

Jibran Khalil Jibran as a philosopher in Arabic Literature

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Abstract

This research paper signifies a study of Jibran Khalil Jibran as a philosopher. He was an outstanding poet, philosopher and artist in Arabic literature who was born in Lebanon. He primarily was a thinker addressing himself to the study of his philosophy. Thereafter he had been able to establish the thought and well defined theory of love, nature, etc. He was also a good poet and a student of philosophy who found himself more concerned with his ideas not with his theory of love but with Jibran, the lover. *The Prophet (Al-Nabi)* was written by Jibran and was published after eleven years when he immigrated to Boston. In *The Prophet* he wrote as well his thought seen to have passed through two stages. His early Arabic works are nymphs of the "Valley", "*Sprits Rebellious*", *Broken Wings* and "*A Tear and A Smile*" were published between 1907 to 1914. His later mature stage of processions the tempest, the madman which almost works are consisted with philosophical thoughts. In the *Broken Wings* he tells the story about his love with Salma Karamah when the local archbishop frustrates in love and by forcibly marrying Salmah Karamah to his nephew. From this tragedy he finds the opportunity and singing, his love of the virgin beauty of Lebanon. In "*Sprits Rebellious*" the heretic is expelled from a monastery in mount Lebanon because he was too Christian to be tolerated.

Introduction

Jibran was an Egyptian poet and philosopher. He was inspired by the orientalist Rousseau's ideas on the innocence of the natural man as opposed to the man corrupted by civilization and materialism and he repeatedly pointed out to the contrast between the natural world and the human world in his writings. In 1923, when his most famous book *The Prophet* was published, he knew that it was his greatest achievement in the history of Arabian countries and it was the most important book. After three years his writing *The Prophet* and *Sand and Foam* were published in English. This is a book of beautiful sayings accompanied by seven illustrations by Jibran. *Sand and Foam* was followed one year later by another collection under the title of *Kalimat Jibran* translated as (*Spiritual Sayings*). At that time Gibran started also to contribute many articles having philosophy and published to a quarterly journal entitled *New Orient*. This journal echoed his message of peace and unity in diversity in the world.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To know Jibran as a philosopher.
- ii. To study concerned poet with his ideas with his theory of love.
- iii. To study his contribution to Arabic philosophy.

Data and Methodology

Descriptive method has been selected for this research paper. Both primary and secondary data have been collected which are available in book forms and secondary sources are

available both in book forms and journal and through the survey I acknowledged due to collection and analysis of data that Khalil Jibran was a enormous writer who contributed many works to Arabic literature. I have collected data from useful and reliable sources.

Hypothesis

Hypotheses have been tested in respect of his philosophical thought how his writings reflect a more universal and philosophical discourse and he developed what water field refers to as an “evolutionary philosophy” in Arabic literature during the 20th century. It has been judge how Arabic philosophy had been developed during that period in Egypt through his philosophy. He contributed with the beginning of the century some of the earliest to produce in poetry and philosophy in Arabic which were basically tread both in Arabic language and literature.

Results and Discussion

Jibran as a Philosopher

As a philosopher Jibran started to preach the role of poets in the developing human consciousness and human soul in its journey towards a more divine realm. He always thought of himself as a poet and philosopher. He told “Better a poor thought, musically said, than a good thought in bad form”. From the beginning of 1920s, he adopted the role of poet-as-prophet, confirming Josephine and Mary’s thought. His short story *Al-Awasif* published in 1920 and celebrated withdrawing from society and civilization in philosophy and joining the natural world. He idealized her as a “spiritual being-almost an angel rather than a human being”. Jibran started to contribute to a new magazine *The Dial*, which became his main vehicle for reaching the western audience. He was also still writing pieces for the Arabic newspapers and maintained solid relationship with the Syrian community both in the United States and abroad. Thereafter Jibran got success in the English speaking world, especially that he was the first immigrant to join its board. He started to work with faith to a symbolist style that focused on naked human bodies delicately intertwined and for which Jibran Khalil became popular and his art had received much less attention. Jibran continued to give conversation corresponding to the Syrian audience in New York which welcomed him as a philosophical writer especially on Arab nationalism and Syria’s independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Contributions of Jibran in Arabic Philosophy

‘Al-Funan’ an Arabic journal edited by Nasib Arida, a close friend of Jibran Khalil published his poems, prose poems, essays and parables including a collection entitled “*A Tear and a Smile*”. Through the journal *Al-Funun* Jibran also met his contemporary men of letters Mikhail Nuwaimah, who was immigrant writer was to become his closest friend. Jibran became a popular member of the Poetry Society where he sought favourable reception of his English writing. Roosevelt Robinson was also another member of the Poetry Society who was a sister of Theodore Roosevelt and an established poet. Jibran had described his read pieces from *The Madman* as “destructive and diabolical stuff...contrary to all forms of morality and true beauty” became a fan of Roosevelt Robinson and an admirer of her writings. Jibran also met James Oppenheim who was the novelist and poet led him to become a member of the advisory committee of *The Seven Arts* (1916). In the early 1919 their letters became more intimate, more passionate. Ziadeh became for Jibran a remote soul mate and another guiding spirit in his life.

He was an advocate of Syria relying on herself and her resources to solve her own problems and unity among his people. After the World War I his political activism was increased

by his philosophical thoughts. Jibran also conducted fund-raising activities after the World War I to help his starving people in the country Lebanon in addition to writing philosophical pieces.

The Broken Wings of Jibran which was published in Arabic language in 1912 which increased Jibran's fame in the Arab world. His famous volume of pictures entitled "*Twenty Drawings*" which was published in 1919 reflects philosophy. His writings in English definitely increased English-speaking readers and recognized his abilities as an author. Critics argued that *The Madman* represents a turning point in his career and in his writing style. *Al-Mawakib* is a long philosophical poem accompanied by eight drawings by him which rejects civilization and suggests a simpler 'recipe'. *The Forerunner* his Parables and Poems was followed in 1920 and is a reminder of the human's potential for progressing towards a greater self. In the 1920 he formed a literary society with some of contemporary writers called "*Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya*", translated as the Pen Association which furthered their fame in the Arabic-speaking world where Jibran was elected as president, and Nuwaima was Secretary. They would meet to talk about common goals like Arab nationalism and renaissance of Arabic literature. Jibran worked hard to keep the Pen League group together but he started to be less openly involved in politics. Indeed, he wrote a famous prose-poem in 1920 entitled "*You have your Lebanon*" and "*I have my Lebanon*" the publication of which was unfortunately banned by the Syrian government. In the poem he contrasts the Lebanon of beautiful nature and peace between its people. Jibran relied as editor and financier, but they stayed close friends even though their collaboration came to an end 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". Jibran was involved in a twenty year literary and love relationship with May Ziadeh, an established Lebanese writer was living in Egypt. They however, never met; their relationship was carried on wholly by mail and Jibran wanted to keep it secret but they addressed one another as literary critics, seeking comments on each other's work. In 1923 his most famous book "*The Prophet*" was published and received favourable reactions. Jibran knew it was his greatest achievement and the most important book he ever wrote. He had kept the manuscript for years before he had it published, seeking further moments of inspiration. His second book was to be "*The Garden of the Prophet*" which was edited and published in 1933 after his death and the third great book "*The Death of the Prophet*", was left as a fragment.

Jibran wrote the longest book "*Jesus, the Son of Man*" which was published in 1928. It was his second most important book after "*The Prophet*". In this book he traces the birth and life of Jesus and its human rather than supernatural aspect and he reflects his philosophical inspiration by the teachings of the Christ. His famous book "*The Earth Gods*" was published in 1931. This book consists of a dialogue in free verse between three titans on the human destiny.

He also wrote a play in the English language entitled "*Lazarus and his Beloved*" and *The Blind* was unfortunately not published in his lifetime. Jibran suffered from dangerous fatal disease cirrhosis in liver because he started to seek refuge in heavy drinking and solitude in his studio in daily life. He was the man of strong mind but he became increasingly weak and knew that his abilities as a writer were going away. In 1930's letter to May Ziadeh he emotionally told "I am a small volcano whose opening has been closed. If I were able to write something great and beautiful, I would be completely cured. If I could cry out, I would gain back my health". By the year 1931, Jibran spent most of his time in bed for his bad health. According to his contemporary writer Nuwaima, Jibran refused an operation that might have saved his life. At length he instead waited for death, and it came to him at the hospital, at 10.55 pm, on April 10, 1931, at the age of 48.

Conclusion

Gibran was too much interest shifted to mysticism and primitivism and his writings returned again and again to the beauty and purity of nature. He was the man of romanticized nature and found power as an inspiration in his poetry. He himself identified the divine essence with the natural world through his philosophy. His writings establish a mystical union with nature, a relationship of love and harmony. The natural beauty of Gibran's home village Bisharri was so much strong source of inspiration and nurtured to his imagination. His writing especially in poetry is nostalgic in nature of the magnificent scenery of his childhood which portrays him rejoicing in peace and freedom among the immortal cedars of Lebanon the famous valley of *Qadisha* and the mountains of *Sannin* and Famm al-Mizab.

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