupassant's style. The tokens of Andalusian literature can be seen not only in poems but in prose as well. 'Tahiyyat al-Andalus' (The Greetings to Andalusia) by Ilyas Farhad and 'Al-Andalusia' by Rashid Salim Al-Khuri were written by impact of Andalusian literature.

Thus, it is known that the Mahjar writers contacted with Spanish writers such as Fransisko Villiaespesa who reflected the Arabic literature of Andalusian period in his works. This poet wrote the preface to the 'Ala Bisati al-Rih' (Flying over the carpet) by Fawzi Al-Ma'luf. Fevzi Al-Maaluf translated the ode 'Qirnata' by Villiaespesa into Arabic.

The main objective of the 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' was to established 'The New World' to spread the Mahjar literature in the Middle East, and the literature of Middle East in South America especially in Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. And there was a great role of 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' in the sharing of the ideas of the community in the Middle East.

'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' was continued until 1941. In 1941, the president of Brazil, J.Vargas, banned the publication of all the newspapers and magazines in foreign languages. As a result, 'Al-Usbah al-Andalusiya' was also stopped to be published. However, in 1947 re-publication of the magazine was launched as a result of the efforts of the brother of the chair the poet Shafiq Ma'luf.

Al-Rabitah al-Adabiya (The Literary Society) :

'Al-Rabitah al-Adabiya' (The Literary Society) was founded by George Saydah in the capital of Argentina Buenos Aires in 1949. The main objective of this society is to develop the Arabic literature in South America. This society was functioned only for two years as its founder George Saydah was left for Lebanon in 1951. As a result 'Al-Rabitah al-Adabiya' was stopped in its buds.

As it can be seen, the immigrant writers developed their creative activities by uniting around different societies in order to preserve their own language, customs, and national ideology. To be aware of the political and cultural processes, occurring in their homeland, they tried their level best to develop Arabic language and literature in foreign land. Despite the difficulties of living in alien lands, the main priority for these writers was to immortalize their origins and not to fall apart from the Arab people. The literary societies that they established brought their contribution in realizing this objective.

Conclusion :

The researchers of the Arabic literature explained the success of the Arab Mahjar writers in different ways. According to some of them it was related with their close contact with the western literature, according to others the success was accomplished because of the works which were written in a new unique and original way, different from the traditional one. In both cases, describing the different sides of life and the society in a sensitive manner the Mahjar writers created rich heritage through bringing the innovations to the Arab literature. The migrant writers operated more organized with the societies they had created. The literary societies established both in North and South America played a significant role in the development, promotion and a closer recognition of the Arab literature in the West.

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