

# **SPIRITUAL LOVE IN THE WRITINGS OF JIBRAN KHALIL JIBRAN: A STUDY**

**Final Report of Minor Research Project under UGC XII Plan submitted  
to UGC, North Eastern Regional Office, Guwahati, Assam**

*Sponsored by*

**University Grants Commission  
North Eastern Regional Office, Guwahati, Assam**



**ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये**

*Prepared and Submitted by*

**Dr. Syed Abdullah Ahmed**

**(Principal Investigator)**

**Assistant Professor**

**Department of Arabic**

**Rangia College, Rangia, Assam**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the entire work embodied in this project entitled **“Spiritual love in the writings of Jibran Khalil Jibran: A Study”** is the result of the research carried out by me under the financial assistance of UGC XII plan. I further declare that I have not submitted the matter related to this project either in whole or in part for any degree or award elsewhere.

Date: 11 Nov, 2018

Place: Rangia

*Syed Abdullah Ahmed*

(Dr. Syed Abdullah Ahmed)

Principal Investigator

## PREFACE

Jibran Khalil Jibran was an emigrant (Arab-American) writer. His thoughts, ideas and writings were very dynamic. His love of wisdom, humanism made him an interdisciplinary man in nature. His spirits always rebel against injustices of the society. At the same time he applied new literary art in Arabic Literature throughout his writings. His spirit rebels at the chasm created between what he perceives to be the natural order of things as instigated by God and artificial and oppressive orders created by humans to attain control over one another. It is only by seeing the truth in the oppression all around us that we have any hopes of transcending it. This study particularly highlights on Khalil Jibran; the story of a visionary youth who turned out to be the most famous Arab American ever and one of the world's great writers, by virtue of the phenomenal success of his famous book *The Prophet*. His philosophy of love makes it clear that love is a holy flame, a divine call and source of inspiration. Love, beauty and virtue dwell together. The spiritual love does not contact with physical relation. Description of pure love is discussed in his different writings.

Thus his works show the development of his thought and reflection through the years and present other sides of him, including the poet-rebel and the sensitive Romantic fired by ideals.

For the purpose of systematic scientific analysis, the present work is divided as follows:

**INTRODUCTION:** An introduction of Jibran Khalil Jibran and his nature of love have been sketched here.

**CHAPTER- I:** It describes in detail about the life of Jibran Khalil Jibran. Here an attempt has been made to show his artistic and poetic career also.

**CHAPTER- II:** This chapter discusses on literary works of Jibran specially his books written in Arabic as well as English. The chapter also tries to focus his nature of love through his significant writings.

**CHAPTER- III:** In this chapter the spiritual love of Jibran khalil Jibran has been analyzed in detail. Results and discussions dealing with the finding of his philosophy of love have been elaborated here in this important chapter.

**CONCLUSION:** this is a summary as well as an ending report of the whole study.

Apart from these, efforts are being made to offer suggestions for future studied. However, there is an attempt in the study to cover as much of range and depth as possible before getting into core issue of the project.

*Syed Abdullah Ahmed*

**(Dr. Syed Abdullah Ahmed)**

Principal Investigator

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Date: 11 Nov, 2018

Place: Rangia

*Syed Abdullah Ahmed*

(Dr. Syed Abdullah Ahmed)

Principal Investigator

# **INTRODUCTION**

Love is God gifted. Every love is the best in the world and the dearest. It plays a vital role not only in human life but in nature also. Philosophy of love is different man to man. Jibran's love of wisdom is popularly known around the world. 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 necessity with the natural world.

Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-1931) 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 century with revivalist figures in the Arab world like Butrus al-Bustami, Khalil Mutran, and al-Aqqad, among others who were attracted to Western poetry and particularly English Romanticism. Living in the American society 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 developed some new styles there. Arab-American modern writers were very much influenced by the Western culture and civilization in

attempting to reform the traditional usage of Arabic language and introducing some new ideas to Arabic literature. They developed the prose literature as well as poetry and also introduced Western themes like romanticism, individualism, humanism, and secularism.

The love of friends is deeply rooted in Jibran's doctrine of humanism and spiritualism. At first glance this love seems to be self interested as when he says "your friend is your needs answered". But he continues: "he is your field which you saw with love and reap with thanksgiving. He is your board and fireside." Jibran's philosophy of love makes a characteristically eloquent appeal to all of us to see beyond the petty and often unjust laws that humans have created for one another.

# CHAPTER- I

## A LIFE SKETCH OF JIBRAN KHLAIL JIBRAN

His full name in Arabic was جبران خليل جبران (*Jibran Khalil Jibran*), the middle name *Khalil* was his father's name. When Jibran started his schooling in Boston in 1895, his English teacher suggested him to drop his first name *Jibran* and to change the spelling of "Khalil" to "Kahlil" to suit the American pronunciation. He did so. Therefore, English people use to pronounce his name as *Gibran Kahlil Gibran* while in Arabic his name is pronounced as *Jibran Khalil Jibran*.

### Birth

"The date of my birth is unknown."-Jibran said. But as per journal entries and letters written it has been confirmed that his date of birth was January 6, 1883.<sup>1</sup> He was born in Bushrri of North Lebanon. His father Khalil Saad Jibran was a tax collector of his country, used to spend most of the time with drinking and playing cards. He originally belonged to Maronite family in Syria; later on settled in Bushrri. Jibran's mother Kamila Rahmah was very sincere and gentle lady. She got married with Khalil after the demise of her first husband and the annulment of her second marriage to Yusuf Elias Geagea. She had a son, Boutros, born in

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<sup>1</sup> . Najjar Alexandre, *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography*, London, 2008, p.- 14

1877, by the former, who had died in Brazil, where together they had gone to seek their fortune. Kamila sincerely looked after her four children. She had two daughters... Sultana and Mariana, two sons.. Jibran and another was adopted named Boutros.

### **Migration to America**

It was 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1895 Kamila with her children migrated to Boston. At that time Jibran was twelve years. The eldest brother Boutros aged eighteen years set about looking for work and soon found a job in a textile shop. Saddened to see Boutros killing himself trying to support the family while Jibran was busy with reading, drawing and daydreaming, mother Kamila urged Jibran to help his brother out. But Jibran refused to work saying that the little finger of an artist is worth a thousand merchants- except Boutros. Jibran left no stone to achieve his goal. He attended a charitable institution named Denison House, where Catholic priests taught and where drawing and theatre classes were held. He drew the picture of *The Bacchante*, the 'scandalous' statue of Frederick MacMonnies (which sits majestically in the cloisters of the Boston Public Library). He showed the sketch to Florence Pierce, his teacher at Denison House, who was impressed by his talent and introduced him to an influential social worker, Jessie Fremont Beale. In 1896, Beale wrote to her friend, Fred to suggest that he take the promising young boy under

his patronage. Fred Holland was a great artist of that time. He was very bold while using symbolism and mysticism in his works. He was at same time Director of the Copeland & Day Publishing Co., established in Boston in 1893. A notorious homosexual, he took interest in the male body and did not hesitate to photograph young Adonises in their skimpiest clothing. As Day needed Oriental models for his photographs, he agreed to meet Jibran and invited him to pose for him dressed in Arabic, Levantine or Indian clothing. Jibran accepted Day's proposal. Day opened many doors for Jibran who illustrated several books published by Copeland & Day, among which was the anthology of poetry by the Canadian Duncan Campbell Scott and a book about the astronomer and poet, Omar Khayyam, written by Nathan Haskell Dole. Gradually Jibran ground one of his illustrations was included in an English translation of Maeterlinck's *Wisdom and Destiny*.

In 1898 Fred Holland Day organised an exhibition of 250 photographs at the Camera Club in New York. There Jibran met many great figures; he also met there Miss Josephine Preston Peabody (nicknamed 'Posy') who told him that she could see him everywhere.<sup>2</sup> Posy the twenty-three years girl belonged to an established family, but after the death of her father in 1884 the family faced financial problem.

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<sup>2</sup> . *Ibid*, p. 30

She pursued her education in reputable institutions of higher learning, Boston Girls' Latin School and Radcliffe College.

Jibran was overcome by the beauty of Posy, he memorised her features, and promised to draw her portrait as soon as he could. Jibran's family began to grow concerned about his social life. After all, Day had a fiendish reputation, and people were asking questions. Some scholars suspected Jibran of homosexuality. The writer's intransigent attitude towards homosexuality, as confined by letters he wrote, and his various affairs, public or secret, with older women, however renders this theory unlikely. Matters got worse when in 1897 Jibran fell under the spell of a thirty year old woman, the wife of a businessman. Kamila and Boutros were shocked by his behaviours and exasperated by his frequent nocturnal absences. Kamila had opened a shop of Oriental goods at 61 Beach Street, and thanks to her own savings combined with her elder son's, They were able to take action. They planned to keep Jibran away from the woman and specially from the influence of Fred Holland Day, who took pictures of naked men. At last he was sent back to Lebanon. He said about his departure from Boston: "it was like a dream, not clear and pleasant one, but a confusing dream filled with uncertainty. I was leaving my mother, my brother, and my two sisters behind in Boston. But ahead

of me, far away in Mount Lebanon, near the Cedars, lay my father. And me? I knew I could only become what I was to be if I went back home.”

Before leaving, Jibran completed Posy’s portrait and on Fred Holland Day’s suggestion, he sent it to the young woman with a dedication. At the very moment of leaving, Jibran could not help thinking about his first muse and wondering if he would ever see her again.

### **Back to the native land**

On 30 August 1898, Jibran reached Beirut. He then went straight to Basra and rushed into his father’s arm who was looked defeated worried about the future of his family in Boston and drank like a fish. Everybody welcomed Jibran to his native land. The doctor-poet Selim asked him to get admission in al-Hikma College, Beirut. On 20 October, 1898 Jibran enrolled at al-Hikma College, where he studied until June 1901. He found there a great teacher Father Yusuf Haddad who influenced several Lebanese writers.<sup>3</sup> Through him Jibran learned Arabic language by reading Ibn Khaldun, al-Mutanabbi, Ibn Sina and the Sufi poets. Once Jibran was introduced Hala Daher by Dr. Selim Daher. She was the eldest daughter of the eminent Tannus Hanna Daher who fell under the spell of Jibran. But her brother Iskandar, watched him like a hawk. He made it clear to the ‘strange’ that the relationship could go nowhere; there was

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<sup>3</sup> . Gibra Jean & Gibra Kahlil G, *Kahlil Gibran, Beyond Borders*, Interlink Publishing, 2017 p. 59



too wide a gap in the status of the two families. Hala was two years older than Jibran. In their society, it was unwise to mess about with love, so Jibran did not proceed further.

After some months, at the age of eighteen Jibran met Sultana Tabet, the sister of his old classmate Ayub. She was twenty two years old and had just lost her husband. According to Jibran she was beautiful, talented and loved poetry. For four months, they saw each other, exchanging books and sharing their comments on them. Thus Jibran fell in love with Sultana; but this love did not last long. Sultana's sudden death filled Jibran with incredibly profound sadness. People sent him objects that had belonged to her: a silk handkerchief, some jewels and a parcel of seventeen letters. These were love letters that the young woman had written without ever having dared send to him.

### **Back to the USA**

In 1902 Jibran was on the way back to Boston; he stopped in Paris, got the bad news that Sultana had left for her heavenly only before some days ago. Anyway after two weeks of her death Jibran reached Boston on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1902 and he was greeted by his family members who were crushed by the loss of the young Sultana and still in tears.<sup>4</sup> That same year Jibran was to suffer another great loss, that of his only stepbrother whom he loved dearly and who looked after the family there. At the age

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<sup>4</sup> . Najjar Alexandre, *Gibran Kahli: A Biography*, Op. Cit. p. 42

of twenty-five, Boutros died “with Khalil at his side.” Before the young poet had a chance to catch his breath or attempt to recover from his loss, he was to be visited once more with shadow of death.<sup>5</sup> This blow was the hardest. His sick mother Kamila passed away minutes before he returned home to check on her. So, Jibran immediately fainted.

Within a period of only twelve months, Jibran had lost three of the dearest and closest people to his life. Although wounded and bleeding, the artist in Jibran was determined to overcome the tragedy. Trying to prevent the wheels of tragedy from crushing him, Jibran paid his attention to his art work and sought the comforting company of his old friend Josephine Peabody (Posy). He shared his painting and poetry with Posy.<sup>6</sup> He certainly felt that she was less judgemental and more understanding than his own countrymen who would have preferred that he get a job and keep the family store and give up his pen and brush. During the dark period of his life, the poet’s choice was clear: either surrender to despair and collapse under the heavy load of this tragic calamity or accept the inevitable catastrophic fate, carry his cross, and continue his procession regardless of the wounds and the scars. During this tragic period Fred Holland Day’s encouragements helped him very much to proceed further in his life.

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<sup>5</sup> . El-Hage, George Nicolas, *Gibran Kahlil Gibran: The man Versus the Legend*, p. 36

<sup>6</sup> . *Ibid*, p. 37

## Mary Haskel

On 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1904, Day suggested that Jibran exhibit his paintings that spring at Harcourt Studios, a building comprising about forty studios belonging to poor painters and photographers in town, including himself. Jibran gladly accepted the proposal. The exhibition ran from 30 April to 10 May. His drawings made a profound impression, and, considering his age, the qualities shown in them were extraordinary for originality and depth of symbolic significance. In this exhibition Jibran met Mary Haskel, who played a very significant role in his life. She belonged to an affluent family in Colombia, South Carolina; she was the daughter of an ex-Army officer. Mary was a feminist. She was constantly helping young, struggling artists and enthusiastically championed social and political causes. Attracted to the environment of Boston, she settled there. She was 10 (Ten) years senior to Jibran. Mary was not so beautiful, but her face shone and her blue eyes sparkled. She became impressed by the talent of the young boy and his paintings. In her first conversation with Jibran she asked him “ So young and so talented! Tell me, why are all the bodies in your paintings nudes?”, he replied “because the truth is naked. And the naked body is the closest and most beautiful symbol of life.” Again she asked “And why all these symbols of death and suffering?” he said “Because death and pain have always been a part of my life. In a

span of two years, I lost my sister, my brother and my mother. Each one of them held a special place in my heart”

Mary invited Gibran to join her circle of artists and educated friends. She soon became his confidante and was to follow him as his “guardian angel.” Jibran celebrated his twenty-fourth birthday on 6 January 1907, at Mary Haskell’s school, where he had been invited for tea. She was so willing to cultivate his talents that she later paid for him to attend an art school in Paris and fulfil his aspiration to be a symbolist painter.

### **Jibran in Paris**

Jibran’s staying in Paris was an important part in his life. He read Balzac and Voltaire and became more familiar with Rousseau and Tolstoy. Moreover, he met there some prominent personalities like the French Romantic sculptor Auguste Rodin, Lebanese writer and political thinker. Jibran started to contribute to *Al-Mohajer (The Immigrant)*, a prominent Arabic-language newspaper in New York. Its publisher, Ameen Goryeb met Jibran and was impressed by his writings.

Jibran’s relationship with Mary led him towards romance. His letters became increasingly intimate and he gradually shifted from addressing a mentor and a friend to expressing warm feelings. But upon his return to the USA, they both remained silent about the destination of their relationship. Eventually Mary confessed to Jibran her wish to keep

him only as a friend and to bring his potential as an artist and man of letters to its fullest. In his biography of Jibran, Mikhail Nuaima writes: “What of Mary? She loves him dearly, values his talents, understands his ambitions and aspirations and looks condolingly on his weaknesses and sins” (Naimy, 1964, p. 99).

In Boston, Gibran made a living through his sketches, poems, and prose poems. He began to write in other Arabic newspapers like *Miraat al-Gharb* (*the Mirror of the West*). In 1905, *Al-Mohajer* published his first Arabic book entitled *Nubdah fi Fan al-Musiqah* (*On Music, a Pamphlet*) which eulogizes music and was probably inspired by Gibran’s visits to the opera.

Jibran’s writing started to focus on his rebellious spirit against human oppression and injustice. *Ara’is al-Muruj*, published a year later and translated as *Nymphs of the Valley*, expresses his anti-feudal and anti-clerical convictions. The book is a collection of three stories which take place in Northern Lebanon.

Much in the same tone is *Al-Arwah al-Mutamarridah* (*Spirits Rebellious*), another collection of four short 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. “Kahlil the Heretic” is particularly defiant. As the title of the story suggests, Kahlil is

condemned by authority in the village for questioning the monks' wealth in relation to the poor peasants, and for encouraging the latter to reject the authority's control over their lives.

Through his publications and the political awareness he developed during his stay in Paris, Gibran became well-known within the American Syrian community. He was invited by a club of Syrian Student to give a talk and he joined Al-Halaqat al-Dhahabiyyah (the Golden Links Society), an international Syrian organization with US branches.

### **Jibran again at Boston and meeting Mary**

It was 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, 1910 Jibran arrived again in Boston. He hurried over to his sister Mariana's house. After meeting her he went to see Mary who received him with open arms and told him that she had just lost her father. Worried about keeping him under her control, she told him that she had decided to continue giving him the seventy-five dollars she was sending him monthly throughout his stay in Paris. She also advised him to rent larger accommodation so that he would have difficulties working on his art. Jibran availed the opportunity. The relationship between Mary and Jibran became stronger day by day. They frequently used to go together, visiting Museums, going to concerts or the theatre. The 10 December, 1910 was a remarkable day for Jibran-Mary relationship. That day evening was Mary's thirty seventh birthday and Jibran was invited to

have dinner at her house. All of a sudden he at midnight he took her hand, held it to his lips, and said that he loved her and wanted to marry her. But she refused his proposal due their age difference of ten years.<sup>7</sup> In her journal she expressed that although she knew that their love was mutual, she was afraid that age difference will make problem which may spoil their friendship. Jibran was wounded by her rejection. He wrote, 'Then the very day after I spoke to you of marriage you began to hurt me.' Mary soon realised for her rejection and decided to say 'yes' to Jibran, who would become hopeful again. In a letter July, 1915 she confessed, 'Khalil' I have done you all the wrong I could do. You took me to the very tenderest centre of your heart and it was from there that I gave you every blow and every wound.....My soul treated you like an inferior... I have been in one long, continued sin against you.....through all these five years.' But he was already in depression. To come out from disappointment Jibran made busy himself with writings. He took Mariana and two of his cousins as models and did portraits of several Bostonian personalities. He sketched a new self-portrait in oils: in it his face is turned three-quarter to the right with woman (Mary?) in the background holding a crystal ball. He continued writings and used to sent his works to the director of the New York News paper *Mir'at al-Gharb* ('The

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<sup>7</sup> . Gibran Jean & Gibran Kahlil G., *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World*, New York, 1974, p. 206

Mirror of the West') a virulent article titled, 'We and You', dedicated as usual to 'M.E.H.' ( Mary Elizabeth Haskell ). Then on Good Friday, he published an article titled 'The Crucified' which appeared later in his book *The Tempests*. This book shows his attachment to the figure of Jesus and his determination to raise his spirit by meditating to the Nazarene.

### **His political and religious views**

Living under the influence of the political ideas of the freedom fighter taking refuge in France, Jibran was trying to convince the Lebanese and Syrian communities in Boston to start an organisation to defend the cause of the Arab countries under Ottoman control. The organisation was founded in 1911 and was called 'al-Halaqa al-Dahabyia' (The Golden Circle). The founders decided to keep their activities clandestine and to call the members of this brotherhood 'al-Hurras' (The Guardians), a name inspired by the Masonic lodges. It was 25 February, 1911 at large meeting organised by the association, Jibran took the floor and delivered an important lecture to the Syrians to beware of the promises of the sultan and to rely on themselves from then on to through off the Turkish yoke. 'Whoever does not walk with head held high will remain his own slave, and he who is his own slave cannot walk freely. Freedom is a ray that emanates from the inside and not one that



shines from without', he declared. This significance speech was published in the newspaper *Mirat al-Gharb* that March, turned loyalist newspapers in Syria and Egypt against him. Two years later the famous journal *al-Saih* ('The Tourist') published his another significant article titled 'Open Letter from a Christian Poet to Muslims'. Through this article he appealed to all Muslims to get up against the occupation, as the Ottoman state was responsible for the decadence of Islamic civilization. That too, elicited the wrath of the Ottomans and their allies, 'I am Lebanese and proud of that. I am not an Ottoman and I am also proud of that. I am Christian and I am proud of that. But I love the Arab Prophet and I honour his name; I cherish the glory of Islam and worry that it will fade... Some people call me renegade as I hate the Ottoman state and wish for its eclipse. I answer them that I hate the Ottoman state because I love Islam and wish it would regain its glory.' Driven by prophetic intuition, Jibran thought that if the Syrians did not revolt, they would be driven back onto mercy of the imperialist forces that coveted the region. 'The Christian that I am, who placed Jesus in one half of his heart and Mohammed in the other half, assures you that if Islam does not conquer the Ottoman Empire, the European nations will dominate Islam. If none of you will rise against the internal enemy within this generation, the Levant will fall into the hands of those with fair skin and blue eyes...'

## Jibran in New York

Remembering the days passed in Paris Jibran could not adjust himself again in Boston. He said 'this is a city of mortal silence where nothing is happening....' Searching a better environment to develop his artistic output Jibran chose to go to New York. His sister Mariana pleaded to change his mind, but her efforts were in vain. Mary felt sorrow to see him moving away from her. Deep down her feelings were in disarray. She had decided not to marry him; but at the same time she also thought that his success was now imminent. So, she continued her supporting towards his artistic career.

It was October 1911 he moved into the Tenth Street Studio, the red brick building reserved exclusively for artistics. In the same year his famous book *The Broken Wings* was published in Arabic. This book can be regarded as the most romantic book Jibran ever wrote.

Over the course of 1913, Jibran met a number of influential personalities in the artistic world of New York, among whom were the poet Witter Bynner, editor of *McClure's Magazine*, and Arthur Brown Davies, founder of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors and organizer of an International Exhibition of Modern Art. In April 1913, a new magazine *al-Funoon* (The Art) was published by Naseeb Arida in New York. Jibran very eagerly wrote to this magazine and

published many of his articles and prose poems in it. In this same magazine, he wrote various literary studies about grand mystics such as al-Ghajjali and Ibn al-Farid. Jibran held al-Ghajjali in a great position. He writes 'In al-Ghajjali I found what makes him a golden chain that links his predecessors, the mystics of India, to other theologians who came after. Al-Ghajjali's inclinations are reminiscent of what Buddhist thinking had accomplished up till then; and in the recent works of Spinoza or William Blake, we find traces of these feelings.'<sup>8</sup>. So, in New York Jibran was able to expose his artistic name and fame throughout his valuable works.

### **May Ziaydeh**

Her nickname was 'May'. She was a daughter of a Lebanese teacher from Ehden, a village in North Lebanon and her mother was Palestinian. Born in Nazareth in 1886 she May grew up in the Land of Cedars and went to Antoura College. Unusually talented and with a command of English, French and Arabic, she made a name for herself in journalism and literature. In 1912, May discovered Jibran. After reading his article 'The Day of My Birth' in the Newspaper she fell under the spell of the writer's style. That same year '*Broken Wings*' was published. May read the book, loved it, and wrote to Jibran to congratulate him. Without ever having met, the two writers felt very close to each other, so

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<sup>8</sup> . Gajjali, *An Anthology of Sufism*, p. 302

close that Jibran considered there were 'invisible threads' binding his thoughts to hers, and his soul to hers, and he imagined that May's spirit, thanks to what he called the translucent element, was with him wherever he went. He even used the first person plural, as in hundreds of letters addressed to Mary Haskell, to prove his soul and May's were united despite their long distance.

In June 1921, May sent him her photo which inspired him to draw her portrait in charcoal. Jibran became very happy to find a woman with full round face, short brown hair, a sensual mouth and so and so. In her look there was something which electrified him very much. She had every beauty he looked for in a woman. But she was far away from him. In October 1923, Jibran found himself love-starved, Posy Micheline, Charlotte and Gertrude were no longer there. Mary had distanced herself. No longer holding back, he wrote to May to expressing 'You live in me, and I in you; you know this and I know it too.' In a letter 15 January, 1924 May became impatient and finally dared to declare her feelings to Jibran. After a long introduction written in a playful tone, she reproached him for having forgotten to send her holiday greetings. In it she invoked the longstanding rivalry between their two villages Bsharri and Ehden. She confessed her love to the one she nicknamed 'Al-Mostafa' the main character of Jibran's famous book *The Prophet*. Thus their

correspondence was going on frequently until Jibran's death. The last letter May received from Jibran was included a drawing of blue flame held in an open palm. Getting the news of Jibran's death, she let out a terrible cry of pain. Ten years later, she died, never having loved any other man.

### **Jibran's death**

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 knew that his abilities as a writer were fading away. In 1930 a letter to May Ziadeh he confessed: "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"<sup>9</sup>

By 1931, Jibran spent most of his time in bed. According to close friend Nu'aima, Jibran refused an operation that might have saved his life.<sup>10</sup> 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. Among other people close to Jibran, his sister Marianna and his best friend Nu'aima were by his side.

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<sup>9</sup> . *A Self-Portrait*, 1959, p. 91

<sup>10</sup> . *Nu'aima*, 1964, p. 218

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 honored 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 birthplace, Busharri, and his belongings and books were later sent to the Jibran museum in the Mar Sarkis monastery.

## **CHAPTER- II**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS OF JIBRAN KHALIL JIBRAN TO MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE**

Jibran Khalil Jibran, spent a greater part of his life in America, but he never forgot his native land (i.e. Lebanon). Impressed by the technological achievements of America, he viewed his adopted home from the vantage point of his own cultural heritage. Consequently he tried to infuse Eastern mysticism into western materialism, believing that humanity can best be served by a man, who is capable of bridging the two cultures and acknowledging the virtues of each. Jibran combined prose with the art of painting, sculpting, music and poetry. According to the Orientals, the merging of different arts appeared for the first time in Arabic in Jibran's writings. With his artistic background he paints with the pen and his expressions become pictures filled with life.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Pen Association**

It was of 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1920; Abdul Masih Haddad called for a meeting of Lebanese and Syrian writers from New York at his house. In that meeting all the writers discussed about the upliftment of Arabic

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<sup>11</sup> . Mahdi Ismat, *Modern Arabic Literature*, p. 146

Literature and they decided to form a committee to modernize the literature. Just one week later i.e. on 28<sup>th</sup> April, nine writers namely Amin Rihani, Mikhail Nuaima, Wadih Bahout, Rashid Ayub, Elia Abu Madi, Naseeb Arida, Nadra Haddad, Elias Atallah and William Catzefflis got together at Jibran's studio. They formed their proposed committee and it *al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya* (The Pen League). Accordingly they explained its two main objectives: (1) to publish the works of its members and of other worthy Arab authors & (2) to encourage of the translation of masterpieces from world literature into Arabic. Jibran was elected as president; Mikhail Nuaima was advisor and Catzefflis treasurer. They took a Hadith <sup>12</sup> to define their goal: '*How marvelous are the treasures hidden under the throne of Allah that only the poet can reveal them*'

Jibran thought the Arabic language had no future unless it was liberated from the old moulds. But it was very tough to initiate a real dialogue with the West and to incorporate the influence of European culture, without being dominated by it, into his native language 'The spirit of the West is a friend if we can take from it what we need but becomes an enemy if we have to accommodate it and bend ourselves to it.'

In August 1920, an anthology consist of thirty-one articles of Jibran was published by *al-Hilal* in Cairo.

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<sup>12</sup> . the most significant text in Islam after the Quran



The members of *al-Rabita* met fairly regularly from 1920 until Jibran died in 1931. They used to publish a good numbers of articles in *al-Sayih*. The Pen League ended up being the symbol of renaissance in Arabic literature.

Jibran wrote in two languages: Arabic and English. His literary credits can be divided into two phases. The first phase started in 1905, the year in which his first book الموسقي *"al-Musiqā"* was published; and the second phase began in 1918, while his first English book *"The Madman"* was published. So, in the first phase he wrote in Arabic, but from 1918 onwards his works were mainly in English language.

Jibran wrote most of his Arabic poetry and prose during the early years of his life. He created a new era in style which was influenced by western thoughts and which revolutionized the minds of the younger generation of his country. His writings are characterized by a strong sense of bitterness and disillusionment. His main aim was to reform the society. He criticized injustice inflicted upon women. He also critically attacked against clergymen and their lust for money and discloses his rebellion against the strictures of a bigoted and prejudiced society. His writings reveal that he has studied the high priests of Eshtar, Baal and Tamuz, the Moses and the Prophets. He deeply read of Christian and Islamic theology. His thrust took him to the fountains of Budha,