

**THE CYBERNETICS OF LOVE:
A STUDY OF KAHLIL GIBRAN**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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DECLARATION

I, DIVYA JOHN, hereby declare that this dissertation, THE CYBERNETICS OF LOVE: A STUDY OF KAHLIL GIBRAN has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled THE CYBERNETICS OF LOVE: A STUDY OF KAHLIL GIBRAN, is a record of the original studies and research carried out by DIVYA JOHN, Research Scholar, Department of English, Vimala College, Thrissur 680 009 (Calicut University), under my guidance and supervision and submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Ph. D. in English Language and Literature.



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PREFACE

The work of Kahlil Gibran I first chanced upon was *The Prophet* in the family bookshelf. The illustrations in it embarrassed the adolescent in me. I remember glancing slyly at a few pages and then keeping it aside. Later, as a teenager, I found Gibran's novel *The Broken Wings* on my dining table in a gift pack. I read it at one sitting, weeping profusely over the pain of pleasure and the pleasure of pain the book provided. Suddenly the name "Kahlil Gibran" alighted on a forgotten corner of my memory. I rushed back to the old bookshelf and pulled out *The Prophet*, and read it page after page. I did not fathom the depth of the words then, but the feel of it was good, as much as I grasped. I was so enthralled by some of the sentences that later when I thought of research, I could not think of any other author.

However, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge after my preliminary thesis was submitted. I was fortunate enough to visit several libraries abroad: the University of Cambridge, the University of New Castle Upon Tyne, Leeds Metropolitan University and, above all, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. These libraries were visited immediately after the series of bomb blasts that rocked UK in June 2005. The search for material on an Arabic poet by an Asian Research Scholar in UK during that period, was not a comfortable experience. Yet the venture was carried out with courage and perseverance. I was able to collect a lot of material of Gibran and on Gibran.

Regarding the author of study, one desire remains to be fulfilled: to visit the Mar-Sarkis turned Museum at Lebanon where lay the remains of the great poet-painter-philosopher.

03.03.2007

DIVYA JOHN

KAHLIL GIBRAN

A Profile



Birth : 6 January 1883

Death : 10 April 1931

Life Time : 48 years

“He was born at dawn and died at sunrise.”

The Broken Wings

**“You are the first Eastern storm to
sweep this country, and what a
number of flowers it has brought!”**

American President Woodrow Wilson

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

KAHLIL GIBRAN: A HEART AND MIND IN THE WORKSHOP

Arabic Literature down the Ages

Arabic and Persian languages evolved into the medium of expression in many Muslim nations because the classical literature of Islam was written chiefly in these two languages. Hence the growth of Arabic and Persian classical literature corresponds with the growth of Islam before the Mongol invasion. Islamic literature in the Turkish language began in the post-Mongol period and has a history of only five centuries. Yet, Turkish dialects are spoken in the major part of the Islamic world. Obviously Turkish literature influenced tremendously the thinking of the Near East for the last three hundred years. Therefore, there are three main Islamic languages now: Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Arabic, a Semitic language, replaced the pre-Islamic Himyaritic tongue in the southern part of Arabia toward the end of the fifth century AD. Classical Arabic, the language of the Koran and the spoken language of many nations, consists of twenty-eight characters

adapted from the Aramaic, which has its origin in the Phoenician alphabet.

Arabic literature may be divided into five periods: The first is the pre-Islamic period of a hundred and fifty years ending with the advent of Mohammed in AD 610. The second is the early Islamic period of the Prophet and the Koran and the Umayyad Empire. This period ends with the fall of the Umayyads in AD 750. The third, the Abbasid period, is the glorious age of Islamic civilization and Arabic literature. This period ends with the fall of Baghdad and its capture by the Mongol hordes of Hulagu in 1258. The fourth period, a comparatively unproductive one, with only a few great writers ends in the middle of the nineteenth century. The fifth period witnessed the renaissance of Arabic literature or *An-Nahda*. It dawned in the middle of the nineteenth century owing to the influence of Western literature, and continues to the present day (Ullah 4-5).

An-Nahda, or the renaissance of Arabic literature, was influenced by the Catholic Church. The Maronite sect of Lebanon had continuous relations with the Catholic Church of France and Rome. This relationship was religious at first, but it became cultural and intellectual towards the end of the eighteenth century. The French expedition to Egypt and the

Near East in 1798 had already introduced the Western cultural influence. The printing press too had existed in Syria from the beginning of the eighteenth century but its introduction in Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte's army marked a real rebirth. At this stage *An-Nabda* was noted for two characteristics: (1) the introduction of new ideas and new methods (2) the revival of the legacy of the past (173). The former demanded innovation, and the latter followed tradition.

In the first half of the nineteenth century after the withdrawal of the French forces, some scholars aimed at a widespread education of the Arabs. An Egyptian scholar, Hassan al-'Arrar (d. 1834) founded a hall for European lectures. He later became the rector of the oldest Islamic university. This university in Cairo is also the oldest existing university in the world. Mohammed Ali, the founder of the last royal dynasty of Egypt, established new schools of medicine on Western style and translated European works. The European and American missionaries in Syria favoured the new schools. A Lebanese scholar, Butrus al-Bustani (1819-83) established one of the first national schools and published the first Arabic magazine, *Al-Jinan*. During the nineteenth century, the American College of Beirut became the American University, and the French Jesuit Fathers

established “The University of St. Joseph” in Beirut and “The Egyptian University of Cairo” in Egypt. Libraries were built, and from 1850 onwards literary, scientific and political societies were founded.

Many individuals and families of Syria were forced to emigrate to Europe and America because of the political and economic conditions. Some of these emigrant scholars and writers introduced a great revolution in Arabic literature. After 1870, the flow of emigration increased, and the Syrians who settled in North America, founded a new school of literature. In fact, there were three groups among them. One was strongly attached to the old styles of literature and allergic to new ideas. The second, indulged in a superficial imitation of Western models. The third hoped to develop Arabic literature through the methods of modern European culture. In course of time, the third school triumphed over the other two.

Side by side, the national consciousness of the Arabs was aroused and they began to desire freedom and equality in comparison with the Ottoman Turks and the Europeans. The Arabic literary movement became active from 1880. The Egyptians were more concerned with scientific works, and the Syrians with literary productions. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and

the entry of British troops into Egypt increased Western influence. During this time, a number of Lebanese and Syrian poets and writers came to Egypt and established their periodicals. The representatives of this period were Mohammed 'Abduh (d. 1905) an Islamic reformer, Jirji Zaydan (d. 1914) who introduced the historical novel, and Al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) who adapted several European literary works in Arabic versions and became the great master of modern Arabic prose.

Egypt became the centre of Arab nationalism after World War I. Thus, modern Arabic literature passed on to Egypt. The People's Party was founded, and its voice, *Al-Jarida (The Gazette)* was published under the editorship of Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyed. M. H. Haykal founded the daily *Al-Siyasa* to express political views. The general trend in Egypt was to revive classical Arabic literature and to introduce the European methods of criticism for its study. A major desire of this period was the publication of works concerning the freedom of the Arab lands. Both in the Arab world and among those who migrated to other countries, there were many poets who wrote Arabic poetry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the beginning there was a natural return to the classical style of pre-Islamic Arabia and the golden age of the Abbasids. The return to ancient classics was similar to

the return of the European scholars of the Renaissance to their Greco-Roman past.

In Syria, Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-71) revived the classical style of Arabic poetry while the poet Francis Marrash (1836-73) adopted a modern philosophical and pessimistic style.

In Iraq, Al-Faruqi (1789-1861), Al-Akhras(1805-73) and Ibrahim al-Tabataba'i (1832-1901) followed the style of the Abbasids. Iraq gave birth to two other great modern poets - Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi (1863-1936) who wrote exquisite philosophical poems free from classical rules, and Ma'ruf al-Rusafi (1873-1945) whose poems were written in the classical style.

In Egypt, Mahmud Sami al-Barudi (1839-1904) and Isma'il Sabri (1884-1923) practiced the Abbasid style while Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932), known as the poet of princes and the prince of poets, introduced new ideas in the old classical forms. Hafiz Ibrahim (1871-1932) called "The Poet of the Nile" was a man of the masses. His eloquent and masterly poems in classical style, deal with the political and social problems of his time. Khalil Matran (1872-1949), Syrian in origin, lived in Egypt, and composed lyrical poetry in new forms and styles, breaking the strict rules of classical prosody. Abdul Muhsin Kazemi (1870-1935) of Iraqi origin, also lived in Egypt, and wrote about the

contemporary events in Egypt in a novel and yet classical Arabic style.

In America, the emigrant Arab poets experienced a free atmosphere. Animated by their national consciousness and Arabic culture, they introduced unique ideas and forms to Arabic literature. Among them are Amin al-Rayhani (1876-1940), Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-1931), Mikha'il Nu'ayma (b. 1889) and Ibiya Abu Madi. These poets were born in Lebanon and later migrated to the United States of America. Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi (1892-1955), an Egyptian, also migrated to the US. The Arab emigrant poets in Latin America, Ilyas Farhat (b. 1893) and the Ma'aluf brothers lived in Brazil. The modern lyrical poems of the Arabs are considered the wealth of modern times. Of these, the most notable is Jibran Khalil Jibran, the Lebanese-American philosophical essayist, novelist, mystical poet and artist whose works influenced American popular culture. He illustrated a number of his books with his drawings. He believed that if a sensible way of living and thinking could be found, people would have mastery over their lives. The freethinking "hippy era" of the 1960's saw a resurgence of interest in his works and he has remained popular since.

II

Life and Works of Gibran and Works on Gibran

Life of Gibran

Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-1931) whose name is now spelt, 'Kahlil Gibran' is hailed as 'The Immortal Prophet of Lebanon,' 'The Savant of His Age,' 'The Mystic,' 'The Philosopher,' 'The Religious,' 'The Heretic,' 'The Serene,' 'The Rebellious' and 'The Ageless.' Such an accumulation of contradictory characteristics appears possible for a man whose books *The Prophet* and *The Broken Wings* have been on the international best-seller list for more than half a century. Moreover, *The Prophet* has been translated into more than a hundred languages. Gibran wrote in two languages - in Arabic for the Arabic world and in English for the Western world. His admirers have translated his Arabic works into English, and his English works into Arabic. If the West has been seeking practical solutions to its problems through science, the Arabic-speaking countries have longed to look at life in poetic and philosophical terms. Consequently, Arabic writers have felt a freedom of expression that may be envied by Western writers. The recent interest in Arabic writing has revealed Gibran as the finest in Oriental literature and as a poet every person should be acquainted with.

In Bisharri, a mountainous area in North Lebanon, Jibran Khalil Jibran was born to the Maronite Christian family of Khalil Jibran and Kamileh Rahmeh. Young Jibran was the first child of his father but the second of his mother. Jibran's mother had a son named Boutros (Peter) from her first marriage. At the age of two (1885) and four (1887) his sisters Marianna and Sultanah were born. At five, he went to a village priest to learn Arabic, Syriac and Arithmetic. When he was eleven, his father was accused of tax evasion and jailed and so his mother and the four children migrated to Boston for a livelihood. Peter opened a small shop, the family's only source of income while Jibran joined the Quincy School in Boston. The English teacher there anglicised and abbreviated his name to "Kahlil Gibran" to make it more amenable to Americans. At twelve, he began to learn English. At thirteen, Gibran discovered Denison House, an establishment in Boston that encouraged artistic creativity among the emigrant and slum children. That very year he was introduced to the Bostonian artist-photographer, Fred Holland Day, who was then experimenting with photography. It is said that Gibran was photographed in various postures, some in the nude, for the esoteric artist's study purposes.

At fourteen, Gibran was sent back to Lebanon to attend the high school in Beirut in order to study Arabic, French, religion, and ethics. When he was nineteen, his younger sister Sultanah died of tuberculosis and he returned to Boston. Days after, Peter, his half-brother, died of tuberculosis and his mother, Kamileh, of cancer. Gibran found consolation in the company of his sister Marianna and a young Bostonian poet and intellectual, Josephine Peabody, for whom he developed a romantic fondness.

Hardly twenty-one, Gibran held a picture exhibition at Fred Holland Day's Studio. This paved the way for his meeting with Mary Haskell, an American school headmistress, in Boston. She encouraged him to accept her financial aid and to go abroad for study. She also assisted him to write in English. At twenty-three he had an affair with a pianist, Gertrude Barrie, but at the age of twenty-five he began his two-year stay in Paris, sponsored by Mary Haskell. He studied painting and was influenced by the school of symbolism. At twenty-seven, back in Boston, his romance with Mary deepened but she withdrew fearing the society.

Gibran joined Golden Links Society of Arab-American writers, and at the age of twenty-eight began writing in English. The same year he met Yeats and drew a picture of him. Though

impressed by the drawing Yeats criticized him for his hyper-nationalism. The following year he published in New York, *The Broken Wings*, his only novel, in Arabic. Side by side, he began correspondence with the Syrian Egyptian intellectual and writer, May Ziadah, and then moved to New York for good. At thirty, Gibran met Carl Jung and was introduced to Jungian philosophy. The following year he exhibited his paintings at Montross Gallery on Fifth Avenue and it became a rare success. This was quite unexpected for most galleries had resisted his work on grounds of excessive nudity and modernism. Three years later, famine ravaged the Levant and Gibran's feelings of Syrian nationalism and his resentment of Ottoman rule grew. He raised relief funds in the U.S. for the starving thousands.

At thirty-five, he published *The Madman* (1918) in English which inaugurated a new literary career. In 1920, he published *The Forerunner*. The same year he met Rabindranath Tagore and discussed with him the progress of technology in America. At the age of forty, he published *The Prophet* (1923). The same year Mary Haskell moved to Savannah Georgia and thus went out of Gibran's life. She married Col. Jacob Florance Minis. In 1926, Gibran published *Sand and Foam*, a collection of parables, poems and aphorisms and in 1928, *Jesus, the Son of Man*, an attempt at

portraying Jesus as a strong and convincing personality like Almustapha of *The Prophet*. The same year he became friendly with Barbara Young. He had begun to show signs of ill health from 1923 but he pursued his painting and writing and also drinking heavily side by side until his death. He is said to have suffered from cirrhosis of the liver and tuberculosis in one of the lungs. His body was returned to Lebanon and laid in the chapel of Mar Sarkis, an old monastery carved in a rock near Bisharri. Two of Gibran's works were published in New York posthumously - *The Wanderer* (1932) and *The Garden of the Prophet* (1933). Gibran had completed the former work but the latter was completed by Mrs. Barbara Young.

Works of Gibran

Gibran's works were written either in Arabic or in English originally.

Works originally written in Arabic

On Music 1905 (*Nubdah fi Fan al-Musiqa*)

Nymphs of the Valley 1906 (*Ara'is al-Muruj*)

Spirits Rebellious 1908 (*Al-Arwah al-Mutamarridah*)

The Broken Wings 1912 (*Al-Ajnihab al-Mutamarridah*)

Tears and Laughter 1914 (*Dam'ah wa-Ibtisamah*)

The Procession 1919 (*Al-Mawakib*)

Works Originally Written in English

The Madman: His Parables and Poems (1918)

The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems (1920)

The Prophet (1923)

Sand and Foam (1926)

Jesus, the Son of Man (1928)

Works Published Posthumously

The Earth Gods (1931)

The Wanderer: His Parables and Sayings (1932)

The Garden of the Prophet (1933)

Lazarus and His Beloved (1933)

On 10 April 1931, *The New York Sun* announced in its obituary, “A Prophet is Dead.” Nevertheless, the readers knew for sure that he would live in the hearts and minds of his readers. Elvis Presley, a big fan of Gibran, gave away thousands of copies of *The Prophet* as a keepsake. During the twentieth century, *The Prophet* was America’s second best-selling book, beaten only by The Holy Bible.

Works on Gibran

Though *The Prophet* has been an inspiration to millions throughout the English-speaking world, it is considered neither pure literature nor pure philosophy. As an Arab work, written in

English, it belongs to a recent tradition: 'Literature in English.' Studies on Gibran did not exist during his lifetime. The first notable anthology of his primary and secondary sources appeared in Brazil in 1932 under the title *Jubran Hiyan wa Mayetan (Gibran in his Life and Death)* by Habib Mas'oud. In 1934, three years after his death, Mikhail Naimy, Gibran's close friend and colleague, published an Arabic biography *Jubran Kahlil Jubran*, which was translated into English in 1950 under the title *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and His Works*. However, this biography is considered neither authoritative nor objective. The first English biography, *This Man from Lebanon: A Study of Kahlil Gibran*, was published by Barbara Young in 1945. A devotee who edited his work during his last years, she took it on herself to deify Gibran. Anyway, her book remained the only study in English for the next eighteen years.

The first serious critical analysis of Gibran was done in 1963 by Khalil S. Hawi whose doctoral dissertation from Cambridge University was published as *Kahlil Gibran: His Background, Character and Works*. Hawi did not have access to the letters from and to Gibran and yet he could present a credible evaluation because he had recourse to English and Arabic sources as well. Studies on Gibran started a new phase in 1970 when under the patronage of the President of Lebanon, The First

Gibran International Festival, was held at the American University of Beirut. The festival produced an anthology of his writings in both English and Arabic in a bilingual and bicultural context, together with a comprehensive bibliography. This bibliography was superseded only in 1983 with the publication of *Kahlil Gibran: A Bibliography* by Suheil Bushrui. The festival was also significant in that it initiated the first academic programme in Gibran Studies at the Department of English at the American University of Beirut. This was followed by another programme *Kahlil Gibran and his Contemporaries*, which defined the characteristics of Arab-American literature during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The study centred on the English works of three writers - Kahlil Gibran, Mikhail Naimy and Ameen Rihani.

The year 1972 witnessed the publication of the correspondence between Gibran and his American patroness, Mary Haskell, under the title *Beloved Prophet: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell and her Private Journal*. This reliable account provided a wealth of information to scholars. Another volume was designed in 1979 in Arabic: *The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran to May Ziadah*. The most up-to-date biography is that of the couple, Jean and Kahlil Gibran, under the title *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World*. This volume includes a lot of original material

unpublished until then, like diaries of Josephine Preston Peabody, documents on his Boston experience and other letters and primary sources. This biography is a definitive account of his life in America.

A Gibran Museum was opened in 1975 in Bisharri, Gibran's birthplace. The same year came the publication, *Gibran of Lebanon: New Papers*. Two years later in 1977 when Salma Khadra Jayyusi published *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, Gibran was honoured as "the greatest literary figure in Arab letters during the first three decades of the century" (Jayyusi 91). During the years between 1974 and 1980, some manuscripts of Gibran were edited by William S. Shehadi and published under the title *Kahlil Gibran: A Prophet in the Making* by the American University of Beirut in 1991. These included fragments of works such as *The Madman*, *The Prophet*, *The Earth Gods* and *The Forerunner*.

In the seventies and eighties, the Chairman of The Gibran National Committee in Lebanon decided to promote Gibran Studies throughout the world. As part of the venture, he retrieved as many original manuscripts as possible from Lebanon, from the USA, and the paintings from the Old Gibran Museum in Bisharri. He also decided to transform the area surrounding his resting place into a modern museum for the sake of posterity.

The Chairman of The National Committee invited Farid Salman to be the consultant and advisor to the Committee, who succeeded in maintaining an artistic integrity and a refined sensibility.

In 1981, the fiftieth anniversary was officially commemorated by The Gibran National Committee and the Ministry of Education. The American University of Beirut organized a series of activities and also published *In Memory of Kahlil Gibran: The First Colloquium on Gibran Studies*. Two years later, the hundredth anniversary of his birth was celebrated by Kahlil Gibran Centenary International Commemoration at Beirut, Washington, New York, London and Oxford.

The President of Lebanon declared 1983 a Gibran International Year. The international activities attracted his fans the world over. The political turmoil in Lebanon disrupted the activities there, but they were carried out in the US and Britain. The celebration included the publication of *The Blue Flame: The Love Letters of Kahlil Gibran to May Ziadah* (1983), which is the English translation of the Arabic work in 1979. A reprint of the same appeared in 1987 as *Gibran: Love letters*. In 1987 *Kahlil Gibran of Lebanon: A re-evaluation of the life and works of the author of The Prophet* was published by Suheil Bushrui (sic). The Library of

Congress in Washington organized a conference, *The Vision of Gibran, on Arab-American Literature*.

In 1986, the University of Maryland established the Kahlil Gibran Chair on value and peace. This was the first academic program on his studies, followed by the Kahlil Gibran Research and Studies Project, the Centre for International Development and Conflict Management. In addition to all this, a Kahlil Gibran Park was created in 1977 at Copley Square in Boston, and the mayor of the city of Boston designated January 1983 the Kahlil Gibran Month. During this centennial celebration, an exhibition of forty paintings of Gibran was held at the Boston Public Library. The Kahlil Gibran Centennial Foundation Memorial Garden Dedication Weekend took place at Embassy Row in Washington in 1991. This garden of meditation was inaugurated by President George Bush after the Congress of the United States passed a legislation providing the land for the memorial. Among the three American Presidents who signed the legislation, was President Jimmy Carter who chaired The Honorary Committee of the Foundation. This was a remarkable achievement for a poet who was only beginning to be recognized by the academic world.

The U. N. E. S. C. O. housed an exhibition of his works under the banner *The World of Kahlil Gibran: A Pictorial Record*

of His Life and Work in Paris from 19 to 22 March 1996. In the same year, *The Prophet* was voted by the British readers as one of the most popular books of the century. In 1998, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* was published jointly by Suheil Bushrui and Joe Jenkins. In the same year, Robin Waterfield published *Prophet: The Life and Times of Kahlil Gibran*. Between 30 December 1999 and 2 January 2000, The First International Conference on Kahlil Gibran was held under the auspices of the Kahlil Gibran Research and Studies Project at the University of Maryland, USA, on the topic “Kahlil Gibran and the Immigrant Traditions.”

Now Gibran has become an integral part of the literary legacy of both the East and the West. He is not just the Gibran of Lebanon or the Gibran of America but Gibran, the voice of global consciousness.

III

‘Love’ from Gibran’s Perspective

Gibran’s concept of love is the amalgamation of the several viewpoints he imbibed at various stages of his growing up: Christian, because he was a Christian by birth; Islamic, because he was born and bred in a predominantly Muslim country; Hindu and Buddhist, because of his continued stay in cosmopolitan

America where Hinduism and Buddhism were popular influences; mythological, because of his wide reading; and Jewish, because of its affinity with Christian terminology. This dissertation does not intend to refer to the relevant religious documents extensively, for such an in depth probing into religious concepts of love, is beyond the purview of the present study. On the contrary, the study of the concept of love and the perception of love are made with reference to the sum total of a layman's knowledge – his taught content and his thought content that can be assessed by the inputs he received and his outputs, along the length of his life. However, some Christian concepts need to be quoted because Gibran was born a Christian; he lived a Christian; spent the major part of his life in a Christian land; and accepted Christianity as the life-blood of his spirit, as is evident from the biblical tone of *The Prophet* and *Jesus, the Son of Man*.

Love is often referred to by Greek terms: Agape, Philia, Eros, and Storge. Agape is the selfless, altruistic, charitable and unconditional love that God has for humanity. It is parental love, responsible for the goodness of the world, and that which Christians aspire to attain. Philia is brotherly love, while Eros is sexual love, and Storge is child-to-parent love.

The Holy Bible bears profuse witness to all forms of love. The Old Testament dictates: “Love the Lord your God with all your strength” and “love your neighbour as you love yourself” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). The Psalms promises God’s love for all who keep his commandments: “But for those who honour the Lord, his love lasts for ever, and his goodness endures for all generations” (103:17). God has always shown man, how much he loves them: “ ‘The mountains and hills may crumble, but my love for you will never end; I will keep for ever my promise of peace.’ So says the Lord who loves you” (Isaiah 54:10). The Old Testament declares God’s love throughout its pages: “My love for you is too strong” (Hosea 11:8).

The New Testament focuses on the point that God loves humanity immensely. It is God’s love (agape) for man that made him sacrifice his only son for them. “See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God’s children - and so, in fact, we are,” says The First Letter of John (3:1). He continues, “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life” (John 3:16). As Jesus spoke to his apostles he said, “And now I give you a new commandment: love

one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). He repeats it in other words: “My commandment is this: Love one another, just as I love you” (John 15:12). The text of the commandment that Christians treasure is the extract from The Gospel According to Mark: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second most important commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment more important than these two” (12: 30-31). The most endearing definition of love among Christians is the one given in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians: “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail” (1 Cor 13: 4-7). Love is seen here as a set of behaviours that is expected from all Christians or humanity. Love encompasses not only one’s kith and kin but also one’s enemies. St Paul also places love above faith and hope. He says: “faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13).

Gibran has also imbibed the Islamic concept of love as universal brotherhood. If God or Allah has ninety-nine names, they are mostly attributes, of which one is “Al-Wadud” which means “The Loving One” or one full of loving-kindness. A contemplation of Sufi philosophy or Sufism is in place in this dissertation because it is an ascetic and a mystical movement within Islam that has influenced Gibran. The word “sufi” is derived either from the Greek word “Sophia” which means “wisdom” or the Arabic word “safa” meaning “purity” or the Arabic “suf” meaning “wool,” indicating the woollen clothes worn by Sufis formerly. Sufi thought emerged from the Middle East in the eighth century. The greatest Sufi was Prophet Mohamed himself. The two central Sufi concepts are “tawakkul,” which means “the total reliance on God,” and “dhikr,” meaning “the perpetual remembrance of God” <<http://en.wikipedis.org/wiki/Sufism>>. Sufism is supposed to have incorporated elements of Christian monasticism, and Indian mysticism, but its origin is traced to the formative period of Islam. During AD 1200-1500, Sufism experienced an era of increased activity in various parts of the Islamic world. This period is the Classical Period or the Golden Age of Sufism. Sufis teach in personal groups because they believe that the interaction of the master is necessary for

the growth of the pupil. There are several Sufi orders, and they differ in philosophy but all orders are concerned with direct personal experience and mysticism. Sufism emphasizes “Ishq,” or divine love. Sufism, being a religion of love, describes God in tripartite terms: (1) Lover (2) Loved and (3) Beloved. A common viewpoint of Sufism is that through love man can get back to his inherent purity and grace <[http://en.wikipedia.org/Love_\(religious_view\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/Love_(religious_view))>. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* contains the teachings of the Sufis. According to an offshoot-Islamic Sufi thought, Sufism is a universal philosophy independent of the Koran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. This view of Sufism has been popular in the Western World, and the terms “Yogi” and “Sufi” have been used interchangeably ever since. However, many contemporary Muslims argue that Sufism represents the core sense of Islam. Gibran too endorses the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood, and the Sufi concept of God as Lover, Loved and Beloved.

In Hinduism, “prema” is elevated love, “Bhakti” is devotion to God, “Kama” is sexual love, and “Karuna” is compassion and mercy. Hindu philosophy believes that love leads to peacefulness, relaxation and freedom. Gibran appears to have absorbed the idea

that love grants peace, joy and freedom <[http://en.wikipedia.org/Love_\(religious_view\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/Love_(religious_view))>. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

In Buddhism, “Kama” or sensuous and sexual love, is a selfish form of love, and hence a hindrance to the path of enlightenment. “Karuna,” as in Hinduism, is “compassion that is necessary for enlightenment.” Buddhists believe that “Advesa” and “Maitri” are benevolent and unconditional forms of love that refer to detachment and selfless interest in the welfare of others <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_\(religious_view\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_(religious_view))>. In Tibetan Buddhism, the Bodhisattva ideal is the complete renunciation of self in order to take on the burden of a suffering world. It requires the strongest motivation and the most unselfish kind of love to take on the path of the Bodhisattva ideal of love. There is no doubt that Gibran was fascinated by the self-effacing aspect of the Buddhist concept of love. He considered himself an enlightened person who was called upon to love mankind in an act of self-abnegation.

For the Jews, love is “ahava,” a Hebrew term commonly used for interpersonal love and love of God. They also have two other terms, “chen” for “grace” and “chesed” for “loving kindness” <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_\(religious_view\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_(religious_view))>.

Love for God should be “with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). The Torah says, “love your neighbour like yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). The biblical Song of Songs is a romantic depiction of the love between God and his people.

Mythologies abound in gods, goddesses and angels of love: Amor or Cupid, god of love, and Venus, goddess of beauty and love, in Roman mythology; Eros, god of love, and Aphrodite, goddess of beauty and love, in Greek mythology; Haniel, angel of eros, and Raphael, angel of love, in Judeo-Christian mythology; Kama, god of sensual love, and Rati, goddess of passionate love, in Hindu mythology; Mihr, spirit of love, in Persian mythology; Ishtar, goddess of love and war, in Babylonian mythology; Aonghus, god of sensual love, beauty and youth, in Irish mythology; Astarte, goddess of love, in Canaanite mythology; and so on. Gibran knew these myths and mythical persons but he used them only sparingly in his writing <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_\(religious_view\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_(religious_view))>.

This study of Gibran is based on the definition of love as given by M. Scott Peck in his best seller, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. Scott Peck admits that it is not possible to give an adequate

definition of love because love is too large and too deep to be truly understood, or defined by words. Yet he ventures to put it within a framework: "I define love thus: the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (85). This definition is given a fivefold elaboration too.

(1) Love is meant to fulfil a purpose; love is spiritual growth. (2) Love is extending oneself into an evolutionary process; it is a circular process. The act of loving aims at another's growth, but it attains personal growth as well; it is self-evolution. (3) Love is love of self and love for the other. To be dedicated to the spiritual development of humanity is to be dedicated to the race of which man is a part. (4) Love requires effort. To become real, love needs to extend its limits. (5) Love is a wilful act. Choosing to love another is exerting oneself for spiritual growth (85-88).

Gibran's concept of love is akin to Scott Peck's definition that it is the will to extend one's self for spiritual growth: "When I genuinely love I am extending myself, and when I am extending myself, I am growing. The more I love, the longer I love, the larger I become. Genuine love is self-replenishing. The more I nurture the spiritual growth of others, the more my own spiritual growth is nurtured (Peck 171). This is explicit in his masterpiece *The Prophet*.

IV

‘The Cybernetics of Love’ from Gibran’s Perspective

The word ‘cybernetics’ was coined by Norbert Wiener (1894-1964), a great engineer, mathematician, and social philosopher of the twentieth century, and popularized through his book *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and Machine* in 1948. ‘Cybernetics’ is derived from the Greek word ‘kybernetes’ which means ‘steersman,’ ‘governor,’ ‘pilot,’ or ‘government.’ Though Wiener is considered “the father of cybernetics,” it is an oversimplification to say that he was the first to use the word. Perhaps unknown to Wiener it was formerly used by Andre-Marie Ampere (1775-1836) to mean ‘government’ in his classification of human knowledge. The word was even used by Plato in *The Laws* to signify “the governance of people” <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cybernetics>>. Cybernetics, as a discipline, was firmly established by Wiener, Warren McCulloch, W. Ross Ashby and W. Grey Walter. An important geographical locus of cybernetics was France where Wiener’s book was first published. Wiener popularized the social implications of cybernetics by drawing analogies between automatic systems and human institutions in his best seller *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*.

The prefix 'cyber-' extended its influence along with the spread of computers and electronic communication in 1960s, 70s and 80s. By 1990s, practically anything could have 'cyber-' as its prefix if it involved computers or the Internet. *The New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society* contained more than a hundred cyber words in 1994 and 1995 <<http://www.answers.com/cybernetics&r=67>>.

The area of cybernetics is still young, but there are many definitions. Wiener first used the word in the study of "teleological mechanisms," that is, goal-oriented behaviour, and since then the word has gone through a series of modifications. In 1956, Couffignal suggested a more philosophical definition of cybernetics as "the art of ensuring the efficiency of action" <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cybernetics>>. McCulloch defines 'cybernetics' as "an experimental epistemology concerned with the communication and control within an observer and between the observer and his environment." Stafford Beer, a management consultant, says it is "the science of effective organization." Anthropologist, Gregory Bateson noted that it focuses on form and matter <<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/ASC/CYBERNETICS.html>>. Wiener calls it "the study of systems of control and communication, in particular those of the human mind and the

computer” <<http://www.answers.com/cybernetics&r=67>>. With this definition, an analogy between the mind and the machine was introduced. *The Science and Technology Encyclopedia* gives a modern explanation of cybernetics as “the study of communication and control within and between human machines, organization and society” <<http://www.answers.com/cybernetics&r=67>>. The main innovation of cybernetics is “the creation of a scientific discipline focussed on goals: an understanding of goal-directedness or purpose” <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cybernetics>>.

A distinguishing feature of the cybernetic field is its movement towards practical pursuits, such as psychiatry, family therapy and so on. To integrate such practical pursuits there is the need for feedback or a circularity of reference. That is evolving a theory of feedback by feedback. Thus, the science of cybernetics fosters a better understanding of man’s personality. The problems of man belonging to the cyber-age demand a cybernetic solution; so much so, there is a need for the modern man to be a cybernetic psychologist himself in order to guide his own aspirations and depressions in the cybernetic age. Sensitive man, oppressed by forces within and without his control, is easily trapped in the loveless age. The only remedy for emerging from the deteriorating trap is, according to Gibran, love. So the

cybernetics of love is the regulation of the goal-oriented behaviour towards a life of love. Gibran's concept of the cybernetics of love is formulated from his works and from the critical material on his works. The theory becomes more effective when it is viewed from a psychobiographical angle. Margaret Mead defines cybernetics as "a way of looking at things and a language for expressing what one sees" <<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/ASC/CYBERNETICS.html>>. This dissertation, as Margaret Mead defines, is a way of looking at the cybernetics of love from Gibran's angle and the language used to express it is the psychobiographical language.

V

From a Psychobiographical Perspective

"Psychobiography" is defined by William Todd Schultz in his article "Psychology and Life-writing" in the *Encyclopaedia of Life-Writing* thus: "Psychobiography is the name given to life histories making substantial use of psychological theory and/or research as a means of shedding light on the interior lives of biographical subjects and the connection between the life and the work" ("Psychobiography"). Psychobiography is biography viewed

from a psychodynamic or psychoanalytic angle. In other words, it is biography strengthened by psychological theory or research.

Psychobiographical criticism, a branch of psychological and psychoanalytical criticism, deals with the life of an author and the connection between his life and his work. Psychobiography depends on the author's own writing and on external sources for evidence. In other words, it is a life history that makes use of psychological theory as a means of shedding light on the interior lives of biographical subjects making both literary and psychological sense of its subjects. Psychobiographers argue that a text reflects the psychological make-up of the author. Ross Murfin believes that an author may write in order to "gratify secretly some forbidden wish" (118). Lionel Trilling clarifies that psychobiography is not to expose the 'shame' of the author, but to encourage the reader to regard a text as "no less alive and contradictory than the man who created it" (39). Trilling emphasizes that psychobiography is meant to illuminate the text.

The desire to psychobiographize has been there ever since psychological insights began with the Greeks, with Plutarch, Xenophon and Thucydides. The Gospels too are, to a great extent, psychobiographical. But psychobiography as a modern psychodynamic or psychoanalytic biography began with Sigmund

Freud's renowned book *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1964). It is considered psychobiography at its best and worst. In it Freud surmised that Leonardo is a perfect and rare type of artist, who channelled his sexual instincts into his artistic and scientific investigation. Subsequently, Freud concluded that Leonardo's work was his erotic life, liberated through sublimation from the demands of sexuality. Freud also ascertained that Leonardo had recapitulated his lost mother in Mona Lisa. So far, Freud's contention was credible. He goes wrong only when he reconstructs a missing childhood history of Leonardo from his journals. Leonardo had recorded the dream of a bird visiting him in his cradle and thrusting its tail into his mouth. Based on an inaccurate translation of Leonardo's journals, Freud interpreted the bird as a vulture, and indulged in a series of mythological suppositions. All these proved Freud wrong later, when a more correct translation of Leonardo's journals became readily available. That is why Freud's psychological analysis of Leonardo is considered good and bad at the same time <[http://www.psychobiography.com /articles/pblifewriting.html](http://www.psychobiography.com/articles/pblifewriting.html)>.

In spite of the drawback, Freud's work sets an excellent standard for psychobiographical writing. He gives useful tips to psychobiographers about what to do and what not to do. He tells

them (1) to avoid idealizing the biographical subject (2) to avoid drawing conclusion from inadequate data (3) to examine the internal and external validity of biographical anecdotes (4) to compare the biographical subject's behaviour with that of contemporaries and (5) to avoid spinning webs of meaning out of isolated events <<http://www.Psychobiography.com/articles/pblifewriting.html>>. Though Freud violated many of his own proscriptions, his book was a trendsetter because his theories could bring coherence to chaos, and his arresting style was worthy of emulation.

Other psychobiographies of the twentieth century are Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth* (1969), Gordon Allport's *Letters from Jenny* (1965). Henry Murrays's *Endeavours in Psychology* (1981), Dan McAdams's *The Stories We Live By* (1993) and Jerome Bruner's *Acts of Meaning* (1990), Alan Elms's *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology* (1994) and William Runyan's *Life Histories and Psychobiography: Exploration in Theory and Method* (1982).

Psychobiographies are usually written on individuals of importance like Hitler, Emily Dickinson, Mahatma Gandhi, and so on. A psychobiography, being a case-study research, can be conducted in a variety of ways, by, (1) exploring the effects of early life history on personality, (2) identifying habitual modes of psychological defence used by a person, (3) sorting out the

preferred life-story sequences narrated by the person, (4) isolating early-life experiences (of loss) that underscore the person's attitudes, (5) examining the consequences that a person's behaviour elicits from his environment and, (6) revealing underlying patterns of behaviour <<http://www.psychobiography.com/faq.html>>.

Psychobiography, as a discipline, has developed various methodological guidelines for study. They are:

1. The use of prototypical scenes in the life of the subject to serve as a model for their personality pattern.
2. The use of a series of indicators or salience markers, such as primacy, frequency, and uniqueness of an event in a life, to identify significant patterns.
3. The identification of pregnant metaphors or images that organize autobiographical narratives.
4. Logical coherence or consistency as a criterion for adequate psychological interpretation <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/psychobiography>>.

Guidelines are only guidelines. Psychobiographers follow their own pattern for their study.

The distinction between psychobiography and biography has been vanishing over the years. This is because biography has shifted recently in a psychobiographical direction.

Psychobiographers are usually structuralists. “They take it as fact that there is a personality to be found and that its currents can be elucidated via a careful examination of life-history evidences viewed through the sharpening lens of theory.” That is, they search for the self and see it as a real thing and believe that facts can be reliably uncovered by sifting through biographical data. “Biographers are poststructuralists. They hint at the mystery behind the self. They are more inclined to problematize the self, more devoted to trumpeting its inscrutability” <<http://www.psychobiography.com/definitions.html>>. They believe that personality is text, and is therefore fundamentally ambiguous.

Being interdisciplinary, psychobiography assumes various forms. It is neither exactly psychology, nor precisely biography nor purely literary criticism. Instead of telling the story of an entire life, it chooses specific events or episodes from life, and focuses on them. Hence psychobiography is more modest than biography. Likewise, the psychobiography of Gibran is not taken in its entirety in this dissertation. The whole focus is on his state of mind when he wrote *The Prophet*, and before he wrote it and

after. The study hopes to prove that his love for man evolves into grace as he visualizes and realizes *The Prophet*. Before he wrote it, the concept of love was being disciplined in his mind to attain the stature to pen the magnanimous work. After writing it, the concept of love underwent balancing with suffering and pain. He did not venture to write anything entirely new after *The Prophet*. Nevertheless, he used the remainder of his life to codify and modify all that he had started writing and kept at bay for various reasons. Of these *Jesus, the Son of Man* stands out as a marvellous work.

After roaming about in the shade and shadow of the Holy Cedars of Lebanon as a child, Gibran spent the mature years of his life within the shadows of the skyscrapers of New York. Cosmopolitan by background and education, he became an interpreter of America, Europe and the Middle East. Thus through him the East and the West merged in thought and style. To his Arabic readers he introduced the simplicity of English expression and the freedom of thought and frankness. His concept and style were considered revolutionary by the Arab world. To his English readers he introduced family traditions, and the poetry and philosophy of the Middle East. It is true that he criticized law, religion and the customs prevailing in the social

structure of the Middle East. This is because he loved his fellowmen, and loved to teach them how to carry the torch of love throughout their lives. He believed in a doctrine of kindness, brotherhood and justice, and waged a long and bitter struggle in favour of love. He was thus largely responsible for many of the social, political and religious reforms finally undertaken by the rulers of the East. Conscious of man neglecting the cybernetics of self for the cybernetics of a scientific reality, he advocated the cybernetics of love for a peaceful society. In a loveless world, it is encouraging to listen to the voice of the poet-prophet of love. As a cyber-man of love, he will live on and grow through the centuries.

VI

The Chapters in Perspective:

This dissertation is an attempt at studying the psychobiography of Gibran in relation to *The Prophet* and the cybernetics of love as revealed in *The Prophet* and the works before and after *The Prophet*.

Chapter One, "Kahlil Gibran: A Heart and Mind in the Workshop" is divided into six sections. Section One, "Arabic Literature Down the Ages" places Gibran in the history of Arabic

Literature. Section Two, “Life and Works of Gibran and Works on Gibran” include his life, his works, and a brief review of the critical material on him. Section Three, “ ‘Love’ from Gibran’s Perspective,” gives the gist of Gibran’s concept of love which is derived from various sources like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on. This section also quotes Scott Peck’s definition of love from *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*, on which this study is founded. Section Four, “ ‘The Cybernetics of Love’ from Gibran’s Perspective,” explains the term ‘cybernetics’ and ‘cybernetics of love’ according to Gibran, and lays down the hypothesis of the thesis. Section Five, “From the Psychobiographical Perspective,” explicates the theory of psychobiography on which this study is built. Section Six, “The Chapters in Perspective” proposes the chapter divisions in this dissertation.

Chapter Two, entitled “Before *The Prophet*” clubs together the works written before *The Prophet - Nymphs of the Valley*, *Spirits Rebellious*, *The Broken Wings*, *The Madman* and *The Forerunner*. These works are noted for their rebellious tone. However, the rebellion decreases as Gibran proceeds from one work to the other. The chronology in the writing of a work and the chronology in

publishing it do not tally because he had written many works and waited for years to publish it with correction and revision. As a result, the work originally written from a youthful angle has been made mature with the years. The grace that fills the pages of *The Broken Wings* is a typical example because the novella was written as early as 1903, that is, when he was twenty years old, but published only in 1912 when he was twenty-nine. The cybernetics of love, or the communication and control of love manifested in the above-mentioned works, is the disciplining of love for evolution, that is, the evolution into grace. Angry with the clergy and the society for several embedded practices and malpractices, he attacked them mercilessly in his early works, *Nymphs of the Valley*, *Spirits Rebellious*, and *The Broken Wings*. The dormant stage that *The Broken Wings* went through perhaps made it travel on the path of grace. Gibran was still proceeding on the same path as he wrote *The Madman* and *The Forerunner*. The desire for discipline that is found partly in these works is because he cared for his fellowmen and he wanted them to be free of exploitation. The regulation he aimed at was a part of his cybernetics of love. From a psychobiographical angle, too it can be proved that Gibran was in the workshop and in the world of discipline before writing *The Prophet*.

Chapter Three, “*The Prophet*” deals with the major work *The Prophet*, the internationally acclaimed eponymous book which has been translated into more than hundred languages and which has remained among the ten best sellers for more than fifty continuous years. This chapter deals with the cybernetics of love, or the evolution of love as explicated by Scott Peck. The study focuses on the call of grace received by a few people, like Gibran, for a promotion by which they are expected to exercise a higher responsibility towards mankind. Those who become aware of grace and accept it, experience an inner tranquillity and peace. Therefore, the call of grace is a call to a life of service and sacrifice, a call to be a parent to humankind. Such people are conscious of the responsible position they are in, and the mysterious character of the gift they have received. Gibran was so full of love for man that like a parent he took up the duty and the obligation of rectifying their wrongs and leading them on towards a life of grace.

Chapter Four, “After *The Prophet*” deals with *Sand and Foam*, *Jesus, the Son of Man*, *The Earth Gods*, *The Wanderer*, and *The Garden of the Prophet*, the works published after *The Prophet*. These works show the characteristics of pain and the consequent depression. From a psychobiographical angle, too it is evident that Gibran had

attained the maturity and grace to bring forth an arresting work like *The Prophet*. Fully satisfied with the captivating work he stayed put the rest of his life. The works published later bear the marks of an earlier period. This is because they were conceived and begun in an earlier period; only to be completed hurriedly towards the end of his writing career. At this stage, he was writhing in pain and suffering. Therefore, the optimism in the works except in *Jesus, the Son of Man* was on the decline. The man of grace remained the man of grace in his later works, more so in *Jesus the Son of Man*, his second major dream project. The cybernetics of love or the regulation of love, manifested in the above-mentioned works is the balancing of grace that was already achieved in *The Prophet*.

Chapter Five, “Conclusion” or “The Cybernetics of Love from a Psychobiographical Perspective” portrays the evolution of Gibran through suffering and discipline towards growth and grace.

“Love is the only freedom in the world because it so elevates the spirit that the laws of humanity and the phenomena of nature do not alter its course.”

Kahlil Gibran

CHAPTER TWO

BEFORE *THE PROPHET*

The works of Gibran clubbed together in this chapter are the ones written before *The Prophet - Nymphs of the Valley, Spirits Rebellious, The Broken Wings, The Madman* and *The Forerunner*. Gibran was conscious of taking on a prophetic stance right from the beginning of his writing career. The social, political and financial irregularities of Lebanon racked his brains at first; later it was New York, the US, nay, the whole world. He assumed the obligations of a prophet even in the works written before *The Prophet*. But the prophetic garb here was only in the making: “As Gibran grew more confident in his ‘prophetic’ role, he moved further away from the concrete and particular. Where once Lebanon had been the homeland whose wrongs he set out to right, he expanded his horizons until the injustices of the whole world were his to correct” (Waterfield 62). The cybernetics of love, or the regulation of love, manifested from the psychobiography of Gibran as he composed these works, is dealt with from the point of view of “love disciplined” as explicated by Scott Peck in *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*.

Nymphs of the Valley

Nymphs of the Valley is a collection of three stories originally written in Arabic - "Martha," "Yuhanna the Mad" and "Dust of the Ages and the Eternal Fire" - set in Lebanon. These remarkable stories were published in New York by the newspaper *Al-Mohajer (The Immigrant)*. Gibran's emotionally high-strung anecdotes were popular because of their passionate element. "The familiar settings, the working-class heroes, the strident anticlerical tones, were a breath of fresh air, in sharp contrast to the formalistic Arabic writing of the day" (Bushrui and Jenkins 74).

"Martha" is an account of love and deception. Born and brought up in the beautiful valley of Lebanon, Martha loved life and revelled in the beauties of nature. Though she was an orphan, she enjoyed the freedom given by the natural world. One day while she was gazing at the flowers and the trees, a young nobleman attracted by her, cheated her with soft-hearted words. On the other hand, she, impressed by his wealth and charm, believed his promise to make her his wife. He made her his mistress instead, and gave her shelter in the city of Lebanon. When she was with child, he deserted her. Subsequently, a baby boy was born, Fouad. Unable to feed him and herself, she was forced to sell her body, thus becoming a prostitute in the city of

Lebanon. As expected, she was infected by a disease that led to her death. The narrator of the story happens to meet Martha's son by chance. The five-year old boy was selling flowers for his livelihood. The narrator accompanies him home to meet Martha, who was in tears for the fate of her son: "People will look upon my child with contempt and mocking, saying this one is the offshoot of sin; this is the son of Martha, the harlot; this is the child of shame, of chance," she said (*Nymphs of the Valley* 15). He comforts her with the words: "You are persecuted and despised, but it were better that a person should be the oppressed than that he should be the oppressor. . . . Take comfort, Martha, in that you are the flower crushed and not the foot that has crushed it" (16-17). As they watched, her voice ceased, but her lips moved for a while. Then a shudder ran through her; she sighed; her face became pale; her spirit departed and her eyes remained gazing at the unseen. When Martha died, the Church authorities did not give permission for a traditional and religious burial in the consecrated cemetery. So Fouad and the narrator buried her in a remote place far away from the town.

Gibran rails against men like Martha's seducer whose non-disciplined love is the cause of misery for many young women. They pretend love, and attract women and then turn them down,

providing them with no means of livelihood. When such a woman indulges in the sex trade, it is not she alone but the society that is to be blamed. Gibran accuses the reckless young man for committing a sin out of excess of lust and lack of love. "All this did he do, smiling and behind soft words and loving gestures did he conceal his lust and animal desire," says the narrator (21).

"Yuhanna the Mad," focuses on poverty-stricken villagers oppressed by the rich and corrupt clergy. Though the story is an attack against some church officials, the main thrust is on the rebellion of Yuhanna, a young herdsman. While Yuhanna was taking care of the herd, he was reading the Bible. He did not notice his oxen straying into the pasture of the monastery. This incurred the wrath of the monks who expected him to pay for the loss caused by his negligence. Well-versed in the Bible, Yuhanna argued with them until he was imprisoned. The old mother of the youth pacified the monks saying: "I have naught except this collar, father. It is a gift of my mother, given me on the day of my marriage. Perchance the monastery will accept it as an atonement for the guilt of my only son" (*Nymphs of the Valley* 49). She then handed over a precious locket thus paying for the damage. Out of the prison, Yuhanna becomes more vociferous. While the priest and the monks celebrated the construction of a

magnificent church, he stood in the crowd and after the ceremony was over, he exposed the poverty of the people in comparison with the riches of the monastery. He was so full of love for the villagers that the crowd cheered him and he continued his harangue. The priests put him behind bars but this time he was rescued by his father who falsely testified before the governor that his son was mad: "My lord . . . often have I heard him babbling in his solitude and talking of strange things that have no existence. Night after night has he spoken into the silence in unknown words, calling upon the shadows of darkness in a terrible voice like that of sorcerers uttering incantations" (58). To add to his testimony the father requested the governor to find out about his illness from his friends, his mother, and the monks. Saying this he earnestly begged the governor to release his son, openly declaring, "He is mad, my lord, but to his mother and me he is kind. He sustains us in our old age and fulfils our wants with the sweat of his brow. Show him mercy through your compassion upon us and forgive his foolishness for the sake of the parents" (59).

Though Yuhanna was set free, the label "mad" stuck to his name. He roamed about like a madman, conscious of his suffering and the suffering of his fellowmen. As the story ends,

Yuhanna is pictured as one sighing deeply and repeating the words: "You are many and I am one. Say what you will of me and do to me as you wish. The ewe may fall as prey to the wolves in the darkness of the night, but her blood will stain the stones of the valley until the coming of the dawn and the rising of the sun" (59). Here is an example of the crushing of personalities by rigorous social and religious norms. Yuhanna's personality is crushed even by his father who stated that his son was mad. Even though it was meant to be a blessing in disguise, it turned out to be a curse for him. Yuhanna was so full of love for his countrymen that he wished to improve their lives but he could not, because it was not possible for an individual to free himself from the fetters of the society easily. Moreover, he did not know how to tackle the problem prudently and obediently.

"Dust of the Ages and the Eternal Fire," as the title suggests, is about reincarnation. The story is set first in the autumn of 116 BC. Then it moves to the spring of AD 1890. Nathan, the hero, first appears in 116 BC as the son of a Phoenician priest in Baalbek and then after incarnation, he is Ali Al-Husaini, a member of an Arab tribe, a Bedouin nomad dwelling in tents around Baalbek. Nathan's ladylove, on the point of death, had promised to meet him after death:

The gods call me . . . and Death has come to part us. . . . Grieve not, for the will of the gods is sacred and demands of Death are just. . . . I am going now, but the twin cups of love and youth are still full in our hands and the ways of sweet life lie before us. . . . I am going, my beloved, to the meadows of the spirits, but I shall return to this world. (*Nymphs of the Valley* 23)

She gives enough reason for her return:

Astarte brings back to this life the souls of lovers who have gone to the infinite before they have tasted of the delights of love and the joys of youth. . . . We shall meet again, Nathan, and together drink of the morning dew from the cups of the narcissus and rejoice in the sun with the birds of the fields. (23)

This promise came to be fulfilled in AD 1890 when Ali Al-Husaini, a shepherd, experienced a vision among the ruins of the ancient city temple of Baalbek. He had been suffering a spiritual hunger, the meaning of which he was beginning to grasp. Simultaneously he began to remember his past life. The distant past and the memories of his beloved began to haunt him. All of

a sudden, he saw an attractive woman coming out from among the trees carrying a jar of water upon her shoulders. As they met, both of them began to remember their past lives and realized that they have been reborn: "They communed, the one with the other, in all the tongues of the spirit. And when full understanding and knowledge possessed their two souls, Ali crossed the stream, drawn thither by an invisible power" (34-35). They exchanged the initial intimacies of physical love without speaking. Then she spoke: "Astarte has brought back our souls to this life so that the delights of love and the glory of youth might not be forbidden us, my beloved" (36). They began to enjoy their youth once again. Ali closed his eyes with joy. Then his face lighted up and his spirit was refreshed. His visions were scattered, and he forgot both the past and the future. In this story, "love is the immortal fire" opine Bushrui and Jenkins (76). This immortal fire kindles love and gives light to generations. Reincarnation is a topic Gibran cherishes, as it is evident from what he wrote to Mary: "I feel sure we have lived before. In myself I have experiences that indicate previous lives to me" (8 June 1924 BP 427). Lovers commune in space and time, and out of space and time, just as the East communes with the West. Gibran believes that with love, the living can commune with the

dead. If love is a matter of the body and the mind, it can be disciplined or regulated with love.

In the "Introduction" to *The Wisdom of Kahlil Gibran*, Andrew Sherfan says: "In *Nymphs of the Valley*, Gibran attacks those in authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, since they make laws but do not observe them" (x). Gibran was specially against the vices rampant among the clergy. He believed in the goodness of people who were tortured in the name of the church and religion. Bushrui and Jenkins ascertain that the attack on the church and state was because of Gibran's compassion for man: "The combination of his Rousseau-like belief in the innate goodness of an unshackled humanity and his personalized interpretation of the Christian message of universal love led him to launch a radical assault on the church and state in his two early works," *Nymphs of the Valley* and *Spirits Rebellious* (14). Such assaults led by Gibran represented the wildest insubordination to the status quo, and he was vilified and condemned as a heretic (*A Self-Portrait* 15). He had also been very sharp in his criticism of wealthy noblemen. Like Yuhanna the Mad, Gibran is filled with love for his tortured fellowmen and is forced to speak against the clergy. He undergoes love's trials like Martha and the incarnate lovers of "Dust of the Ages and the Eternal Fire" and

becomes a vociferous reformer. “Martha,” “Yuhanna the Mad,” and “Dust of the Ages and the Eternal Fire” portray Gibran’s role as a reformer. They show his “belief in sorrow and suffering as a means of purification . . . All these beliefs were defensive walls which he built round himself to keep the succession of tragedies from crushing him; they and his messianic belief in his vocation were also a rampart against the degrading effects of poverty” (Hawi 89).

Spirits Rebellious

Four stories - “Madame Rose Hanie,” “The Bridal Couch,” “The Cry of the Graves” and “Khalil the Heretic” - originally published in *Al Mohajer*, appeared in book form under the title *Spirits Rebellious*. These reflect the oppressive social conditions in Lebanon.

“Madame Rose Hanie” is the account of a woman married to Rashid Bey Namaan, a rich, generous and good-hearted Lebanese, from the city of Beyrouth. Madame Rose Hanie found herself a puppet in a rich mansion. Namaan, who amused himself in superficial things for self-gratification, married her for her beauty not knowing whether her soul had said ‘yes’ to his soul. Years later he realized that the woman he had rescued from poverty and adorned in gold and glitters now lived in a poor

hovel with another man she truly loved. The narrator in the story listens to Rose Hanie's description of her life after she was married to Namaan. She was eighteen and he forty. He placed at her disposal, a gorgeous palace and servants, expensive clothes and precious gems, and possessed her instead of loving her. He proudly exhibited her before his friends and relatives who envied her. When people praised her, he held his head so high that he was unaware of the people mocking him for trapping her, and pitying her for living in a miserable trap.

The ill-matched couple lived on in a half-conscious state until Rose Hanie woke up from the slumber of childhood and found herself imprisoned by law in the household of the loveless Namaan. She experienced a spiritual hunger for love: "I prayed and prayed in the silence of the night before God to create in the depths of my heart a spiritual attachment that would carry me closer to the man who had been chosen for me as a companion through life" (*Spirits Rebellious* 216). Her prayers were not granted, and she realized that, "Love descends upon our souls by the will of God and not by the demand or the plea of the individual" (216). She became increasingly conscious of her suffering in giving her body to one and her soul to another. It was after a lapse of two years that she found a companion whose love she recognized and accepted.

The narrator listened to Rose Hanie not as the merciful champion of oppressed women but as the true friend of Namaan who was ashamed of the fact that Hanie could throw away his riches and seek comfort in a hut with a poor man. He understood that she had become one with the man she loved: “There is no power under the sun that can take my happiness from me, because it emanated from two embraced spirits, engulfed by understanding, radiated by Love, and protected by heaven” she told him (218). She was aware that people would rate her as a heretic and an unfaithful woman, who discarded virtue and put on the cloak of sin and disgrace. However, her new love made her argue thus: “In God’s eyes I was unfaithful and an adulteress only while at the home of Rashid Bey Namaan . . . I was a sinner in the eyes of God and myself when I ate his bread and offered him my body in reward for his generosity. Now I am pure and clean because the law of Love has freed me . . .” (219-20). Pointing out to the enormous buildings of the city through the window, Madame Hanie told the narrator that many of the occupants there were empty of pure love; that is, they were spiritually buried.

Away from such spiritually dead people, Madame Hanie says she feels free. She did try to reconcile herself to her misfortune of living with Namaan, but her spirit refused to. So

she broke the binding chains and walked out from Namaan's home, like a bird freed from its iron cage, leaving behind all the gems, clothes and servants. Then she gladly came to live with her beloved for she believed that what she was doing was honest before God. Recollecting her past days in Namaan's house, she says that she used to pray in the night for dawn to come and when dawn came, she prayed that the day would be over. Gradually she became conscious of her misery and conscious of the fact that God does not want anyone to lead a pathetic life. She believed that God placed in the depths of her heart a desire for happiness. When she made herself happy God was at rest in her heart. When Madame Hanie introduced her object of love to the narrator, there was a wholesome smile on her lover's face. The narrator noticed a complete understanding emanating from two smiling faces, illuminated by sincerity and surrounded by virtue: "For the first time in my life I found the phantom of happiness standing between a man and a woman, cursed by religion and opposed by law" (226-27).

The reader shares the confusion of the narrator, who is Gibran himself, when he sympathizes with Namaan's misery on one side but admires Madame Hanie's courage on the other: "Had that woman done wrong when she left him (Namaan) and

followed the freedom of her heart? Or did he commit a crime by subduing her body in marriage before subduing her heart in love? Which of the two is the oppressed and which is the oppressor?" (227). A more pertinent question is: "Will man remain a slave of self-confinement until the end of the world? Or will he be freed by the passing of time and live in the Spirit for the Spirit?" (229).

Gibran was conscious of the inequality of man and woman that hinders the growth of the individual. One of the world's most fervent and outspoken champions of the cause of human rights, he had waged a long war to strengthen the youth's freedom of action in love. He also longed to abolish from the social structure of the Middle East, some of the ancient marriage customs prevailing. He condemned the tradition of pre-arranged marriages of children by their parents, in complete disregard of the wishes of the children. As noted in the "Introduction" to *A Treasury of Kahlil Gibran*, Martin L. Wolf states: "It is a matter of common knowledge that these transactions often took place when the children concerned were scarcely old enough to walk, much less realize the enormous significance of the steps then planned irrevocably for them" (xii).

Madame Hanie is the oppressed according to Gibran's view but she in turn oppresses Namaan who is a victim of ill-arranged marriages. Gibran, while lashing at the social customs, sympathizes with Namaan, but at the same time, he would grant Madame Hanie her freedom. There was no sacrificing of individual freedom, for Gibran. Love could not be disciplined in Hanie or in Namaan because there was no love between them. Namaan possessed her instead of loving her, while she could not love him. Where there is no love Gibran would advocate realization. Namaan does realize Hanie's true love for her lover. Gibran also focuses on the illumination of love in the lives of Hanie and her newfound love.

"The Bridal Couch" or "The Bride's Bed" is based on an incident that occurred during a marriage celebration in North Lebanon in the latter part of nineteenth century, and it was conveyed to Gibran by one of their relatives who attended the function. "The Bridal Couch" like "Madame Rose Hanie" ponders on the fate of women in the patriarchal society of the Middle East. In this story, Lyla in love with Selim, is deceived by Najeebee, Lyla's rival. Najeebee convinces Lyla that Selim does not love her. Thus, Lyla's marriage to another man is arranged. But on the wedding day when Lyla and Selim meet, all

misunderstandings are cleared and she tells him: “My beloved, listen to me; I am sorry for having been hasty and thoughtless. I repented until my heart is crushed with sorrow; I love you and do not love any other; I shall continue to love you to the end of my life” (*Spirits Rebellious* 349). Then she encourages him to elope with her. Selim, a typical straightforward character of the society, requests her to return to her husband. In order to dissuade her he falsely owns that he is in love with another woman: “Depart from me! I love another with an intensity that causes me to forget you exist in this world. Najeebee was right when she told you that I loved her. Go back to your husband and be a faithful wife to him as the law commands” (351). Though Lyla does not believe him, his reluctance to join her, angers her, and she cries out saying, “No one shall ever triumph over me and take my love from me!” (351). In no time, she draws out a dagger from beneath her wedding gown and stabs him. As he succumbs he bursts out: “Come, Lyla, and do not leave me. Life is weaker than Death, and Death is weaker than Love. . . . Lyla, you have rescued me from Life’s suffering. Let me kiss the hand that broke the chains and let me free. Kiss me and forgive me, for I have not been truthful ” (352). Lyla stabs herself to death with the words: “Stay away from us and separate

not our bodies, for if you commit such a sin, the spirit that hovers over your heads will grasp you and take your lives. Let this hungry earth swallow our bodies and hide us in its bosom” (354).

Watching the lifeless bodies of the lovers, the priest proclaims that anyone who keeps vigil for the dead throughout the night or buries the bodies would be banned from the church: “Cursed are the hands that touch these blood-spattered carcasses that are soaked with sin . . . he who remains here shall be cursed and excommunicated from the church and shall never again enter the temple and join the Christians in offering prayers to God!” (355-56). Thus, the bride’s unrestrained fury brings upon herself, tragic consequences. Gibran’s scathing attack on such inhuman marriages have sent shock waves all over with social, political and religious implications. “The Bride’s Couch” ends tragically because Lyla and her lover ended up as lifeless bodies while Madame Hanie and her lover live a life of love. Gibran boldly speaks against the problems of oriental women, whose lives were ruined by misogyny and wrongly arranged marriages. Individual liberty is at the centre of Gibran’s narratives.

“The Cry of the Graves” hints at the judiciary that is lawless and wayward. Three criminals are brought before the Emir for justice. The first criminal, a young man, who has killed a

commander in the Emir's army, is condemned to be beheaded. The second, a young woman accused of adultery, is to be stoned to death. The third, an old man, who stole a sacred vessel, is to be hanged. Witnessing this, is the narrator who says, "All this happened while I was standing there . . . I was meditating the laws, made by man for man, contemplating what the people call 'justice,' and engrossing myself with deep thoughts of the secrets of life. I tried to understand the meaning of the universe" (*Spirits Rebellious* 314). As the narrative proceeds, the crimes change their shape. The Emir's commander is killed by the young man because he (commander) tried to rape the young man's ladylove. The accused young woman was actually innocent because she was merely talking to a lover. The accused old man was driven to stealing because he was starved by the monks. The punishment meted out to the three was drastic - the youth beheaded, the young woman dragged naked outside the city and stoned to death, and the old man hung from a tree. These being criminals, their bodies could not be buried in the religious tradition and so were left in the wilderness.

The questions raised by the narrator are Gibran thoughts, no doubt: "When a man kills another man, the people say he is a murderer, but when the Emir kills him, the Emir is just. . . .

When a woman betrays her husband they say she is an adulterous, but when the Emir makes her walk naked in the streets and stones her later, the Emir is noble” (315-316). Gibran becomes more peaceful as he ends the narrative with thoughts of the cry of those in the graves. He stretched his hand toward the graves, lifted his eyes toward heaven and cried out: “Oh, Bravery, this is your sword, buried now in the earth! Oh, Love, these are your flowers, scorched by fire! Oh, Lord Jesus, this is Thy Cross, submerged in the obscurity of the night!” (323). Gibran was ever conscious of the conflict between law and individual freedom.

“Khalil the Heretic,” dealing with individual liberty in a unique manner, is the most thought-provoking story in *Spirits Rebellious*: Here the theme is still more outspoken and defiant than in *Nymphs of the Valley*. Both collections focussed on the abuse of power but *Spirits Rebellious* “attempted to offer positive alternatives” (Bushrui and Jenkins 83). The hero in “Khalil the Heretic” and in “Yuhanna the Mad” are both abused by power, but while Yuhanna succumbs to the torture, Khalil is strong enough to resist it. Khalil the Heretic rebels against the monastery and he is expelled. But he justifies himself saying that he left because he was surprised to find the head priest believing that in order to become a monk, one had to be blind, ignorant,

senseless and dumb. He says, "I left the convent because I am a sensible man who can see, feel, and hear" (*Spirits Rebellious* 252).

Touched by the love of Rachel and Miriam, Khalil narrated his past and admitted that he was expelled from the convent. Having lost his parents before the age of seven, the village priest took him to Deir Kizhaya where he was put in charge of the cows and sheep. He did his job for years, as there was no other alternative. At the age of fifteen, he says, the monks put on him a black robe and asked him to make a vow to live a virtuous life of poverty and obedience. He agreed, not realizing what he was agreeing to, and since that time the monks addressed him as 'Brother Mobaarak' though they did not treat him like a brother. He says, he suffered bad food, heavy work, and uncomfortable living conditions. In the depths of his heart, Khalil knew that "The true light is that which emanates from within man, and reveals the secrets of the heart to the soul, making it happy and contented with life" (255). Khalil's strong conviction made him declare that the beliefs and teachings that make man miserable, are false, "for it is man's purpose to be happy on this earth and lead the way to felicity and preach its gospel wherever he goes. He who does not see the kingdom of heaven in this life will never see it in the coming life" (256). The monks, who could

not tolerate the rebel, put him in a dark cell with minimum food for forty days, as part of discipline.

According to Khalil's version, the night before he left the monastery he was called mockingly "The Great Reformer" for reading out passages that hinted at the non-biblical attitude of the monks. Naturally the head priest cried out, "Arrest this rebel and drag him out from this sacred place, and let the storm's fury teach him obedience" (261). This was the provocation for his expulsion from the convent. Hearing Khalil's story of pain, Rachel provided him shelter for five days. In the meanwhile, he could understand the silent love Miriam began to feel for him. "Why will you not remain here and live close to us?" she asked (267). He made it plain that he loved to stay back in the village though he feared that the villagers would not accept an expelled monk to live among them. She answered, "We are both in the hands of a mysterious and merciful power. Let it do its will" (268).

The news of Khalil in Rachel's house reached Sheik Abbas, the lord of the land. He ordered his men to tie Khalil and bring him to his palace. They did as ordered and and Rachel and Miriam followed him. The Sheik's residence was crowded with people who wished to have a glance not only at the infidel who was expelled from the convent but also the two women who had

given shelter to heresy. The Sheik took the seat of judgement and beside him Father Elias. The throng gazed at the pinioned Khalil who stood defiantly in front of them. Rachel and Miriam stood behind Khalil trembling with fear. Sheik Abbas informed Khalil that he was to be tried as a criminal. On hearing this Khalil turned to the crowd and challenged them: "I select you now as my jury, because the will of the people is the will of God. Awaken your hearts and listen carefully and then prosecute me according to the dictates of your conscience" (276-77). Then Khalil poured out his complaints to the crowd: "I have sustained imprisonment, thirst, and hunger for the sake of Truth that hurts only the body. I have undergone suffering beyond endurance because I turned your sad sighs into a crying voice that rang and echoed in every corner of the convent" (278).

As Khalil narrated his grievances to Sheik Abbas and the monks, there was a silent understanding in the hearts of the villagers. Sheik Abbas was dismayed at their attentiveness and tried to interrupt but Khalil continued passionately, "God has given you children to rear, to teach them the truth and fill their hearts with the most precious things of existence. He wants you to bequeath upon them the joy of Life and the bounty of Life"

(285). Overwhelmed with anger, Khalil said that if he were to be killed that night he would die in peace because, “I have fulfilled my mission and revealed to you the Truth which demons consider a crime. I have now completed the will of Almighty God” (286). Sheik Abbas and Father Elias trembled with righteous indignation because they thought that Khalil was just a rebel and not a good-hearted reformer. Abusing the crowd for listening to Khalil, the Sheik raised a sword towards the fettered youth. Just then a strong villager gripped the Sheik’s hand and said, “Lay down your weapon, Master, for he who draws the sword to kill, shall, by the sword, be killed!” (287).

As a gesture of rebellion, the oldest of the servants took off his cloak and turban and threw them before the Sheik saying that he does not wish to be his slave anymore. All the servants did the same. The people’s faces radiated with joy, symbolic of freedom and truth. One of them untied Khalil and expressed the desire of all: “This fettered youth, whom you have brought here tonight to be tried as a criminal, has lifted our depressed spirits and enlightened our hearts with Truth and Knowledge” (289). Khalil left the place and the crowd followed him as though he possessed a divine power. As the crowd dispersed, he followed Rachel and Miriam to their poor hovel. The villagers rejoiced for

they knew that a new spirit had led them into the right path of freedom.

Khalil continued to enlighten the villagers for the next two months. Sheik Abbas had a nervous breakdown. He issued commands to his servants but no one listened to him. Father Elias too lost respect. In the meanwhile the love between Khalil and Miriam became known to the people. They were glad because the news assured them of Khalil's continued leadership in the village. At the time of the next harvest, Sheik Abbas had already become a memory. In his absence, each villager harvested his own crop. The huts of the villagers were filled with wheat and corn, wine and oil. Since that year, each villager reaped what he had sowed. The land they tilled became theirs.

Half a century passed since that incident. The wretched huts of the past are now comfortable and happy homes surrounded by fertile fields and blooming orchards. On enquiring about Khalil, the villagers would say: "There resides our beloved Khalil, whose life's history was written by God with glittering letters upon the pages of our hearts, and they cannot be effaced by the ages" (298). Honest Khalil had lived courageously and gracefully, and accepted responsibility for the people around him. Imbued with love for them he wanted to make his village a

utopian ideal, a community where work and love could be made visible. He conforms to Scott Peck's stipulations for a disciplined person:

Courageous people must continually push themselves to be completely honest, yet must also possess the capacity to withhold the whole truth when appropriate. To be free people we must assume total responsibility for ourselves, but in doing so must possess the capacity to reject responsibility that is not truly ours. To be organized and efficient, to live wisely, we must daily delay gratification and keep an eye on the future; yet to live joyously we must also possess the capacity, when it is not destructive, to live in the present and act spontaneously. In other words, discipline itself must be disciplined. (66)

"Khalil the Heretic" makes the reader think from several angles to ask Gibran innumerable questions on freedom and truth. Individual liberty was a matter of serious concern for Gibran as shown in "Yuhanna the Mad" and "The Cry of the Graves." The world believes that Gibran's knife-edged attacks were largely responsible for many of the social, political and religious reforms finally undertaken by the rulers of the East. Gibran's feeling for

his country and countrymen was very strong. That is why he could write with conviction, the article, "Dead are my People." Two specific works in *Spirits Rebellious* precipitated drastic official action against him – "The Cry of the Graves" and "Khalil the Heretic." *Spirits Rebellious* was burned in the market place of Beirut, and Gibran was excommunicated from the Church and exiled from the country. In a language unheard of in the past, both works condemned the evils of the Church and State prevailing in early twentieth century. The burning, the exile and the excommunication did not serve the purpose they were meant for. Gibran's attacks grew stronger and he realized the need for a second edition of *Spirits Rebellious*. Gradually the world became interested in his writings. Years later his exile was remanded and the Church embraced him without conciliation on his part. A mourner who witnessed the funeral procession of Gibran in 1931 states that the ecclesiastical pageantry of the event was beyond description:

Hundreds of priests and religious leaders, representing every denomination under Eastern and Western skies, were in solemn attendance. Included were Maronites, Catholics, Shiites, Jews, Protestants, Mohammedans, Greek Orthodox, Sunnites, Druzes,

and others. And to render complete, Gibran's restoration to the fold of religion, he was buried in the grotto of the Monastery of Mar Sarkis, his childhood church. (Wolf xix-xx)

The passionate ideals expressed in *Spirits Rebellious* created enemies for him. Some of them aimed at his life. He narrated it to Mary who recorded it in the Journal: "He showed me the scar on his arm that a shot in Paris had given him - a Turkish attempt on his life. . . . He had never told me of that before - the shot was fired too close - and had been a failure" (Jean and Kahlil 306). But threats and plots did not affect Gibran for he happily wore the mantle of a revolutionary even after.

As *Spirits Rebellious* was suppressed by the Syrian government, only 200 copies got into Syria, secretly. The church considered excommunicating Gibran, but the sentence was never actually pronounced (Jean and Kahlil 189-90). Later two representatives of the Patriarch visited Paris and invited him with other Syrians for dinner. He did not want to but when urged he stayed. One of the representatives said to him:

You have made a grave mistake - are making a grave mistake. Your gifts you are using against your people, against your country, against your church. The holy

Patriarch realizes this. But he does not condemn you. He sends you a special message and loving offer of friendship . . . and now - seek out every copy of the book - destroy them all - and let me take word from you back to Syria and the Church and to the holy Patriarch. (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 190)

Hearing this accusation, Gibran was vehement, Mary records, in her journal on 3 Sept. 1914. He just let himself go, furiously and purposely. "He told his Holiness he had heard all that had been said, before it was uttered. Nothing in it had surprised him. Far from 'returning,' he was working then on a book to be called 'The Broken Wings.' He hoped his Holiness would read it - he hoped the holy Patriarch would read it" (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 190). Then referring to the new book, he added, "They would see in it how entirely he disagreed with them and how he was advancing as he had begun. And he said Goodnight - did not stay for dinner" (190).

Khalil, the mouthpiece of Gibran, gives a serious message for mankind: "True light is that which emanates from within a man, and reveals the secrets of the heart to the soul, making it happy and contented with life" (*Spirits Rebellious* 255). Believing in

The New Testament, Gibran stresses on the “inner person who must be transformed” and he teaches that compassion is the guiding light of a person’s actions (Bushrui and Jenkins 85).

Humanistic by approach, Gibran’s philosophy includes: “A word of compassion to the weak criminal or prostitute is nobler than the long prayer which we repeat empty everyday in the temple” (*Spirits Rebellious* 258).

The Broken Wings

Brimming with tears that sparkle in the eye, the reader of *The Broken Wings* empathizes with Selma Karamy’s suffering and admires her capacity for endurance. It is Selma’s and her lover’s unfulfilled love and the consequent pain that transform them into persons of grace. When their friendship first blossomed into love and developed into a deep spiritual union, she had whispered: “Now I know that there is something higher than heaven and deeper than the ocean and stranger than life and death and time. I know now what I did not know before” (42). He realized with equal fervour: “At that moment Selma became dearer than a friend and closer than a sister and more beloved than a sweetheart. She became a supreme thought, a beautiful dream, an overpowering emotion living in my spirit” (42).

However, fate had it otherwise. The Bishop, Bulos Galib, desired that his wayward nephew, Mansour Bay Galib, should marry Selma because her father, Farris Effandi Karamy, had immense wealth. Karamy was unable to go against the Bishop's order. "That night in which I had been born again, I felt that I saw death's face for the first time" her lover exclaimed (47). She complied with the thought, but struggled for reconciliation: "I neither know nor love him, but I shall learn to love him, and I shall obey him, serve him, and make him happy. I shall give him all that a weak woman can give a strong man" (59). She could not understand the cause of her suffering for she had not disobeyed any commandment, nor tasted of the forbidden fruit. So she prayed: "Oh Lord God, have mercy on me and mend my broken wings!" (69).

After marriage, Galib and Selma lived at Ras Beyrouth where wealthy dignitaries resided. Galib spent his time in pursuit of extra-marital sexual satisfaction while Selma's lover prayed for her happiness and surrender to the request of her father: "My son, be a real brother to Selma as your father was to me" (86). Those words turned out to be a dying man's request and he respected it. After Karamy's death when Mansour Bay Galib got possession of Selma's wealth, he made her a prisoner for life.

At this point of time, the relationship between her and her lover took a revolutionary turn. They met in an obscure temple once a month and indulged in the pleasure of conversation, discussing their hidden miseries and imaginary hopes. These secret meetings devoid of any sexual or physical intimacies, with only God and a flock of birds as witnesses, led to a new discovery of reality - a reality that feared not the observer's eyes, a reality that suffered no prick of conscience, a reality purified by pain, a reality unashamed before the throne of God. The lover's new reality made him argue, "The oppressed prisoner, who can break away from his jail and does not do so, is a coward" (96).

These secret meetings soon ended, because the Bishop found out that Selma used to leave her home once a month. She feared for her lover and not for herself, and suggested that they bid each other farewell and separate. He fiercely reacted to her decision assuring her, "I love you, Selma, and you love me, too; and love is a precious treasure, it is God's gift to sensitive and great spirits (104-05). Then in more clear-cut terms he said: "Let us go to the coast under the cover of night and catch a boat that will take us across the ocean, where we can find a new life of happiness and understanding" (105). Gracefully she rejected the offer saying, "It is love, purified with fire that stops me from

following you to the farthest land. Love kills my desires so that you may live freely and virtuously” (106). Not allowing him to make a protest, she just looked at him for his approval. And as she had never done before, she flung herself upon him and put her smooth arms around him and kissed him and knelt reverently before the picture of Christ and kissed His feet whispering, “Oh, Christ I have chosen Thy Cross” (109).

Then she made a further request for separation. He looked askance at her nobility of sacrifice and her happiness of rebellion. At last, grace dawned on him in the form of one truth - sincerity. He understood that her sincerity would lead her to grace, and he regretted that he could not ascend the same heights. However, with the lapse of time, grace dawned on him naturally and gradually when Selma and her child died in childbirth, leaving him alone to pray for them.

According to Robin Waterfield, *The Broken Wings* becomes special for its themes:

What makes the book distinctive of the young Gibran are some typical themes: sympathy for the plight of Eastern women; championing womanhood in general; the idea that wealth is a positive impediment to happiness; criticism of the greed and worldly power

of high-ranking clerics; eulogy of the mother; and above all the Romantic theme of the power of love to elevate us into a world of transcendent reality.

(60)

When *The Broken Wings* was published, May Ziadah, a young Lebanese woman, three years junior to Gibran and a writer of literary reviews, living in Cairo, wrote to him praising his style. But she had no sympathy with the heroine, a married woman, meeting her secret lover in the temple. In the 'Introduction' to *Gibran: Love Letters*, Bushrui and Haffar opine:

While Gibran felt that man's only path to self-realization lay in love, May (Ziadah) was all too conscious of the inescapable position of the Eastern woman and the grip of social restrictions. Though she respected the freedom and individuality to which other women aspired, she could not disregard the silken bonds which tied her to her own society. (xvi)

But she agreed with Gibran's intention of "freeing women from the rigid proscriptions prevalent in the Middle East" (Jean and Kahlil 368). Reference to women as a commodity, purchased and delivered and as an object of sexual pleasure, invited severe criticism from several Arab quarters in the same vein as May

Ziadah's but being too strong a personality he interpreted the relationship as "a fragment of the power of love" (Waterfield 60). Consequently, "*The Broken Wings* established Gibran as one of the first defenders of women's rights in the Middle East" (Bushrui and Jenkins 58).

Readers have single-mindedly agreed that *The Broken Wings* is based on real-life experience. In Bisharri, young Khalil had to depend upon Tannous Asad Hanna Dahir for food and accommodation. In return, Gibran used to help the daughters of Dahir with their household chores. Young Kahlil was specially attracted to Hala, the eldest of them and she responded by listening to his reveries. Though she was older than he, gossip spread about a possible betrothal. But he knew the impossibility of it for her influential brother, Alexander, legal scribe and town official, could not contain the fact that the son of a goat-tax farmer should marry his sister. "It may have been this youthful incident that provided the substance of his semi-autobiographical novella written thirteen years later" says Bushrui (21). In fact, there is no need to probe into the autobiographical element beyond a certain limit, but the need arises here because the study undertaken in this dissertation is psychobiographical and therefore

the impact of personal experience on the work is significant indubitably. Professor Hawi interviewed people close to Gibran's family in Lebanon in the 1950s, and discovered that he did fall in love with Hala Al-Dahir of Bisharri but their relationship was broken off not because she was married to the Bishop's nephew but because her brother considered Gibran too low-born for her. He seems to have remarked about Gibran thus: "After all, he is the son of that ruffian Khalil" (Waterfield 61). Though Gibran and Hala were forcefully separated, they had clandestine meetings which were known to a close circle in Bisharri. It is interesting to note that "as recently as 1987, a descendant of Hala confirmed the story" to be true (61).

The Broken Wings was revised thoroughly prior to publication. As Mary Haskell was the confidential editor of all Gibran's English works, he naturally discussed the novel with her. The Journal says that Gibran gave her the outline of the story in English for about two hours during which he said:

Not one of the experiences in the book has been mine. Not one of the characters has been studied from a model, nor one of the events taken from real life. . . . The characters and events are my creations . . . I say this because the book dealing with a young

man's awakening to life and with a love affair is sure to be called autobiographical. (20 Dec 1911 BP 50)

All the same, Selma was close to his heart, he admitted, "Sulma Karami I love very much. I've studied her carefully. She's a real person to me!" (20 Dec 1911 BP 51). He also wrote to Mary "This summer I rewrote it. And you were always with it - so you are in a way the mother of the little book!" (BP 51).

The Broken Wings, first published in Arabic in New York by Mir 'at' al-Gharb in 1912, was dedicated to Mary Haskell who was the confidential editor of his English books and whom he referred to as his guardian angel (20 Dec 1911 51). Biographers of Gibran unanimously considered the book autobiographical. But what biographers were unaware of until the early 1970s is Gibran's own verdict on the matter. As recorded in Mary's journal, Gibran had stated categorically that the book is not autobiographical (qtd. in Waterfield 60-61).

There would have been no controversy in this matter had not the people close to Gibran known about the estrangement developing between Mary Haskell and himself. Waterfield argues that, "It would after all, only increase our admiration of Gibran as a writer that he could so fully enter into the soul of a broken-hearted young lover without having had any such

experience himself.” (61). However, as an after-thought, he adds, “Gibran was something of a chameleon. He was perfectly capable of not telling Mary the complete truth, of saying what he thought would please her” (61). Besides, he moved to New York by 1911 and Mary remained at Boston where her school was. They met rarely and perhaps they tried to maintain the relationship by not touching upon sensitive areas. “Under these circumstances, it is plausible to think that Gibran might have been disingenuous, to say the least, about the earlier affair: everyone knows the lingering power of a first, teenage love” (61). Moreover he was “more concerned to present to Mary his mythical persona than any solid reality, so that it is often hard to believe the things he told her” (61-62). This harsh comment by Waterfield is balanced by an opposite view he quotes with reference to an interview with Mikhail Naimy, who confirmed that Gibran had made it clear to his uncle, Nadeem Naimy, that “there was no basis of fact in *The Broken Wings*. It seems, then, that in this instance Gibran was not lying to Mary: the book is not autobiographical” (62).

Gibran’s letter to Mary says, “At last *Broken Wings* is out and I am sending you a marked copy (in Arabic!) which you cannot read now. Someday perhaps you will read it in a different

tongue, and perhaps you will love it as an expression of the blessed year 1911” (26 Jan. 1912 BP 56). On 28 January 1912, she wrote: “Came from Kahlil a marked copy of *Broken Wings*, just out - with the dedication translated and title of each chapter” (BP 57). The translation found on the same page was worded thus: “To her who gazes at the sun with fixed eyes; who touches the Fire with fingers that tremble not; who hears the songs of the Absolute while in the midst of the hollering blind - to M. E. H. I dedicate this book. Gibran” (28 Jan. 1912 BP 57).

Mary was moved by the dedication: “In reply - I could only cry out of my speechlessness: To him who turns eyes sunward; who brings fire; who gives the Absolute a voice; whose immortality my name exults to hear - acknowledgment” (28 Jan. 1912 BP 57). If *The Broken Wings* is a “tale of tragic love, anguish and separation” as Bushrui says in *Kahlil Gibran of Lebanon*, the tragic love is not only that of Selma and her lover but also that of Gibran and Mary Haskell (21). The book is full of simple poetry and tender emotion of love because it was written before Gibran read Nietzsche. Yet, it is balanced by a criticism of laws, society, authorities and clergy in particular.

But Naimy has a different explanation. According to him, Gibran had started working on *The Broken Wings* since his return

from Lebanon in 1903. Mikhail Naimy's testimony is that, "A year after his return from Paris, Gibran was on his way to New York. In his ears he carried Marrianna's sobs; in his eyes, her tears; in his heart, the love and blessing of Mary; in his pocket, a small sum of her money; in his satchel, the manuscript of his Arabic novelette "Broken Wings" together with an English copy of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*" (108).

The Broken Wings contains a eulogy for Gibran's mother Kamileh, who being an affectionate and accomplished woman was a source of inspiration and admiration for him. The daughter of a Maronite priest, she prepared herself to enter a nunnery but her desire did not materialize. Perhaps for that reason Gibran had great respect for nuns: "I love nuns and give them my heart's blessing" (Bushrui and Haffar 30). It was when he was twenty years of age that his mother shared this secret thought, which is given in poetic prose:

"It would have been better for me and for
everyone else if I had entered the nunnery."

"If you had entered the nunnery I should not
have come into this world," I said.

"You were foreordained, my son," she replied.

"Yes, but I had chosen you for my mother long
before I came into the world," I said.

“If you had not come into the world you would
have remained an angel in heaven.”

“But I am still an angel!” I replied.

She smiled and said: “Where are your wings?”

I held her hand and put it on my shoulder, and said:

“Here”.

They are Broken!” she said. (30)

This loving and meaningful dialogue was especially significant because Gibran had had his shoulder broken, following an accident in his childhood (20 April 1920 BP 330). His adoration for his mother takes shape in the mouth of Selma, who looking into the photograph of her mother weeps profusely while the narrator digresses considerably. However, the digression does not exceed tolerable limits because of the fine poetry and the delicate human emotion.

Jean and Kahlil Gibran believe that the cry of Selma and her lover - “Oh, Lord God, have mercy on me and mend my broken wings” resemble a line from Josephine Peabody’s one-act play, *The Wings* (*The Broken Wings* 69). Gibran appears to have been influenced by the line, “Ah Thou! Have pity on all broken wings” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 217). So when Gibran says that there is nothing personal in this book and calls it a spiritual

biography, he could probably be justifying to himself that though the time for the novelette is inspired by Josephine Peabody's presence, and space for it influenced by Hala Dahir's Lebanon, it is not a literal autobiography but a biography inspired by his spirit. Furthermore "The heroine of *The Broken Wings* was not Syrian in mind or heart: stripped of the superficial jasmine blossoms and lemon scents, Selma Karema could easily have been French, English, Russian, Italian or Austrian" (Jean and Kahlil 368).

Gibran "expressed disappointment over the weakness of his countrymen who quietly surrendered their own power to the traditional authority of the clergy" (Otto 24). As he set forth to right wrongs in his own country, he grew more confident in his "prophetic" role. Though the venue of his mission was Lebanon in the beginning, he embraced the whole world in concentric circles. The discipline of love portrayed in *The Broken Wings* makes a great stride towards his definition of the cybernetics of love.

The Madman

The Madman: His Parables and Poems (1918) is the result of the thirty-five years of isolation that Gibran experienced at different levels: a poor Maronite Christian from a predominantly

Muslim region; the talented son of a broken family; a Lebanese emigrant in America; a genuine artist penniless in a materialistic society; and a mystical poet in a strange land. In his childhood, Otto says, Gibran “conceived the universe as perfect and devoid of evil” but as he grew up, he became disillusioned and embittered and “took upon himself the task of exposing the evil deeds of men” (52). Bushrui and Jenkins state that “Often Gibran was gripped with a triple longing; a longing for his homeland; for a more just and tolerant society; and for a higher world of spiritual union - a triple longing which fired his creativity. Now, in 1918, Gibran found that the Western world was prepared to listen to him” (168). He rebelled against imposed authority and wrote scathing articles on the misuse of authority.

Gibran began to write seriously in English with the help of Mary Haskell in 1913. The first English publication was a poem “The Perfect World” published in 1915. Later this poem was included as the last piece in *The Madman* in 1918. The years of the First World War changed his thoughts considerably. He became pessimistic and sombre in tone. In the summer of 1918, he was introduced to a young publisher, Alfred A. Knopf who, delighted with *The Madman*; published it. Knopf also published all subsequent English works of Gibran.

Mary Haskell's help was mostly in the language part of writing. Jean and Kahlil give a detailed account of the assistance given by Mary, quoting from the letters written by her and Gibran. Mary admits: "He gave always every idea and I simply found the phrases sometimes" (qtd. Jean and Kahlil 284). No doubt Gibran too has owned the help several times: "I am sure that I could not have written a word in English if it were not for you. But I must learn a great deal more before I can give form to my thoughts in this wonderful language" (300). After the contract with Mr Knopf was signed, Gibran appeared confident: "Of course I want the book to be a success commercially, for both Mr Knopf's sake and for the sake of my next book" (319). On 22 October 1918, he sent Mary a copy of *The Madman* with the inscription: "To M. E. H. this also I owe to you. K. G." (323).

The Madman is a collection of thirty-four parables with a moral. Ironic and bitter, the parables deal with malevolence, hypocrisy, injustice, conformity, ambition, blindness and puritanism. Each of the parables is spoken by a madman, who is, in fact, more sane and far-sighted than ordinary men. In general, the parables concentrate on the indivisible unity of man, nature and God. The notion of the "madman" was an interesting topic for

Gibran. He had narrated to Mary several times “fanciful stories of lunatics he had met in his childhood and youth in Lebanon” (qtd. in Waterfield 206). Gibran’s parables explicate the depth of relationships, as Annie Salem Otto observes:

Gibran’s parables delineate repeatedly the possibility that man’s dreams or fancy, which are man’s ability to perceive the ideal or universal character of experience, can, rather than separate man from man, create a communion or a sharing in the existent spiritual essence of man. . . . Gibran’s parables portray first an awareness of existing relations, of the possibility that these relations can be changed, and finally, of the motivation and behaviour necessary for change. (48-49)

The first parable of the collection “How I Became a Madman” is a passionate outpouring. It is the story of a man who woke up one morning to find all his masks gone. Feeling insecure with his masks, he ran into the streets shouting at the thieves who stole his masks. The people mocked his mad behaviour but it was from a boy who shouted from a housetop, that he knew that he is really a madman. When the madman looked up to see the boy, the sun kissed his naked face and he says “my soul was

inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. And as if in a trance I cried, "Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks. Thus I became a madman" (7-8). He discovered a freedom that was partly loneliness and partly safety from being misunderstood: "For those who understand us enslave something in us" (8). Gibran hints at ordinary men who are untrue to their real selves. Though people laugh at him, he is free to laugh at them and at himself. Prof. Hawi states that the madman believes in reincarnation, since he is conscious of the seven lives, that he has passed through before his present incarnation.

In the parable "God," the madman in his first life, believed in God as a "master," whose slave he was, and therefore God spoke to him angrily like a tempest. Next he worshipped Him as the Creator, and thought of himself as a piece of moulded clay; then as a Father, calling himself His son, but God was displeased by both these conceptions of Himself, and did not answer him. However, the madman did not give up his prayer. He continued: "My God, my aim and fulfillment; I am thy yesterday and thou art my tomorrow. I am thy root in the earth and thou art my flower in the sky, and together we grow before the face of the sun" (10). Then God answered, whispering

“words of sweetness” in his ear, and enfolded him like “the sea that enfolded a brook” (10). After this, he saw God in the valley and the plain. The prose poem “God” was ‘the key’ to all his thoughts and feelings, Mary told Gibran in 1916: “The poem on God is the key to all my feeling and thinking. And if need be I will change its present form, because I want it to be simple and clean” (12 Jan. 1917 BP 284). It is expressed as best as he could, to portray what he had been going through for a year. The narrator makes three attempts to speak to God, but receives no response. “On the fourth occasion, climbing the sacred mountain, he addresses God no longer as an entity separate from him, but as an integral part of the divine order of things . . . And when I descended to the valley and the plains God was there also” (Bushrui and Jenkins 157). The indivisible unity underlying man, nature and God is explicated here.

The poem “God” was the result of some philosophical speculations caused by a special gift from Mary to Gibran. Mary sent him by registered post, a tiny meteorite which came from the Diablo Canyon in Arizona, supposed to have fallen to earth in a massive stellar shower when the earth was struck by a huge meteor: “You will love it as I do. It is crowded with Infinities and as grim and as heavy as Birth and Loneliness,” she wrote (17

Dec. 1916 BP 281). He replied: “The meteorite, the precious meteorite, is the most wonderful thing I have ever had. It feeds my imagination and it sends my thoughts into space and makes the infinite nearer and less strange to my soul. I hold it everyday and each time I bless you with all my heart” (3 Jan. 1917 BP 283). These exchanges inspired the poet to write another poem “The Astronomer” in which the narrator asked a blind man since when he had been blind. The blind man answered “From my birth” (59). The narrator questioned him again, “And what path of wisdom followest thou?” He answered that he is an astronomer “watching all these suns and moons and stars” (59). Gibran expresses the idea that even a blind man can enjoy sight if God compensates his blindness by granting him insight.

When *The Poetry Society* invited Gibran to read some of his poems, he read “Night and the Madman” and came out of the meeting, boiling with anger and resentment, for the audience received him with coldness and mockery. He did not despair, instead courageous as he was when *Spirits Rebellious* was publicly burned, he used his pen to write the poem “Defeat” a passionate poem that became very famous:

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 levelled down,
 And to be grasped is but to reach one's fullness
 And like a ripe fruit to fall and be consumed. (46-47)

And again:

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. (47-48)

Likewise, Gibran defeated his defeaters with a sharp sword, thus administering a dose of opium to his wounded pride. This poem was used as a pamphlet, advocating self-determination for the fragmented countries of Eastern Europe, and later published in *The Madman*. Although the poem's message that defeat is dearer "than a thousand victories" was explicitly political, its underlying theme reflected Gibran's more personal feelings (Bushrui and Jenkins 168).

"Crucified" is the parable of a man who wanted to be crucified. People turned away from him for fear of being accused of murder. But the man insisted that only by crucifying him, they would be exalted. So they crucified him just to be exalted. And

when he was hanged they lifted up their heads to see him. "And they were exalted, for their heads had never before been lifted" (57). Still they did not understand. Looking at the crucified figure they began to question him:

For what are thou seeking to atone? . . .

In what cause doest thou sacrifice thyself? . . .

Thinkest thou with this price to buy world glory?

(57-58)

One man called out from the onlookers: "Behold, how he smiles! Can such pain be forgiven?" (58). And the crucified man answered: "I was imprisoned in your days and nights - and I sought a door into larger days and nights. And now I go - as others already crucified have gone. And think not we are weary of crucifixion. For we must be crucified by larger and yet larger men, between greater earths and greater heavens" (58). Otto says that the parable reflects spiritual fulfilment:

This is a parable of man's search for spiritual revelation and spiritual fulfillment unmindful of the physical sacrifice involved. . . . The idealistic man embraces the extreme act of self-sacrifice for his idea of good and the right. Although other men may consider him mad, he does not falter. His silent need

demands expression and urges him on beyond self to a Universal Self of Principle. In this manner he frees his spirit from a narrow, limited view of the world to a vaster unfettered vision of the world that embraces all men in all worlds. (53)

In the parable of "The Wise King" the mighty king of Wirani yields to the superstitious beliefs of his people rather than lose his authority over them. The only well in the heart of the city was filled with cool and crystalline water. In the night a witch poured seven drops of a strange liquid saying "From this hour he who drinks this water shall become mad" (27). The next morning all the inhabitants except the king and the lord chamberlain drank from the well and became mad. During the day, the mad people began to whisper: "The king is mad. Our king and his lord chamberlain have lost their reason. Surely we cannot be ruled by a mad king. We must dethrone him" (28). When the king heard the rumour, he called for a goblet of water and drank it and gave it to the lord chamberlain also. The people were happy because they believed that the king and the lord chamberlain had regained their reason. Though the title is a misnomer, the 'wisdom' of the kingdom is the reflection of the 'wisdom' of the people. In the parable, madness is universal and



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therefore normal. So madness is wisdom and wisdom is madness in the parable.

According to Hawi, Gibran attacks social values in two ways: the first method is to reduce them to the subconscious motives behind them which contradict their overt assumptions. The second method is to reduce them to absurdity by showing them in an extravagant manner (196-97). The first method of attacking is found in "The Sleep-Walkers" in which the subconscious emotions behind polite exterior, is revealed. A mother and her daughter accuse each other as they walk in their sleep. The subconscious hatred of each other is revealed in their accusations. The mother says "You by whom my youth was destroyed - who have built up your life upon the ruins of mine! Would I could kill you!" and the daughter's words show equal hatred " O hateful woman, selfish and old! Who stand between my freer self and me! Who would have my life an echo of your own faded life! Would you were dead!"(15). At that moment, a cock crows and both women come back to their senses. The mother asks gently "Is that you, darling?" and the daughter answers "Yes, dear" (16). Hawi says that the emphasis in this parable is on the "freer self" and self-realization (196-97). Two other parables that belong to this group are "My Friend" and

“The Two Hermits.” In “My Friend,” a madman confesses his dissimulation to a friend, with whom he walks hand in hand. In “The Two Hermits,” there is demand for legal justice.

The second method of attack is found in “The Wise Dog,” “The Blessed City,” “The Other Language,” “The Scarecrow” and so on. “The Wise Dog” delineates the discussion between a grave cat and a wise dog. The grave cat hopes that if one prays and prays again, surely “it shall rain mice” (17). But the wise dog, disagreeing with the blind and foolish cats, says that it has been written down and also proved from experience that if one prays with faith and in supplication, it shall rain not mice but bones. The dog who has the last word becomes the wise one.

In “The Blessed City” children grow up to conform to the lies of the society and to forget about the blessedness of the paradise from which they have come. In “The Other language,” an infant talks to older people in the language of the other world from which he has come; but they do not understand him. He disagrees with the lies the elders tell him, but as he grows older he identifies himself with his masks and thus forgets “the language of the other world” (33-34). As a result, he loses contact with his essential self. In “The Scarecrow” Gibran presents the philosopher as a man of straw. Not tired of

standing, the scarecrow says with pride “The joy of scaring is a deep and lasting one, and I never tire of it” and “only those who are stuffed with straw can know it” (14). A year later, the scarecrow turned into a philosopher and the narrator found two crows building a nest under his hat (14). Gibran illustrates that the scarecrow or philosopher is incapable of doing the work he was meant to do, that is, scaring the crows and thus allowing the seeds to grow.

There are other parables in the collection that deal ironically with normal life in the society. In “The Two Cages,” a caged sparrow addresses a caged lion as his “brother prisoner,” because imprisonment has tamed the lion and made him an equal to the sparrow. The cage is for Gibran, a symbol of the oppressive laws of the society. The parables “When My Sorrow was Born” and “When My Joy was Born” are about life beyond sorrow and joy. In “The Grave-Digger,” the poet attends the funeral of one of his dead selves laughing. “The Greater Sea” is a search of the soul. In “The Good God and the Evil God,” two gods continually mistake each other. When the Good God says “You are in a bad humour today,” the Evil God says: “Yes, for of late I have been often mistaken for you, called by your name, and treated as if I were you, and it ill-pleases me” (45).

The Good God answers: “But I too have been mistaken for you and called by your name” (45). Angry at what he heard, the Evil God walked away cursing the stupidity of man.

In the last parable “The Perfect World” the word “perfect” is used ironically. Here Gibran is not actually thanking God for the perfect world, but instead presenting a complaint:

But why should I be here, O God, I a green seed of unfulfilled passion, a mad tempest that seeketh neither east nor west, a bewildered fragment from a burnt planet?

Why am I here, O God of lost souls, thou who art lost amongst the gods? (71)

All the praises that precede this complaint are indirectly Gibran’s consciousness that the world is not perfect and it needs to be perfected: “I dwell in the midst of a perfect race, I the most imperfect” (69). It is a poetic desire that gives birth to words like, “It is a perfect world, a world of consummate excellence, a world of supreme wonders, the ripest fruit in God’s garden, the master-thought of the universe” (71). The note of disillusionment is characteristic of not only this parable but all the parables of *The Madman*.

In *Kahlil Gibran of Lebanon*, Bushrui opines that though the biblical influence on Gibran was obvious the metaphorical form he used in many of the didactic stories is typically Arabic (53). He quotes *The Madman* to prove it:

Said the Eye one day, "I see beyond these valleys a mountain veiled with blue mist. Is it not beautiful?"

The Ear listened, and after listening intently awhile, said, "But where is any mountain? I do not hear it."

Then the Hand spoke and said, "I am trying in vain to feel it or touch it, and I can find no mountain."

And the Nose said, "There is no mountain, I cannot smell it."

Then the Eye turned the other way, and they all began to talk together about the Eye's strange delusion. And they said, "Something must be the matter with the Eye." (63)

The Madman reminds the reader of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Bushrui and Jenkins argue that "The influence of Nietzsche is detectable in the parables - a perception of man and woman as yet unrealized, still shackled by slavery and conditioned morality" (170). Gibran's metaphor of the madman or fool has been already explored by William Blake in *Songs of*

Innocence and Songs of Experience. Gibran's madman realizes that he is mad only when his mask is stolen. He finds joy, freedom and safety in madness when the sun kissed his naked face for the first time. In this state he sees the truth of things but people bound by custom and tradition reject him. According to Blake's concept, this is proof of sanity:

‘Madman’ I have been call’d: ‘Fool’
they call thee.

I wonder which they Envy, Thee or Me? (538)

Gibran was an ardent admirer of Blake. Echoes of Blake's writings and his art have been obvious. Gibran's parable "When my Sorrow was Born" is reminiscent of Blake: "When my Sorrow was born I nursed it with care, and watched over it with loving tenderness. And my Sorrow grew like all living things, strong and beautiful and full of wondrous delights" (65). That he wished to be clubbed with Blake, and that he could be clubbed with Blake can be accepted. But Waterfield goes to the extent of accusing Gibran for a kind of manipulation that is unnecessary. The publicity-flyer advertising *The Madman* had a printed testimonial from Auguste Rodin saying that Gibran was "the William Blake of the twentieth century" and that the world should expect much from this poet-painter of Lebanon" (qtd. in Waterfield 209). The

Rodin-quotation comparing Gibran and Blake on the publicity-flyer worked extremely well. The impact of *The Madman* was immediate. In 1919, Gibran proudly informed May Ziadah that, “*The Madman* has now been translated into French, Italian and Russian and parts of it into other languages” (Bushrui and Haffar 16).

With the publication of *The Madman*, Gibran was introduced to Americans as a mysterious hero and a ready-made genius and “The Middle Eastern Counterpart of Tagore” (Jean and Kahlil 326). When Gibran read the poem “My Soul and I Went to the Great Sea to Bathe” from *The Madman* at *The Poetry Society of America*, a long discussion followed. Comments were varied of which the most significant was that of Mrs Robinson, Theodore Roosevelt’s sister who said: “This is destructive and diabolical stuff. We must not encourage such a spirit in our literature. It is contrary to all our forms of morality and true beauty” (14 Mar. 1915 BP 234) Gibran read to the students of Mary Haskell’s school from *The Madman* and was gratified: “That was the sweetest audience I ever had,” he said. “They were so responsive, they knew when to be silent, and they laughed at just the right time” (7 Jan. 1919 BP 320).

The Madman is conspicuous for a self-commentary on madness and creativity. Gibran once wrote to Naimy:

So you are on the brink of madness. This is a good bit of news, majestic in its fearfulness, fearful in its majesty and beauty. I say that madness is the first step toward unselfishness . . . Be mad and tell us what is behind the veil of “sanity.” The purpose of life is to bring us closer to those secrets, and madness is the only means. Be mad, and remain a mad brother to your mad brother. (167-68)

Gibran was obsessed with the idea of madness before and after writing *The Madman*. He applied it to all sorts of topics like love, rebellion, religious faith and thought. Many of his pet characters are mad. For example, they all share one quality, according to Bushrui and Jenkins, that is, the “essential quality which is responsible for their madness, and that is their revolt against conventional wisdom and ways of thought and life” (205).

According to Otto the parables have a dual purpose: “First, to know life and to plumb its depth for meaning, one must suffer. . . . Suffering is encountered in the struggle for freedom from man’s imprisonment in man’s blind and limiting laws. The

second spiritual lesson touched by the parable has to do with the cheerful acceptance of pain” (54).

The disillusionment pervading *The Madman* can be easily understood in the context of the World War and its aftermath. To be introduced to the English reading public in an oriental, exotic and a rebellious fashion and to be successful at the same time, is not surprising when the zeitgeist is taken into consideration.

The Forerunner

The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems (1920) is a collection in which Gibran is less bitter than he was in 1918 when he published *The Madman*. If a forerunner is a person who prepares the way for the coming of somebody more important, then *The Forerunner* is precisely a forerunner because it prepares the way for the ambitious venture *The Prophet*. Waterfield suggests: “One feels that this book is a pot-boiler for him, while he was having difficulty finishing off *The Prophet*” (214). Jean and Kahlil observe that as the writing of “The Prophet” progressed, Gibran kept aside the work for a while and started on “The Forerunner” Perhaps he was doing a writing practice before his book of books (334). Gibran wrote to Mary about the book: “Ideally a book should be small. I want you to be able to read a book at a

sitting, before you go to sleep at night, or to put in your pocket and take it out on an afternoon walk” (7 Sept. 1920 BP 348).

The creditable part of Gibran’s writing is that whether it is the forerunner or the real runner, running was planned by God and both runners have had their life, their value and their reward. The forerunner explains his stand honestly: “And when you were a silent word upon life’s quivering lips, I too was there, another silent word. Then life uttered us and we came down the years throbbing with memories of yesterday and with longing for tomorrow, for yesterday was death conquered and tomorrow was birth pursued (5). If these words refer to the writing process, all books have their worth, for as the forerunner says: “And now we are in God hands. You are a sun in His right hand and I an earth in His left hand. Yet you are not more, shining, than I, shone upon” (6).

The book was originally meant to be called “The Lonely Man” but the change to *The Forerunner* indicates the underlying optimism of the work, says Waterfield (214). “*The Forerunner* . . . is a bit of a hybrid. On the one hand, it continues the trend towards concentrating less on the negative aspects of life and more on our potential for living a greater life. In this sense, the book acts a bridge as between *The Madman* and *The Prophet*” (213).

Naimy considered the book inferior to *The Madman* because, according to him, *The Madman* is delightful in its bitter sarcasm, while *The Forerunner* is neither bitter to the end, nor sweet to the end (163). There is no doubt that though *The Forerunner* is generally optimistic in tone, it contains some stuff that is meaningless and not worthy of publication. At the same time, the book also shows that man is himself responsible for his destiny.

The Forerunner is different from *The Madman* in that Gibran applies the lessons of *The Forerunner* to himself. He becomes conscious of his pride, and his hatred for others. Waterfield notes that Gibran had admitted to Mary that he is self-centred and self-absorbed, and is 'humiliated' by the realization that "he used to regard himself as a man apart, with a gulf set between himself and ordinary mortals" (275). Waterfield adds that Gibran also "confidently asserts that now he loves people better and that recognition of these faults will lesson their hold over him" (215). *The Forerunner* tries to ridicule those who think that they are the only people who know the truth. He used the parable style, because it was an old Oriental way of satire among some Arab writers who did not enjoy freedom of speech. The introduction very clearly shows that Gibran was influenced by Nietzsche. The opening words of *The Forerunner* are: "You are your own

forerunner. . . . and I too am my own forerunner” (1). This is clearly a reflection of Zarathustra’s statement: “Mine own forerunner am I” (192).

The very first parable is a marvellous one setting the reader in a whirl of laughter. “God’s Fool” is the parable of a dreamer that shows the contrast between dream and reality. A dreamer who came from the desert to the city of Sharia, was wonder struck at the great temples and skyscrapers. He often stopped to ask people questions about the city, but did not understand his language nor he theirs. At noon, he found people entering a vast inn made of yellow marble. Thinking that it is a great shrine he entered and found himself in a magnificent room with people eating and drinking and listening to music. He understood it is not a temple and so he guessed that it could be a place where the prince is giving his people a feast. As he stood there gazing, the receptionist approached him and offered him a chair. Hoping that this man is a slave of the prince, the dreamer ate the delicious meal given to him. But as he was leaving, the gorgeously dressed man at the door stopped him. This, he believed, was the real prince bidding him farewell. The dreamer bowed and thanked the man. But when the man asked him to pay for the meal he did not understand him fortunately.

So he bowed again and thanked him once more. The man at the door inspected the dreamer carefully and found that he was a poor man who could not pay for his meal. He clapped his hands and four watchmen appeared. They escorted the dreamer to the House of Judgment. He was attracted by the splendid uniforms of the watchmen and thought they were men of distinction. When he entered the House of Judgment, he saw a venerable man with a long flowing beard and majestic robe sitting on a throne. Supposing this is the king himself, he listened joyfully to the charges made against him by the escorting watchmen. Two advocates were appointed to take action against him, and it was decided that the dreamer be made to ride through the city on a naked horse, with a trumpeter and a drummer, before and after him, and a tablet hung about his neck on which his crime would be written. The sentence was carried out immediately.

As the dreamer rode through the city, everyone laughed at him and the children ran after him. Imagining that the procession was in his honour and the tablet about his neck, a sign of the king's blessing, he was overwhelmed with tears of joy. He saw among the crowd, a man from the desert just like himself. He called out to him but that man did not respond for he could not understand the language of the city, perhaps. But "the dreamer's

face was uplifted and his eyes were overflowing with light” (*The Forerunner* 10). Had the dreamer been physically tormented, he would have understood the implication of their actions. The treatment delighted him only because he interpreted it according to his desires. Otto says: “Indeed he is life’s fool. Perhaps, that is why he is a dreamer and why he is also God’s fool. The lesson lies in the desirability of dreaming about life; no matter how foolish one’s dreams may seem, he finds joy and comfort in them” (75).

In the poem “Love” Gibran speaks of the need for coexistence of foes. As example, he cites a jackal and a mole drinking from the same stream from which the lion also shares: if one lives for the other, both should be in a position to say:

“Let me rather starve,
 And let my heart parch with thirst,
 And let me die and perish,
 Ere I stretch my hand
 To a cup you did not fill,
 Or a bowl you did not bless.” (11)

The parable “The King-hermit” explicates the life of a king who has willingly abandoned his throne to seek shelter in the wilderness. The narrator seeks the king to learn the secret of his

heart because he believes that “he who renounces a kingdom must needs be greater than a kingdom”(12). The king narrated his story briefly, saying that once he overheard the Lord Chamberlain telling a foreign envoy, “I am like the king; I have a thirst for strong wine and a hunger for all games of chance. And like my lord the king I have storms of temper” (14-15). Thus, he attributed all his faults to the king. After some time he continued “My lord the king is like myself - a good marksman; and like me he loves music and bathes thrice a day” (15). The king took his decision to leave because he did not want to be the ruler over those “who assume my vices and attribute to me their virtues” (15). To the embarrassed narrator, the king continued to speak of the beauty of the forest where seasons sing and dance. And there is no wonder for there have been many forerunners “Many are those who have given their kingdom for less than solitude and the sweet fellowship of aloneness (15).

“The Lion’s Daughter” is a parable about the contrast between authority and slavery. It begins with an old queen sleeping on her throne while her four slaves confess their hatred for her. They complain bitterly against their slavish condition. Gibran introduces a cat as the narrator. Each complaint of the slaves is commented on by the cat whom Gibran names the

‘Lion’s Daughter.’ The cat’s comments are italicised and therefore, all the more, striking. The first slave points to the ugliness of the old queen while the cat comments, “*Not half so ugly in her sleep as you in your waking slavery*” (17). The second slave says that the queen might be dreaming of something evil and the cat comments that she (the slave) could also sleep and dream of freedom. The third slave remarks that the queen is probably seeing the dream of a procession of all those she had slain. The cat’s comment is “*Aye, she sees the procession of your forefathers and your descendants*” (17). The fourth slave says she is weary of standing continuously to fan the queen. The cat purrs, “*You shall be fanning to all eternity, for as it is on earth so it is in heaven*” (17).

At that moment, the old queen nodded her head in her sleep and her crown fell down. The fourth slave picked it up and replaced it on the queen’s head. She woke up but went to sleep again and started snoring. The four slaves continued to fan her and the cat commented, “Fan on, fan on, stupids. You fan but the fire that consumes you” (18). This parable reflects the slavish thoughts of those who are compelled to be in bondage to others. Here the queen is old and weak and single, while the slaves are strong and four in number and perhaps young. Yet the authority the queen has, makes her powerful and the slaves,

subservient and inactive. The idea that they can change their condition and win freedom does not strike them. They are likely to continue their subordination as the cat comments. The accident of the crown falling ought to have suggested to them the vulnerability of authority but instead they only consider it a bad omen. Replacing the crown shows that though they curse their position they would continue to fan the fire that consumes them, as predicted by the cat.

The parable “Poets” is a humorous parable in which four poets sit around a bowl of wine to enjoy themselves. The first poet boasts that with his “third eye” he sees the fragrance of the wine hovering in space like a cloud of birds in an enchanted forest (*The Forerunner* 27). The second poet says that with his inner ear he can hear those mist-birds singing and the melody holds his heart as the white rose imprisons the bee within her petals. The third poet closes his eyes and stretching his arms upwards says he can touch the birds with his hand and feel their wings, brushing against his fingers. The fourth poet admitting that he is less imaginative picks up the bowl of wine saying: “I am too dull of sight and of hearing and of touch. I cannot see the fragrance of this wine, nor hear its song, nor feel the beating of its wings. I perceive but the wine itself. Now therefore must I

drink it, that it may sharpen my senses and raise me to your blissful heights.” Then he puts the bowl to his lips and drinks the wine to the very last drop. Astonished the three poets look at him with “a thirsty yet unlyrical hatred in their eyes” (27). The fourth poet is realistic while the other three are imaginary. Salem Otto remarks that, “The poets became angry at the (fourth) poet who, unlike them, preferred to discover the reality of his senses rather than speculate gloriously about intangibles” (65).

“Knowledge and Half-Knowledge,” a story of frogs indulges in the difference between limited notions of truth on one side and reality on the other. Each of the frogs has as explanation for the movement of the log on which it is floating downstream. One frog concentrating on the movement says that the log itself is moving. The second focuses on the log being borne along by the river, and the third comments that the sensation of the movements is purely subjective. The fourth frog asserts that all the three are right. The other three frogs become angry and push the fourth frog into the river. Thus the wisest frog who sees reality is punished by his less gifted friends.

The poem “Out of My Deeper Heart” portrays how the self can expand itself by aspiration. A bird flew out of the narrator’s heart and flew higher and higher until it became larger

and larger. As it grew it developed from a swallow into a lark, and then to an eagle, and then again to a spring cloud, and finally it merged with the starry sky:

O my faith, I am in chains behind these bars of
silver and ebony, and I cannot fly with you.

Yet out of my heart you rise skyward, and it is my
heart that holds you, and I shall be content. (29)

Gibran shows here how a farsighted man can trust the deeper powers of his soul.

In "Beyond My Solitude," the poet knows that beyond his solitude there is another solitude: "Beyond these hills is a grove of enchantment and to him who dwells therein my peace is but a whirlwind and my enchantment an illusion" (45). He is aware that he is too young, restless and riotous and so he has to release his burdened self in order to reach his freer self. But he still doubts: "And how shall I become my freer self unless I slay my burdened selves, or unless all men become free?" (45).

Gibran implies the freedom of the self in this parable.

In "The Greater Self," the greater self is held up as a standard of human perfection. After his coronation, the King of Byblus enters his bed-chamber, and takes off his crown and royal garments and looks into the mirror. Suddenly he sees a naked

man in the mirror. He haunts the King with questions and humiliates him. Frustrated, the King weeps, falling on the floor. Then the naked man replaces the crown on the King's head with tenderness. The King looks into the mirror again and finds himself crowned. In a similar parable, "Other Seas," a fish speaks of greater oceans beyond the one known to fish in general.

Waterfield notes that some of the parables are very touching for when Gibran read to Mary, "War and the Small Nations" and "The Dying Man and the Vulture," she was moved to tears. But she was more impressed by "The Last Watch" which she considered an undeniably powerful epilogue to the book (214). "The Last Watch" is a parable of lamentation and awakening. In the wee hours of the dawn, the Forerunner left his bed and ascended to the roof of his house, and gazed down upon the sleeping city. Then he raised his head and began to speak to "the sleepless spirits of all those asleep" (*The Forerunner* 46). He preferred to speak to them while they were sleeping for, then he could be free and unrestrained and say what he wanted. Moreover, they would be free while, in their waking hours, they would be too busy to listen to him. The Forerunner hopes to inform them desperately of his love for them and the suffering he had endured because of that. He loved them all in his youth

and in his maturity. Then he began to single out each one separately and declared his love – to the giant, the pigmy, the leper, the anointed, the great, the small, the cursed, the blessed, the ignorant, the happy, the strong, the weak, the rich and the poor, with all their imperfections.

Unfortunately, the Forerunner's deep love was misunderstood by the people. They said that his love was that of a blind man who could not differentiate between the beauty of one person and the ugliness of another. They mocked him with the words: "There goes the ageless one, the man without seasons, who at noon hour plays games with our children and at eventide sits with our elders and assumes wisdom and understanding" (48). In spite of their misunderstanding the Forerunner continued to love them even more. Nevertheless, he decided to hide his love with seeming hatred and to disguise his tenderness with a pretentious bitterness. Therefore, he addressed them with derogatory terms like "hypocrites, Pharisees, tricksters, false and empty earth bubbles" and hurled abuse at their positive traits (48). The Forerunner regrets that people do not understand his real attitude: "Thus with my lips have I denounced you, while my heart, bleeding within me, called you tender names. . . . It was my hunger for your love that raged from the housetops, while my

own love, kneeling in silence, prayed your forgiveness” (51).

Finally he makes it known to them that he was the one responsible for opening their eyes to reality:

It was my disguise that opened your eyes, and my
seeming to hate that woke your hearts.

And now you love me.

You love the swords that strike you and the arrows
that crave your breast. For it comforts you to be
wounded and only when you drink of your own
blood can you be intoxicated. (51)

Thus after opening up his heart the Forerunner covered his face and wept bitterly. Then he suddenly raised his head and outstretched his arms and said: “Night is over, and we children of night must die when dawn comes leaping upon the hills; and out of our ashes a mightier love shall rise. And it shall laugh in the sun, and it shall be deathless” (52). In this way the Forerunner’s agony came to an end, and the catharsis was completed, and he was purified. Otto says here lies the content of the parable:

Thus Gibran declares the message of *The Forerunner*.

The night of despair is over: it is dead, and from its
ashes a mightier love is born. . . . There is no need

for judging and condemning; the Forerunner has awakened to a Greater Self, a new understanding. He is content. He is free. Now he can laugh in the light of the sun. (86)

Gibran meant "The Last Watch" to be the experience of every loving man, he wrote to Mary: "The thing in *The Madman* and *The Forerunner* which in the nearest to the people is 'The Last Watch'. Everyone has experienced that truth: that love, like a running brook, is disregarded, taken for granted; but when the brook freezes over, the people begin to remember how it was when it ran, and they want it to run again" (3 Jan. 1921 BP 358).

If *The Madman* ends with a sarcastic tone, *The Forerunner*, just two years after, shows a mellowing down of the poet-philosopher. "The Last Watch" is considered a great message as recorded by Mary Haskell: "The farewell ('The Last Watch') is the best thing in *The Forerunner* . . . *The Madman* ends with the bitterest thing in it; *The Forerunner* with the sweetest" (30 May 1922 BP 391). "The Last Watch" portrays the reception given to the Forerunner. Though he was initially rejected, he is accepted by the people when he addresses them in the base language to which they are accustomed. Thus he surrendered to them in order to conquer them. When the Forerunner, in his closing

speech, lists various types of human beings and their weaknesses, and declares his love for them, the reader is reminded of Robert Frost's poem, "Hyla Brook": "We love the things we love for what they are" (Untermeyer 169). According to Waterfield, "Here Gibran is announcing a change of mood: gone is the bitterness of past years; he will now write from the love for humankind that he always felt underneath all harsh and cruel words" (214). Out of the ashes of *The Forerunner*, a mightier love did rise, the real runner, in the name *The Prophet* with possibilities of deathlessness. That is one reason why the parables of Gibran become less scathing in *The Forerunner* because endurance of his life's grief, contributed to the growth of his self and he moved towards the attainment of grace. In other words, his love for mankind, purified by grief due to suffering, prepared him for the grace that was to adorn *The Prophet*.

The cybernetics of love in this chapter is viewed from the point of view of love disciplined. The love disciplined in the works before *The Prophet*, moulds the author for the prophet's role he hopes to take in his major work. In his desire to set right wrongs, Gibran sought discipline, which according to Scott Peck, is a requisite to solve life's problems. Discipline for Gibran, as

for Peck, is a technique for dealing with grief. Only love can accept discipline, the kind of love that Selma Karamy (*The Broken Wings*) was capable of and that which she instils in her lover. Gibran's characters suffer just as he suffered but he could transform his suffering into grace. For example, the experiences of his teenage love for Hala Dahir, and his admiration for his ideal Josephine Peabody, he could transform into a dream novella. This is proof of how he could attain grace through grief.

From a psychobiographical angle too it is clear that Gibran was growing through discipline and the pain of discipline. Love grows when it is disciplined. Peck maintains, "the energy for the work of self-discipline derives from love, which is a form of will" (167). In other words "self-discipline is usually love, translated into action" and "any genuinely loving relationship is a disciplined relationship" (167). Discipline is the only path of finding joy. There could be other paths that provide ecstatic joy but such joy is fleeting and elusive (171). Discipline is part of Gibran's cybernetics of love as revealed in the works written before *The Prophet*.

**“What I say now with one heart
will be said tomorrow by many hearts.”**

Kahlil Gibran

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROPHET

The cybernetics of love, or the evolution of love manifested in *The Prophet* is viewed from a psychobiographical angle in this chapter. The study, as already mentioned in Chapter One, is based on love's spiritual growth or grace as expounded by Scott Peck: "Love is the will to extend oneself for spiritual growth" (320). In Gibranian philosophy, love occupies the most important place in man's life. In the midst of the national and international conflicts that Gibran witnessed during his lifetime, he could think of only one antidote: love. This is the essence of *The Prophet*.

The germination, the sprouting and branching out of *The Prophet* reached the readers in the most modest manner, as Naimy records: "At the end of September a small black book, neat but unassuming, and costing \$2.25, made its appearance on the overcrowded New York book market" (194). That is how *The Prophet* quietly entered the bookshop, secretly conquered the hearts of the people, rapidly boosted up the sale of the book and overwhelmed the author and all around him. As Mary Haskell says, "Barely 20,000 words long, philosophical in nature

and mystical in tone, *The Prophet* was hardly a book one would expect to capture the attention of the reading public. Yet eventually it did” (Bushrui and Jenkins 224). Gibran’s message in it may be summed up as given in the “Introduction” by Bushrui and Haffar to *Gibran: Love Letters*: “a passionate belief in the healing power of Universal Love and in the Unity of Being” (xi-xii). This small black book begins with a Prologue in which Almustafa, an appellation of Prophet Mohamed, is requested to speak on a wide range of subjects before his final departure.

Before venturing on a criticism of *The Prophet* it is necessary to discuss the various sections of the text. It begins with Almustafa, the Prophet, waiting in the city of Orphalse, for a ship to take him back home. After twelve years he beholds from a hill, his ship coming. Overwhelmed with joy, “he closed his eyes and prayed in the silences of his soul.” Perhaps the thought of loved ones in the new land and thought of equally loved ones in the isle of his birth, deepened his sorrow but heightened his joy. As he descended the hill he wondered, “How shall I go in peace and without sorrow?” (1). As he was in love with Pain and Loneliness, his constant companions at Orphalse, he regretted leaving them. He had grown up with them for twelve years and attained grace through them. Conscious of his

heart “made sweet with hunger and with thirst” he could not leave behind Pain and Loneliness for “It is not a garment I cast off” but “a skin that I tear with my own hands.” Yet with great pain the decision was taken: “I cannot tarry longer” (2). As he reached the foot of the hill, the ship approached the harbour and he declared to the mariners, “Ready am I to go.” Simultaneously, he heard the voices of men and women from the fields hastening towards the city gates saying, “Go not yet away from us” for “No stranger are you among us, nor a guest, but our son and our dearly beloved” (7-8). The priests and priestesses requested him thus: “Let not the waves of the sea separate us now, and the years you have spent in our midst become a memory” and again they assured him, “Much have we loved you. But speechless was our love, and with veils has it been veiled. . . . And ever has it been that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation” (8). If spatial distance and lapse of time bring lovers closer to each other, then that love is timeless and spaceless. The one, who longs for the other during the moments of separation, understands that love transcends space and time.

Almustafa was moved, but he remained silent, for he could not speak his deeper secrets. Though other citizens came and entreated him, he did not answer them but those who stood near

saw his tears falling upon his breast (8). They proceeded towards the temple where they met Almitra, a seeress, who addressed him as "Prophet of God." He looked upon her with exceeding tenderness for she had believed in him even when he was just a newcomer. She realized that he had to leave in spite of the love he had for them and they for him. But her simple and yet great request was, "speak to us and give us of your truth" so that we may pass it on to our children and you shall not perish. Along with that request was another demand, "disclose us to ourselves" and tell us all that you know between birth and death" (10).

Almustafa asked, "Of what can I speak?" Almitra answers, "Of Love." Almustafa's pronouncements on love declare the real spirit of Gibran. His psychobiographical details say that he lived just for these moments, the moments he could disclose his cybernetics of love. Many of the sentences in this extract are meant to maintain and sustain life. The beginning is stunning to be sure: "When Love beckons to you, follow him, / Though his ways are hard and steep" (10-11).

He continues in the same vein: "And when he speaks to you believe in him, / Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden. / For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your

growth so he is for your pruning” (10-11). The concept of love giving pain is commonly accepted but love giving delicious pain is specially Gibranian. The responsibility involved in love makes it delightful. Gibran reaches out to great depths as he says:

“Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; / For love is sufficient unto love” (12). He soars high as he proclaims: “And think not you can direct the course of love, / for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course” (12). There are, no doubt, lines that refer to purification as a part of love: “He kneads you until you are plaint; / And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God’s sacred feast” (11).

One is confused slightly with the line, “When you love you should not say, “God is in my heart,” but rather, “I am in the heart of God” (12). One wonders what the difference in meaning is. All the same, the idea that in God’s heart there is enough space for oneself and for all others, is a happy thought. The climax of the passage, “Of Love,” is given at the end:

Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself.

But if you love and must needs have desires, let
these be your desires:

To melt and be like a running brook that sings its
melody to the night.

To know the pain of too much tenderness.
 To be wounded by your own understanding of love;
 And to bleed willingly and joyfully.
 To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give
 thanks for another day of loving;
 To rest at noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy;
 To return home at eventide with gratitude;
 And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in
 your heart and a song of praise upon your lips.

(12-15)

The poet reaches the height of glory in the above-mentioned lines and the lines reverberate in every heart that has chanced upon them.

Almitra requests again: "And what of Marriage, master?" He answers precisely with an indepth knowledge that can be attained only through experience and grace. This passage on marriage was shown to Mary by Gibran. It was then only "an embryonic English poem, which she called "Passage to Men and Women." Struck by the beauty and truth in it she recorded a part of it in the journal. She did not know then that "this unresolved, untitled passage would become the core of the celebrated statement on marriage in 'The Prophet' "(qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 310-11).

Emphasizing the individuality of the married couple, Gibran warns them against copying the personality of each other. The idea of marriage as the union of two bodies with one soul, or two souls in one body is romantic but unrealistic. The success of a good marriage, he says, lies in the practice of mutual respect, maintaining its separateness: “But let there be spaces in your togetherness. / And let the winds of the heaven dance between you.” When he says, “Love one another, but make not a bond of love,” he also adds, “Fill each other’s cup but drink not from one cup” (16). He is in favour of togetherness no doubt: “Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone” because real happiness lies in separateness: “Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping. / For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts” (16-19).

At a time when the institution of marriage is being challenged, the words of Gibran find a place in the human hearts even today. The popularity of these lines after the First World War is understandable but the continued acceptance of the same is simply remarkable. A loving couple experiences the bliss of marital life when they read together the lines: “You were born together, and together you shall be for evermore. / You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days. / Aye,

you shall be together even in the silent memory of God” (16). The climax of the passage is given in the last three lines: “And stand together yet not too near together: / For the pillars of the temple stand apart, / And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow” (19). Scott Peck maintains that it is the separateness of the partners that enriches the union of a married couple:

Genuine love not only respects the individuality of the other but actually seeks to cultivate it, even at the risk of separation or loss. The ultimate goal of life remains the spiritual growth of the individual, the solitary journey to peaks that can be climbed only alone. . . . Marriage and society exist for the basic purpose of nurturing such individual journeys. (180)

Peck gives a further explanation:

But, as is the case with all genuine love, ‘sacrifices’ on behalf of the growth of the other result in equal or greater growth of the self. It is the return of the individual to the nurturing marriage or society from the peaks he or she has travelled alone which serves to elevate that marriage or that society to new

heights, in this way individual growth and societal growth are interdependent, but it is always and inevitably lonely out on the growing edge. (180-81)

Prophet Almustafa, according to Peck, suffered loneliness and it is from the loneliness of his wisdom that he speaks on marriage (181).

Among the crowd that thronged to meet Almustafa was a woman who held a babe against her bosom saying, "Speak to us of children" (20). To parents who fail to appreciate the individuality of their children he says:

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing
for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to
you." (20)

Parents believe that they have a legal and an ethical right to make their children conform to their ways of thinking and doing. But Gibran dares to warn them:

"You may give them your love but not your
thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,
 For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
 which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
 You may strive to be like them, but seek not to
 make them like you.”

For life goes not backward nor taries with yesterday. (20)

Forcing children to think and act like elders, causes the generation gap. Gibran was right when he asked the parents to express their love in self-sacrifice and not in forming laws that oppress them. Modern psychoanalysis has proved that extreme possessiveness and overprotection on the part of the parents have made children weak and unindividualistic. This is in concurrence with Scott Peck’s thought that many parents regard their children as extensions of themselves. These parents generally fail to appreciate the unique individuality of their children, and instead “regard their children as extension of themselves, in much the same way as their fine clothes and their neatly manicured lawns and their polished cars are extensions of themselves, which represent their status to the world.” Children often complain of such parents as lacking in love: “It is to these milder but nonetheless destructive common forms of parental narcissism that Kahlil Gibran addresses himself in what are

perhaps the finest words ever written about child-raising” (Peck 177). There are lines in the passage on children that make the reader marvel at the thought: “You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth” (20). As he continues one is impressed all the more: “The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrow may go swift and far. / Let your bending in the Archer’s hand be for gladness.” However, there is comfort in the last line: “For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable” (23).

A rich man pleads: “Speak to us of Giving,” and he answers: “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give” (24). If possessions are “things you keep and guard for fear you may need them” it is like the “dread of thirst when your well is full, the thirst that is unquenchable.” He sounds biblical when he says that there are those who give for the sake of recognition and thus their gifts become unwholesome. They have their reward: “And there are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty” (24). Some give with joy and are joyful, some give with pain and are purified, some give with neither pain nor joy

nor for virtue's sake. Nonetheless, God speaks and smiles through all of them. Thus giving of oneself is exalted. Genuine Love gives without calculation of receiving. If it is "good to give when asked," it is "better to give unasked" and to the giver the search for a receiver and the finding of a receiver is "joy greater than giving." The philosophy behind giving is better explicated in the lines that follow. "All you have shall some day be given." If that is so, it is better to give now for the joy of giving. Some people boast of giving only to the deserving. This is a myth because the trees in the orchard and the flocks in the pasture do not make choices: "They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish" (28). The giver may probe to find out whether the receiver is deserving but according to Almustafa, the giver himself should deserve to be a giver, "For in truth it is life that gives unto life" while the giver is just a witness, or an instrument of giving. The most comforting part of this passage is to the receiver. To him Almustafa says, "assume no weight of gratitude," instead rise together with the giver, "For to be overmindful of your debt is to doubt his generosity who has the free-hearted earth for mother, and God for father" (29).

The next in order is the keeper of an inn who solicits knowledge on Eating and Drinking. The Prophet says, "together

we shall rejoice through all the seasons” (31). In autumn when grapes are gathered for the winepress and in winter when the wine is drunk, “let there be in your heart a song for each cup; And let there be in the song, a remembrance for the autumn days, and for the vineyard, and for the winepress” (31).

“Speak to us of Work” says a ploughman and the Prophet answers that “with labour you are in truth loving life, /And to love life through labour is to be intimate with life’s inmost secret” (32-33). Life may be dark for the weary, but it is not so for those who love work. “And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God” (33). Almustafa also gives a suggestion that to work with love is to weave cloth with threads drawn from your heart; to build a house with affection, as if your beloved were to dwell in it; to sow seeds with tenderness and to reap the harvest with joy as if your beloved were to eat the fruit (34). In short, “Work is love made visible” (35). This is the culmination of Gibran philosophy on work.

A woman approaches the Prophet to ask him about Joy and Sorrow. He answers that only one who has a deeper knowledge of life can comprehend both: “Your joy is your sorrow unmasked” and “when you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you

shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy” (36). Though it is easy to grasp that joy and sorrow are inseparable, one is set thinking with the words: “Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.” To believe: “Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy. Only when you are empty are you at standstill and balanced,” requires experience and grace (37).

A mason’s desire to hear of houses is also satisfied with an answer: “Your house is your larger body” (38). However, the questions, “What have you in these houses? And what is it you guard with fastened doors?” are rhetorical questions with embedded answers (39). Like an eyelid that guards the eye, a house should guard peace, remembrances, beauty and comfort, says Almustafa. But, if these are absent the house need not guard anything. It is just like the eyelid that cannot guard the eye if there is no eye. The end of the passage on houses is poetical and soul stirring: “And though of magnificence and splendour, your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longing. / For that which is boundless in you abide in the mansion of the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows are the songs and the silence of night (40-41).

The weaver requires tips regarding clothes. The Prophet tells him: “Your clothes conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful.” He also suggests that, “though you seek in garments the freedom of privacy you may find in them a harness and a chain.” But the final warning is: “And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair” (42-43).

In the passage, “Of Buying and Selling” there is an oft-quoted message in a pleasing garb “To you the earth yields her fruit, and you shall not want if you but know how to fill your hands (44). The method also is ready available, for, “It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied” (44). How the exchange should be done is also emphasized, “Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger” (44).

Almustafa excels in thought when he speaks to a judge, who wants to know about Crime and Punishment:

I say that even as the holy and the righteous cannot
rise beyond the highest which is in each one of
you,

So the wicked and the weak cannot fall lower than
the lowest which is in you also.

And as a single leaf turns not yellow but with the
 silent knowledge of the whole tree,
 So the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the
 hidden will of you all. (49)

However, as he proceeds, thoughts like, “the robbed is not blameless in being robbed,” the guilty is oftentimes the victim of the injured, “You cannot separate the just from the unjust and the good from the wicked,” make the reader guilty.

A lawyer’s plea is answered like an accusation: “You delight in laying down laws, Yet you delight more in breaking them” like children building sand-towers on the beach only to be destroyed by the ocean. Then Almustafa points to the skylark whom none can command and so can sing happy and blithe while men make laws, break them, and suffer for breaking them. The Prophet points to a man who would come to a wedding feast, and when over-fed and tired would go away saying that all the feasts are violations, and all feasters, law breakers. The Prophet’s comment on such men is that they “stand in the sunlight but with their backs to the sun.” They see only their shadows, and their shadows are their laws.” And the sun is to them only a “caster of shadow” (53-54).

It is curious to note that the topic of freedom is given to the orator. The Prophet tells him, “I have seen the freest among

you wear their freedom as a yoke and a handcuff” and his heart bled for them. Freedom, according to him, is not when days are not without care or nights without grief, “But rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound” (56).

It is the priestess who speaks again asking for his thoughts on Reason and Passion. The answer is precise. If there are two loved guests in the house, “surely you would not honour one guest above the other” (60). Both Reason and Passion are welcome guests. So if “God rests in reason” and “God moves in passion” then both Reason and Passion are God’s creations.

A woman desires to hear about Pain, and Almustafa answers: “Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding Much of your pain is self-chosen. It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self. Therefore trust the physician, and drink his remedy in silence and tranquillity.” The physician’s hand is guided by the tender hand of the Unseen. “And the cup he brings, though it burn your lips, has been fashioned of the clay which the Potter has moistened with His own sacred tears” (61-62).

A man’s request for Self-knowledge is answered thus: “Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and the nights.”

And when the infinite depths of the secrets are revealed, "Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth." / Say not, "I have found the path of the soul." Say rather, "I have met the soul walking upon my path." / For the soul walks upon all paths" (65-66).

A teacher's request is given a befitting reply that if he is wise he should not bid the pupil to enter the house of his (teacher's) wisdom, but rather lead him to the threshold of his (pupil's) own mind. This is so because "the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man" (67-68).

About Friendship, the Prophet answers a youth: "Let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit" and he adds: "And let your best be for your friend, / If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also" (70).

A scholar puts forth the topic, "Talking" and gets the answer: "You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts; / And when you can no longer dwell in the solitude of your heart you live in your lips, and sound is a diversion and a pastime. / And in much of your talking, thinking is half murdered" (71).

An astronomer hopes to know about Time and the Prophet is glad to inform him: "Of time you would make a stream upon

whose bank you would sit and watch its flowing. / Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness, / And knows that yesterday is but to-day's memory and to-morrow is to-day's dream (73).

One of the elders of the city asks: "Speak to us of Good and Evil" and Almustafa obviously denied the presence of evil in man. Ghougassian states: "Yet, the old Persian philosophers would have us believe in the equal principles of Good and Evil. Gibran discards the Evil principle, on the ground that Life is Harmony, Beauty, Truth" (Sherfan 340). Gibran surmises that evil is a transformed good, a desire invested with the features of the good. The Prophet admits that he cannot speak of the good but only the evil in man, "For what is evil but good tortured by its own hunger and thirst?" Then he adds: "You are good in countless ways, and you are not evil when you are not good, You are only loitering and sluggard." It is a pity that the stags cannot teach swiftness to the turtles" (77). In fact, stags need not do so for a stag is meant to be a stag and a turtle, a turtle. Goodness lies in longing to be your giant self.

When a priestess asks about Prayer he recites the prayer of the seas and the forests and the mountains, which, he says, can be heard only in the stillness of the night. The prayer goes thus:

“Our God, who art our winged self, it is thy will in us that willeth, / It is thy desire in us that desireth. . . . We cannot ask thee for aught, for thou knowest our needs before they are born in us: Thou art our need; and in giving us more of thyself thou giveth us all” (81-82).

A hermit wants to know about Pleasure and the Prophet answers:

Pleasure is a freedom-song
 But it is not freedom.
 It is the blossoming of your desires,
 But it is not their fruit.
 It is a depth calling unto a height,
 But it is not the deep nor the high.
 It is the caged taking wing,
 But it is not space encompassed. (83)

In order to distinguish that which is good in pleasure from that which is not good, the Prophet says:

Go to your fields and your gardens, and you shall
 learn that it is the pleasure of the bee to gather
 honey of the flower,
 But it is also the pleasure of the flower to yield its
 honey to the bee.

For to the bee a flower is a fountain of life,
 And to the flower a bee is a messenger of love,
 And to both bee and flower, the giving and the
 receiving of pleasure is a need and an ecstasy.

(85-86)

Gibran believed that pleasure is an essential part of life, but not to the point of confusing it with the goal, happiness. All the same, pleasure is neither synonymous with happiness nor contradictory to suffering.

A poet wishes to know about Beauty and he receives the answer that it is “a heart inflamed and a soul enchanted” and “an image you see though you close your eyes and a song you hear though you shut your ears.” In short, “beauty is life when life unveils her holy face” but “you are life and you are the veil” (88-89).

Thoughts of Religion are welcoming to the less fanatic: “Your daily life is your temple and your religion. / Whenever you enter into it take with you your all” because they are “The things you have fashioned in necessity or delight. / For in reverie you cannot rise above your achievements nor fall lower than your failures” (91). The Prophet conveys the idea that there is no need to search for God for he is everywhere, playing with children,

walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms in the lightning and descending in rain. If you look around you “You shall see Him smiling in flowers then rising and waving His hands in trees” (92).

Almitra’s next question is about Death, and Almustafa answers: “If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. / For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one” (93). Death is seeking “God unencumbered” for “Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing. / And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb. / And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance (94).

As these words were spoken it was evening and Almustafa descended the steps of the Temple, entered the ship and stood upon the deck and addressed the people of Orphalese, once more. Then the ship set sail and Almitra silently watched it vanishing into the mist. Her soul pondered on one sentence, “A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me” (114). If the word “woman” is taken in the literal sense, it is an anticlimax to all that is said in *The Prophet*. But if it symbolically refers to “mother” or “motherland” then Almustafa

means to say that he hopes to live a life of love in his motherland. Waterfield considers this line to be a reference to reincarnation: “At any rate, assuming that Almustafa is a perfectly realized being, he still expects to be reincarnated. . . .

Reincarnation remains, as always, a firm belief of Gibran” (260).

Of the twenty-six poetic sermons given by Almustafa, the one on love is considered the best. It is interesting to note that Gibran was elated at his own creation. When he read out *The Prophet* to Mary Haskell prior to publication, “He didn’t read the one on ‘Love’ at first” (Jean and Kahlil 315). He first spoke about the Prologue and read the parts on children, friends, clothes, eating and so on. At last he began the passage “When love beckons to you, follow him, / Though his ways are hard and steep” (10-11). Hearing these words, Mary was transfixed. Gibran asked her, “Do you notice how full these things are of what we have said in talking together sometimes years ago?” and he assured her, “There’s nothing in them that hasn’t come from our talks. Talking about them with you has made them clear to me. And one writes these things in order to find in them his own higher self. This poem . . . has made me better” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 316). The sermons of Almustafa are all in praise of man. Hawi considers them hymns, “for although they take the form of

maxims and precepts, they are not meant to lay down rules for living, nor does their formulator claim to be a law-giver or a receiver of new commandments. His is a vision of pure light which sees nothing but the good in man and life” (227). The Prophet knew that people would say that he came just to praise them: “Think not I say these things in order that you may say the one to the other, “He praised us well. He saw but the good in us.” / I only speak to you in words of that which you yourselves know in thought” (103).

Gibran knew that *The Prophet* was going to be his most significant creation. This is ascertained from “the number of times the book crops up in Mary’s journals and in the letters that passed between them,” says Waterfield (254). Mary Haskell’s journal on 8 Nov 1919, quotes Gibran: “You know *The Prophet* means a great deal in my life. All these thirty-seven years have been making it” (Waterfield 337). Fourteen months later, on 31 March 1921, he wrote, “That book means more to me than all my other work.” More than a year later, on 19 May 1922, he reiterated: “It’s the only book I ever spent so long on.” The following year, on 16 June 1923, he owned that, “*The Prophet* is the first book in my career – my first real book – my ripened fruit” (337). There are references to his book in several other

places in Mary's Journal. For example, MH Journal, 12 June 1912, 7 Sept.1912, 6 April 1913, 4 Sept. 1914, 14 Nov. 1914, 11 April 1915, 21 April 1916, 24 March 1918, 6 May 1818, 31 Aug.-1 Sept 1918, 14 April 1919, 18 Aug. 1919, 20 April 1920, 20 May 1920, 20 Aug. 1920, 25 Aug. 1920, 27 Aug.1920, 31 Aug.1920, 7 Sept. 1920, 10 Sept. 1920, 14 Sept. 1920, 17 Sept. 1920, 5 Feb 1921, 1 March 1921, 12 July 1921, 8 Aug. 1921, 30 Aug. 1921, 2 Sept. 1921, 6 Sept. 1921, 9 Sept. 1921, 19 Jan. 1922, 8 March 1922, 14 April 1922, 5 May 1922, 16 May 1922, 30 May 1922, 11 Sept. 1922, 7 Oct. 1922, 31 Dec. 1922, 2 Jan. 1923, 16 June 1923, 23 June 1923. There are also several references to *The Prophet* in Mary's letters to Gibran, and Gibran's letters to Mary (Waterfield 337).

Gibran's expectation of success was partly due to the long years of preparation and partly to Mary's boosting up of his confidence:

And the text is more beautiful, nearer, more revealing, more marvellous in conveying reality and in sweetening consciousness - than ever . . . The English, the style, the wording, the music - is exquisite, Kahlil - just sheerly beautiful . . . This book will be held as one of the treasures of English literature. And in our darkness we will open it to

find ourselves again and the heaven and earth within ourselves. Generations will not exhaust it, but instead, generation after generation will find in the book what they would fain be - and it will be better loved as men grow riper and riper. It is the most loving book ever written. (2 Oct 1923 BP 416-17)

Jean and Kahlil Gibran opine that the embryo of *The Prophet* began its conception in Gibran's mind at the age of sixteen (333-34). Though the publication of it was postponed time and time again, Gibran had his explanation too: "After those I'll publish *The Prophet*. I have the Arabic original of it, in elementary form, that I did when I was sixteen years old. It is full of the sacredness of my inner life. It's been always in me; but I couldn't hurry it. I couldn't do it earlier" (8 Nov 1919 BP 323). Jean and Kahlil also point to Josephine Peabody's prophetic poem on Gibran about two decades before he published *The Prophet*. This eleven-stanza poem was initially entitled "His Boyhood" and later changed to "The Prophet." Though Gibran had been referring to his most important work as "The Counsels," Josephine's earlier label must have been in his mind. The tenderness and respect shown by such a remarkable woman perhaps caused the seeds of *The Prophet* to sprout out.

The perfection of the written lines makes the reader wonder at the natural flow of dignified words. The long gestation of *The Prophet* is traced by Robin Waterfield from Mary's Journal. "Rather than sitting down and writing actively, forcing the words to come, Gibran took many years over the book, waiting always for particular moments of inspiration" (254). This being his "magnum opus" it was a preoccupation for a long period. He had written to Mary about it:

A voice is shaping itself in my soul and I am waiting for words. My one desire now is to find the right form, the right garment that would cling to the human ears. The world is hungry, Mary; and if this *thing* is bread it will find a place in the heart of the world, and if it is not bread, it will at least make the hunger of world deeper and higher. (6 Jan 1916 BP 264)

As days passed the voice became clearer and clearer and he was able to write, "Yes, the big piece of English work I wrote you about has been brooding in me for 18 months or more. . . . It is to have twenty-one parts; I have written sixteen of them" (6 May 1918 BP 303). This was the first time Gibran had given the title

“The Prophet” but he did not offer any explanation for the change. Whether Mary was unaware of Josephine’s prophecy years back or whether she knew it and so disliked it, is not certain but it is certain that she preferred the term “The Counsels” and continued to use it even after it was published.

The inspiration for writing the book was not only physical and mental, but also emotional and spiritual: “And now my whole being is going into ‘The Prophet.’ That is to be my life until it is done . . . I have imprisoned certain ideals - and it is my desire to live these ideals. It is not writing them that is my interest. Just writing them would seem to me false. I can only receive them by living them” (Jean and Kahlil 337). The desire to live a real life, instead of talking about it, was uppermost in Gibran’s thoughts. Towards the end of the composition, he told Mary: “I am trying my best not to be a talker about things;” and he had sufficient reason for it: “I want it to be so more and more. I want it to *live* reality. Better than to write ever so truly about fire, is to *be* one little live coal. I want some day simply to live what I would say, and talk to people. I want to be a teacher. Because I have been so lonely, I want to talk to those who are lonely” (18 Dec 1920 BP 356).

By the third week of May, Gibran, back in New York, mailed five packets of poems and pieces of “The Counsels” to

314 Marlborough Street. Attached to it was the request: "I hope that you do not mind my sending you these things, now that you are so busy. Please do not give them a thought until you have nothing else to do" (5 June 1918 BP 309). According to Mary's journal on 9 September 1921, "He copied the closing paragraphs of *The Prophet* and then reread aloud the beginning (BP 366). They did not know then that Almustafa's farewell to Almitra was also Gibran's farewell to Mary. This meeting "marked the end of their face-to-face collaboration" (Bushrui and Jenkins 217).

There was a general impression among the readers that the English language in *The Prophet* is Mary's and so half the praise for the book goes to her. However, Mary was unwilling to accept the credit that was not hers. Moreover, she admired his style of writing: "Kahlil's English is the finest I know for it is creative and marvellously simple. And now he rarely misspells a word . . . and rarely misses an idiom" (337). All the same, "Gibran needed Mary to improve his English. She was the perfect sympathetic editor, and without her help his impact on the English world might well have been considerably less" (Waterfield 255). They often sat together to work, as a result, of which his English improved considerably. "But he also had Mary check every phrase of the work: the finished form of *The Prophet*

owes quite a bit to her invisible hand. Even after the whole book was written, they worked together in May 1922 on the ‘spacing’ of the sentences . . . and of course she read the proofs” (Waterfield 254).

Several factors contributed to the success of *The Prophet*. According to Jean and Kahlil, Mrs. Marie Tudor Garland, a widow from Boston invited Kahlil to her Bay End Farm where her artist friends worked undisturbed in a cottage (310). In April 1918, Gibran informed Mary about his trip to Mrs. Garland’s farm, and announced that his next work would be written entirely in English: “One *large thought* is filling my mind and my heart; and I want so much to give it form before you and I meet. It is to be in English - and how can anything of mine be really English without your help?” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 314). In the idyllic community of Mrs. Garland he did about two-thirds of the book which had been brooding in him for eighteen months. All along he had the feeling that he was not big enough to do it but “In the past few months it has been growing and I began it” (6 May 1918 BP 303). He concentrated on its thought more than its poetry. Nonetheless, he cared for rhythm and the right words so that the thought would naturally be absorbed. During the twenty-

four days at Bay End Farm he almost finished the first draft of that “large thought.” He and Mary called it “The Counsels.”

The title of the book, *The Prophet*, was finalized by June 1919 and the original term “Counsels” was meant to refer to the individual sections in it. The script was completed only in 1921. The almost-finished product was preserved for four years before baking it and serving it to the public. Gibran wanted to publish it in September, the month of Ielool, and his dream came true when in September 1923 the small black copy of the book entered the bookshop

Gibran became self-sufficient as he supervised closely the photography and engravings of the twelve drawings for the book. The engravers were overwhelmed having them to work with. He was confident as “The Prophet” was already with the typesetters. His confidence encouraged Mary to travel to Egypt with her husband. Moreover, before going she chanced upon Gibran at the theatre, *Cherry Orchard*, sitting with a group of friends and enjoying their company. His demeanour and expressions with “not a bit of self-consciousness” pleased her: “I was happy beyond words watching him.” She says in her journal, 30 May 1923. “As she watched Kahlil that night at the theater, Mary silently

acknowledged that she was no longer needed” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 365).

Gibran was sure that *The Prophet* would sell because parts of the book were read at poetry societies and well appreciated. People requested him for copies of the same. Knopf was convinced by Gibran’s confidence and so he printed 1,500 copies that were sold like hot cakes. The sales doubled in the following year, and doubled again the year after. Even during the 1930s, the post-world-war period, about 13,000 copies were sold per year. In 1944, towards the close of the Second World War, 60,000 copies were sold. The exact details as records show are 8,109 sold in 1934; 12,539 in 1935; 13,411 in 1937; 14,472 in 1940, 15,911 in 1941; 22,471 in 1942; and in the following five years the number sold are 43,564, 65,265, 91,400, 74897, and 56,822 respectively (Bushrui and Jenkins 330). “Since the late 1950s in North America alone, where the book became a kind of underground bible on the college campuses, the book has sold at a phenomenal rate” (Waterfield 257). It passed the million mark in 1957; 2.5 million by 1965, and four million by 1970. Generally, in the 1960s and 1970s, about 5000 copies were sold every week. “By now it has sold an astonishing nine million copies in North America alone. That is not counting the UK market, or the twenty or so foreign

languages into which it has been translated” (257). In general it can be said that “in the English-speaking world he is known more or less exclusively as the author of *The Prophet*, and therefore as a purveyor of spiritual teaching” (Waterfield 232).

Writing on Almustafa, Gibran began to realize he was himself becoming The Prophet Almustafa. Jean and Kahlil Gibran have recorded that Gibran chose not to wear the mantle of a Prophet. This is in keeping with what is expressed in Mary’s Journal: “I thought that I would use ‘Almustafa’ once only in the book - at the very beginning - and through all of the rest of it say ‘he.’ ‘Almustafa’ in Arabic means something very special - the Chosen and the Beloved too - really between them both - there is no name in English with any such significance” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 341-42). Bushrui and Jenkins opine that “The poet at this period was increasingly aware of the defects of his own personality” (200). However, his staunch conviction that the world needed a ‘prophet’ and that he should provide it gave him the impetus to complete it. Nothing concerned him now except “The Prophet.’ He called it: “the first book in my career - my first real book, my ripened fruit” (qtd. in Waterfield 337).

Admirers thronged the author to find out how he could ever write such a work: “Did I write it” he replied, “It wrote

me” (Bragdon 139). Gibran was also conscious of the magnanimity of his Prophet, as the drawing shows. He wanted an awe-inspiring character. In “Introduction to *The Prophet*” in the work *Kahlil Gibran: Essays and Introduction*, Sarwat Okasha says: “In the picture which represents the personality of the Prophet he visualises him as a teacher of such striking character, such influence, such force of vision, such purity of soul as to make him in truth a prophet. His very presence proves God’s mysterious purpose. His existence justifies and explains creation” (158).

People showered Gibran with many epithets he could not accept. He had confided in May Ziadah: “Some say I am a ‘visionary’, but I do not know what they mean by this word. I do know, however, that I am not so much of a ‘visionary’ that I would lie to my Self. Even if I were to do so, my Self would not believe me” (*Gibran: Love Letters* 37). Though he did not pose as a visionary, he was convinced that, *The Prophet* was his rebirth, his first baptism, the only thought that would enable him to stand in the light of the sun. “For this prophet had already ‘written’ me before I attempted to ‘write’ him, had created me before I created him, and had silently set me on a course to follow him for seven thousand leagues before he appeared in front of me to dictate his wishes and inclinations” (Bushrui and Jenkins 186). Gibran had

expressed the same idea to Mary: “This is not I, but the Prophet” (30 Aug 1921 BP 366). Naimy too confirmed that Gibran never once “intended to parade before men in a prophet’s mantle” (193). Yet he was conscious of his role as a poet. He had once told Mary that the difference between a prophet and a poet is that the prophet lives what he teaches, and the poet does not. The poet may write wonderfully of love, and yet not be loving (7 Oct 1922 BP 397). Alfred Knopf, the publisher, too certifies: “The message of *The Prophet* is a solacing one - and the frightening state of the world in recent decades has apparently created a grateful public for it” (96). By the year 1944 *The Prophet* was Knopf’s second bestseller.

Gibran’s view of life in relation to man and man, finds a deep expression in these pages. Even the structure of the book is given a personal touch. At one glance Almustafa is revealed not just as the Prophet Mohammed or the prophets of Israel, but as Gibran himself. If that is so, then Orphalese is identified as the city of New York, Almitra as Mary Haskell, Almustafa’s isle of birth as Lebanon, and the twelve years in Orphalese as the twelve years Gibran spent in New York, before the publication of *The Prophet* (Bushrui and Jenkins 224). Hawi ascertains that

although Gibran was, from the beginning, taking on the role of a prophet, he was not actually proclaiming it until 1914. In a poem which was supposed to be an epilogue to *Dam'ah wa-Ibtisamah* he stated, "I came to say a word and I will say it" and Hawi adds "This 'word' is evidently his prophecy, his messianic message to the world, which he must have thought he uttered in *The Prophet*" (qtd. in Hawi 223). Like prophets, Almustafa claims that he is not the one speaking, he is spoken to and used as a mouthpiece: "Was it I who spoke? Was I not also a listener?" (*The Prophet* 97).

Originally, *The Prophet* was meant to be part of a trilogy. He specified "the difference between the first two books by saying that the message of *The Prophet* was that all is well, and the message of the second book would be that all is beautiful" (qtd. in Waterfield 256). After the publication of *The Prophet* Gibran's physical health and mental calibre faced a slow down and he could not fulfil his desire. When he passed away he was working on the second book *The Garden of the Prophet*. Of the third book *The Death of the Prophet*, only a fragment is left behind, which says that Almustafa would return to the city of Orphalese, "and they shall stone him in the market-place, even unto death; and he shall call every stone a blessed name" (Young 119).

Gibran longed to integrate his life and work. "His growing awareness of an underlying unity within the phenomenal and noumenal worlds was not mere intellectual assent, but a passionate conviction, a certainty that he now aimed to weave into the fabric of his being: "I know now that I am a part of the whole" (Jean and Kahlil 346). This is perhaps the reason why Gibran was sure of success by 1923. Knopf recounts the author's confidence regarding the success of the book: "Whenever I saw Gibran in the few years of life that remained to him after 1923 and gleefully reported how well *The Prophet* was doing, his reply was always the same - he shrugged his shoulders and said: "what did I tell you?" (48).

Gibran was aware of the two extreme schools of traditional thought regarding love: (1) the love of the body and (2) the love of the spirit. These extremes teach either an extravagant gratification of the flesh or an extravagant mortification of the spirit. He too distinguishes two types of love, that of the body and the mind, the physical and the spiritual. Referring to physical love, he says

And there are among you those who are neither
young to seek nor old to remember;

And in their fear of seeking and remembering they

shun all pleasures, lest they neglect the spirit or offend against it.

But even in their foregoing is their pleasure. (*The Prophet* 84)

This was a period of the past hermits and religious cloisters according to Gibran. He sees no evil in the biological functions of the body. He loves the body just as he loves the spirit, for human existence is neither a pure spirit like the angels nor solely flesh like the animals. Moreover, he believed that God made the body as a temple for the soul. "He knew that an excessive rejection of a bodily desire would not nullify the wish but "repress it in the unconscious, until someday the desire would burst out at the surface, causing damages to the psyche of the individual." says Ghougassian in his article, "Love, the Quintessence of Human Existence" (Sherfan 315).

To clarify Gibran's concept of physical love, Ghougassian quotes a psychobiographical incident from Barbara Young's *This Man from Lebanon*. When a lady asked Gibran, "But have you never been in love?" with no embarrassment whatsoever, he answered: "I will tell you a thing you may not know. The most highly sexed beings upon the planet are the creators, the poets, sculptors, painters, musicians - and so it has been from the

beginning. And among them sex is always beautiful, and it is always shy” (Sherfan 317). Nevertheless Gibran was conscious that physical love could be misused. He warns his readers against the abuse of carnal love. According to his cybernetics of love, pleasure is an essential part of life, but not to the point of confusing it with the goal, happiness. When sex becomes an end in itself, relationship becomes disastrous. Happiness is not synonymous with pleasure or contradictory to suffering he says in *The Prophet*.

Gibran does not consider the body, an evil principle, and the spirit, a good principle, contradictory to each other. In fact, he holds a midway position. He disagrees with exaggerated spiritualism. Ghougassian opines that for Gibran “man is a sexual being; and from the very biological fact that an individual is identified as either a male or a female, it is clear that sex is a reality diffused through all man’s being . . . “ (Sherfan 316). Gibran’s concept is clear from one of his letters to Mary Haskell: “To love, I must understand - even understand with the body, too. When for instance I see a beautiful flower, my body understands its beauty, is drawn to it” (29 Dec 1912 BP 113). Sex for him was an energy that pervaded the whole man.

Not being a philosopher who severs the body from the mind, Gibran advises man to keep control over his bodily desires and to be moderate in sexual life. Ghougassian explains Gibran's concept thus: "Man should regard his sex-eros not as an end in itself, but as a mode of expression for his disinterested love" (Sherfan 322). At such a moment, Gibran believes, physical love or Eros fuses into spiritual love or Agape to become a version of genuine love and "sex is justified as soon as it becomes a vehicle of love-agape" and this is the only way "Gibran sanctifies sex" (Sherfan 322). Gibran's cybernetics of love includes honesty "if one partner feels no real attachment for the other, then the act is prostitution. . . . Gibranism does not inhibit Eros, he simply subordinates it to Agape (Sherfan 322-23).

Mary Haskell was once asked whether Gibran was sexual-minded and she answered: "Kahlil is not sexual-minded, but absorbed in bigger things" and she reaffirms that he transformed his sexual energy "into art-production" (29 Dec 1912 BP 113). However it is possible to believe that he did have sex with Mary and others but he "had sanctified sex in his life and converted it into Agape," says Ghougassian (Sherfan 326). Spiritual love was also a strong point for Gibran. If the word 'Agape' was used by the Greeks to refer to brotherly love, then Agape is the right

word for Gibran's cybernetics of spiritual love. "Gibranism is a people's philosophy and not a philosophers's philosophy" says Ghougassian (Sherfan 328). For Gibran, love is disinterested, individualistic, generous, timeless, spaceless and universal as it will be proved in this dissertation from the sections of *The Prophet*.

The psychoanalytical approach to love is indicated in *The Prophet*:

Oftentimes in denying yourself pleasure you do but
store the desire in the recesses of your being.

Who knows but that which seems omitted today,
waits for to-morrow?

Even your body knows its heritage and its rightful
need and will not be deceived

And your body is the harp of your soul,

And it is yours to bring forth sweet music from it or
confused sounds. (85)

It is an accepted fact that the form of *The Prophet* is reminiscent of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. In both works, there are phrases and sentences reminiscent of the Bible. Aphorisms, epigrams, and parenthetical sentences abound in both works. But, Nietzsche was pessimistic while Gibran was not.

Nietzsche's mouthpiece, Zarathustra, is a Prophet like Gibran's Almustafa. Zarathustra was in exile in an island as was Almustafa in Orphalese. Zarathustra gives out prophetic wisdom topic by topic just like the counsels of Almustafa. "The message of *The Prophet* is light, confident and optimistic, and this is undoubtedly the first aspect of the book that appeals to people" (Waterfield 258). As Gibran and Mary Haskell started polishing the section on 'Farewell', Gibran acknowledged to Mary his indebtedness to Nietzsche and pointed out the difference between Zarathustra and Almustafa:

. . . Zarathustra has much beautiful poetry, and I *love* it and love the book - But Zarathustra comes down from the mountain. He talks two or three minutes to an old hermit on the way - that is all - Then he finds the townspeople waiting to see a tightrope dancer, and to this crowd in their present mood he begins to talk - like a God or a superman. Of course they couldn't hear his real meaning. And there's a certain twist in his doing it that way. There *was* a twist in Nietzsche - a lack of balance in him as an artist. He had an analytical mind. . . . And the analytical mind always says too much. (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 352)

At the end of the First Part of the book Zarathustra says, “Now do I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me, will I return unto you” (Nietzsche 51). But when Almustafa bids farewell he says, “But should my voice fade in your ears and my love vanish in your memory, then I will come again” (*The Prophet* 98). At the beginning of the Part Three, as Zarathustra gets ready to leave the Happy Isles for the world he ascends a high mountain. Then looking at the sea and he says “Ah, fate and sea! To you must I now *go down!*” (Nietzsche 105). Almustafa also looks at the sea and says, “I shall come to you, a boundless drop to a boundless ocean” (*The Prophet* 3). Mikhail Naimy says: “Both are subjective creations, veiled with symbol and metaphor sufficiently to hide their authors’ identities from the ordinary reader” (188). Though they are similar in form and style they are different in substance.

Almustafa resembles the “*Sufis* of the East” (Naimy 189). The influence of Sufi philosophy on Gibran makes *The Prophet* a blend of the East and the West. Bushrui and Jenkins say that the first level of Sufi teachings concerns personal behaviour and the eternal and fundamental subjects central to life. “And which the language and sentiment of *The Prophet* puts on constantly in mind of the Bible and the English Romantics, the spirit and message is Sufi to its very

The Prophet contains all the major Sufi ideas like “the universal self, the unity of life and death, the unity of body and soul, the unity of good and evil, the unity of time and place, the unity of religion, the unity of humankind and collective responsibility, the divine in the human soul, and the relationship between essence and form” (231). Gibran has in mind the Sufi ideal of the Greater Self which is God. Bushrui and Jenkins find in Almustafa a merging of Christ and Muhammad, the embodiment of the “Perfect Man” in the Sufi tradition (231).

“The basis and the essence of the wisdom of *The Prophet*, as revealed in his sermons, is the belief in the Greater Self” says Hawi (224). It is the ‘Greater Self’ that speaks to him and through him. It is the same self that “becomes active while his own self is passive and inactive” (224). Like a hunter, he hunts the Greater Self of man “I hunted only your larger selves that walk the sky” (*The Prophet* 87). The lesser selves are diverse but they will realize that they are one when they desire to attain perfection and “walk together towards your God-self” (37). The same thought is expressed in the words: “It was the boundless in you; / The vast man in whom you are all but cells and sinews” (102). The ‘vast man’ according to Hawi includes within him, the ordinary man and God himself. It means “the organic unity of all

men” and Almustafa uses the terms like God, life, ocean, flaming spirit to mean the same. The ordinary man cannot be evil because he is the root of God. Gibran believed that Evil cannot exist in the root because the tree cannot bear a sound fruit when its roots are evil. If man becomes God in the end, he cannot be evil. Love is the most significant point for the Prophet. Hawi opines that the Prophet considers Love “the chief virtue for without it the individual cannot expand his self into a greater self which includes all humanity” (225).

The universal appeal of *The Prophet* was predicted by Mary as much as Gibran. She had written to him:

The Prophet came today, and it did more than realize my hopes. For it seemed in its compacted form to open further new doors of desire and imagination in me, and to create about itself the universe in nimbus, so that I read it as the centre of things. The format is excellent, and lets the ideas and the verse flow quite unhampered. The pictures make my heart jump when I see them. They are beautifully done. I like the book altogether in style. (2 Oct 1923 BP 416)

Gibran also showed Mary a favourable review in the *Chicago Post* and expressed his happiness at the cordial reception of the book:

I have been overwhelmed with letters about it, and many of the letters from people I never heard of . . . Twenty days after the book appeared some Syrian publishers tried to buy a number of copies and there was not one left. . . . I read from it at the Poet's Club. . . . And it was read in a church - St. Mark's - first of all by (Butler) Davenport. To my regret he read the whole book . . . but his spirit was ever so good - and the reading gave people some idea of the book. . . . You know, I had wanted it first read in a church. (26 Nov 1923 BP 417-19)

In June 1924, Gibran showed Mary a letter from a woman in Michigan who blessed him "for having written and in having written *The Prophet* - and thanking him "in the name of thousands of children" (5 June 1924 BP 426).

At this point, it has become necessary to highlight the role of prophets in general, and the prophets of The Bible, in particular. The prophets of the Old Testament are believed to have moulded the course of Israelite history. There were four major and twelve minor prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel belong to the first category; and Hosea, Joel, Amos,

Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to the second category. In addition, there were many other prophets of whom Moses was considered a prophet without an equal. Chronologically these prophets may be divided into four ages: 1) The eighth century prophets: Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. (2) The late seventh and sixth century prophets: Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah. (3) The Exile or the exilic period: Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah. (4) The Post Exile period: Samuel, Elijah and Elisha. After four centuries appeared John the Baptist, the last of the prophets of the old covenant and the precursor of Jesus <<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txo/prophet.htm>>.

The Old Testament prophets are similar to prophets in the Near East. They were considered mouthpieces of God, revealing God's plan to the masses. In the New Testament, prophesying was regarded as a special gift bestowed on a select number of men and women until the second century AD. After that it was associated with mystics and it lost its high regard. The New Testament prophets are powerful persons within the Church who spoke the word of the risen Lord with authority. Though ranked only second to the apostles in importance, the prophet's word

was regarded as the command of the Lord. As prophets were such authoritative figures and held in such high esteem by the people, abuses were bound to set in. Christ himself had predicted that such abuses would arise (Matt. 24: 11, 24).

Prophecy attained special religious significance in Judaism and Christianity. According to Judaism, the prophet is an individual chosen by God, often against his will, to reveal God's intentions and plans to the people. As a bearer of divine revelation, he often experiences God's overwhelming presence and receives the strength to communicate to others what God has said, even though this may lead to persecution, suffering, and death. Christianity inherited the idea of prophecy from Judaism, and Christians interpret Hebrew writings in the light of the teachings of Christ, who is considered the prophet promised in Deuteronomy. Indeed, in many respects Jesus was a typical Judaic prophet. Prophecy was recognized as a gift in apostolic times, but it gradually disappeared as the hierarchical structure of the church began to develop toward the end of the first century, discouraging individual inspiration. Christian visionaries throughout the ages have often been called prophetic, but they never achieved the status of the great prophets <<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txo/prophet.htm>>.

Islam accepts in principle the prophetic tradition of Judaism, and regards Muhammad as the last prophet of a line of prophets from Adam's time.

Gibran was imbued with the spirit of the prophets of Judaism, Islam and, above all, Christianity. *The Prophet* was the outcome of his desire to play the role of a prophet for the sake of humanity. He wanted to redeem Syria and then America, and subsequently, the whole world. That is why though *The Prophet* received only less literary attention than *The Madman* and *The Forerunner*, he was not perturbed. Though *The Times* did not review it and *Poetry* gave an apathetic review, he knew the book would be a success: "For Kahlil Gibran was that rare phenomenon" as Stanton Goblentz says in "Gibran's Companion to *The Prophet*" (Bushrui and Munro 180). Behind sharp critical comments there was an underlying acceptance. Even the criticism found in *Poetry* was not against the book but about the spirit of the readers: "Doubtless this book will awake response in many readers, for it is not without beauty, but the essence of the book, which is its spiritual significance, cannot satisfy the robust hunger of the occidental spirit" (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 372). The reaction of the readers towards Gibran was mixed. No leading journal in the West reviewed Gibran's books on publication. He was omitted

from books on modern American literature. His literary and philosophical worth was often questioned. But while some critics considered him sentimental and sloppy, others adored him. "There are those too, who, in blindly worshipping Gibran, as if one only needed to read *The Prophet* for life's problems to vanish away, have done him as much disservice as those who have pilloried him for his unfashionable emphasis on tolerance and compassion (Bushrui and Jenkins 21).

The greatness of Gibran is manifested by the honour given to him by Boston, forty-six years after his death. In 1977, the week of September 18th to 25th was declared Gibran Week. It is surprising that a city like Boston should acknowledge that an adopted son has left an indelible mark upon the city. The highlight of the festivities was the dedication of the Kahlil Gibran Park in Copley Plaza. There was also the unveiling of a bronze plaque with the following inscription:

Kahlil Gibran, a native of Bisharri, Lebanon, found literary and artistic sustenance in the Denison Settlement House, the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Public Library. A grateful city acknowledges the greater harmony among men and strengthened universality of spirit given by Kahlil Gibran to the people of the world in return. (Shehadi 28)

In the “Forward” to *An Introduction to Kahlil Gibran*, Stefan Wild describes Gibran thus:

Nietzschean rebellion, Blakean pantheism and the oriental Sufi tradition flow together, blending in him, into an apotheosis of the mystic oneness of the good and the beautiful – an ever-recurrent “leitmotif” in Gibran’s writing, reflecting the feeling and thinking of an epoch. Gibran’s incantatory style, symbolic, rhetorical, abstract and hypnotic, deliberately vague and smoothly ecstatic, has set new standards for Arabic prose. (Bushrui ix)

Barbara Young reports that at St Mark’s, New York, every year an adaptation of *The Prophet* is acted out as a religious drama. The same church has a vesper service based on Gibran’s words (qtd. in Sherfan 30).

Whatever the pros and cons, Gibran redesigned for Knopf, a special edition of *The Prophet* for the purpose of gift-giving and automatically the sales went up without much advertisement. As soon as *The Prophet* was published, Mikhail Naimy visited Gibran in his Hermitage, a severely furnished modest studio cum apartment. In “A Strange Little Book,” Naimy opines that this place “spoke not so much of prayer as it did of work” (*An*

Introduction to Kahlil Gibran 149). There was a cot which served as a bed for the night and a lounge during the daytime. In addition there were three upholstered chairs, a small bed-table and a telephone. "The whole studio was cluttered with folios of drawings, books and papers and the tools of creative effort - brushes, paint tubes, pencils, pen, and inkwells" (149). This humble surrounding housed the author of the strange little book. The account may be more interesting from Naimy himself:

I had scarcely arrived when Gibran handed me a letter and said, with a twinkle of deep satisfaction in his eyes, "Read this, Mischa." The letter was from the President of Colorado College and asked permission to engrave a verse from *The Prophet* on the master bell of the chimes of the college memorial chapel. The verse was, "Yesterday is But Today's Memory, and Tomorrow Is Today's Dream." As I hand it back with warm, congratulatory words, Gibran looked at me with eyes half moist and said in a grave voice, "It's a strange little book, Mischa." (149)

That strange book was proof of Gibran's transformation. The evolution of love from grief, from growth to grace makes Gibran extend himself for spiritual growth. If "Love is the will to

extend oneself for spiritual growth,” Scott Peck says, that love is grace, a point mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (320). “Genuinely loving people are, by definition, growing people” and “people’s capacity to love, and hence their will to grow, is nurtured not only by the love of their parents during childhood but also throughout their lives by grace, or God’s love” (320-21). Some people resist the call of grace, because it is a kind of promotion by which one is called to exercise a higher responsibility. Those who become aware of grace and accept it, experience an inner tranquillity and peace. Therefore, “The call to grace is a call to a life of effortful caring, to a life of service and whatever sacrifice seems required. It is a call out of spiritual childhood into adulthood, a call to be a parent unto manhood” (322-23). Most people desire the privilege of adulthood and the self-confidence thereof. But they do not desire to accept its duties and obligations and responsibilities. There is no doubt that it is difficult to grow up with grace. “Those who are the closest to grace are the most aware of the mysterious character of the gift they have been given” (329). Consequently, they prepare themselves to be fertile ground to welcome grace. The journey of spiritual growth requires preparation - courage, initiative and independence of thought and action.

All these Gibran had for sure. *The Prophet*, the internationally acclaimed eponymous book which has now been translated into more than hundred languages and which has remained one among the ten best-sellers for fifty continuous years, speaks of the psychobiography of the author. Gibran's courage, initiative and independence of thought and action have helped him attain spiritual growth. It is from a spiritual orientation he discloses his cybernetics of love. Gibran received the call of grace to exercise a higher responsibility towards mankind. He was gifted with grace and so he could exercise his obligation towards man responsibly. His love of man encouraged him to lead a life of service, to be a parent to mankind. Thus, he attained grace. The evolution of love and the attainment of grace is Gibran's cybernetics of love.

**“The power to love is God’s greatest gift to man,
for it never will be taken from
the blessed one who loves.”**

Kahlil Gibran

CHAPTER FOUR

AFTER *THE PROPHET*

“I can’t publish anything later than ‘The Prophet’ which shall be any way less than ‘The Prophet’ ” wrote Gibran to Mary Haskell (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 342), a point discussed in Chapter Three. These words reflect the sense of gratification that Gibran experienced while writing *The Prophet* and after writing it. This statement may have been true if he were to start on a new work altogether. He had visualized composing a few books side by side with the “The Prophet” and even done a considerable amount of spadework on them. Subsequently, he did publish some works after *The Prophet*. They are *Sand and Foam*, *Jesus, the Son of Man*, *The Earth Gods*, *The Wanderer* and *The Garden of the Prophet* all of which are clubbed together in this chapter. Of these *Jesus, the Son of Man* is on a par with *The Prophet* according to some critical reviews. A few critics opine that it is even superior to *The Prophet*, but if sales speak true, then *The Prophet* can in no way be out beaten, a point discussed in Chapter Three.

Gibran had a habit of writing something and keeping it aside for future correction, wrote Mary Haskell in the journal: “When he has completed a thing he keeps it for months - and then returns to it. Then he revises - may put away again - either

to revise finally later, or never to publish, but just to keep for a few lines in it worth using in something [sic] he shall care to publish. Thus he has much he never will publish - and some now of old date that he may yet publish” (12 June 1912 BP 86). There is enough evidence to prove that all the above-mentioned works were either written before *The Prophet* or during the insightful flashes, he had while writing it. In every sense, this was the last meaningful work. So the prophetic role he adorned stayed put after completing *The Prophet*. Khalil S. Hawi makes the point in a slightly different way:

After writing *The Prophet*, Gibran felt that the book did not express his whole “word,” and he had still to state it fully. But in fact his next book *Sand and Foam* (1926), contained no new thought, while *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928), which came next, was rather an application of the Prophet’s doctrine to the historical character of Jesus than a new departure. Beliefs and ideas which he had expressed before *The Prophet* found their way into these two books as well. (233)

The optimistic vision of *The Prophet* began to give way because of Gibran’s illness and suffering. Yet, he succeeded in maintaining an optimistic view of life. Hawi’s contention is that *Jesus, the Son*

of Man was Gibran's last song of praise for life: "Afterwards a mood of gloom and bitter irony somewhat like that he had expressed in . . . *The Madman* returned. Considering how he alternated between optimism and pessimism all his life, it is likely that this might have happened even if his health had not broken down" (233).

The period of composition of *Sand and Foam* stretches over a long period. This is a credible fact taking into consideration the nature of the work. It is a collection of aphorisms. Barbara Young gives the impression that they were collected after *The Prophet*. This is perhaps to show the readers her involvement in the work because she became acquainted with Gibran only after this captivating work was published. Hawi opines that it can be proved from Gibran's works in Arabic that some of these maxims were given shape in that language, while he was working on *The Prophet*: "The first group of these sayings appeared in 1921. Besides, the sentiments expressed in them belong mainly to the doctrine of *The Prophet*" (234).

There are different dates about the composition of the next book *The Earth Gods* (1931). Hawi thinks it "heralds the return of darkness to his mind" (237). Barbara Young describes it as one "written out of the poet's hell" (113). "Mr. Naimy thinks it was

not begun until after *Jesus, the Son of Man* was finished, while Mrs. Young states two-thirds of it was written during the years 1914-15, and claims to have Gibran's word for this; however, we know that neither he nor she was particularly devoted to accuracy where dates were concerned," says Hawi (237). *The Earth Gods* was perhaps conceived towards the end of the First World War, the same time probably *The Madman* was written. It is possible to make this conjecture because of the prevailing pessimistic thought of the times, and because Gibran was going through intense mental conflict. It was also a period he had not matured enough to accept love as a unifying principle, as he later did. Hawi disagreeing with Young's date of composition of *The Earth Gods* suggests: "It is possible that the book . . . belongs to a phase in Gibran's life when he was undergoing a period of inner division and tension which he went through in 1918" (237).

The Wanderer, Gibran's last book was completed shortly before his death, says Young (116). In this work, there is the same "irony that met our eye in *The Madman*" (117). Hawi too testifies that *The Wanderer* "adds little or nothing to what Gibran had formerly expressed in *The Madman*" (239).

The Garden of the Prophet appeared in 1933, two years after Gibran's death. He had often declared that it was "on the way,"

says Barbara Young (119). Naimy, in an interview in September 1957, could not say whether it was completed by Gibran or not (qtd. in Hawi 240). Young says that the various pieces were complete but as “no arrangement had been planned,” and as the thread of the story was missing, she took up the responsibility of editing it (119-20). However, when the book was published it was presented as Gibran’s. It is obvious from the book that Gibran had no new thought to convey in *The Garden of the Prophet* different from *The Prophet*, Hawi maintains:

It may be that Gibran had nothing more to say of the relation of man to nature and their oneness, after . . . *The Prophet*. Perhaps this was why *The Garden of the Prophet* was always “on the way” but never finished. It is also possible that he was not satisfied with what he had written and did not intend to publish it, for there is nothing in *The Garden of the Prophet*, either in thought or imagery, which does not remind us of Gibran’s previous works. The mood is one of darkness and preoccupation with death. It is Gibran’s farewell to life, and expresses his longing to dissolve into nature. (242)

The cybernetics of love or the communication of love, manifested from the psychobiography of Gibran as he composed these works, shows that he was full of graceful love for humanity, and he considered it his duty to acquaint people with the profuse knowledge he had imbibed, collected, modified and improvised all his life. The works of Gibran written after *The Prophet* have the marks of illness, suffering and the consequent depression. Reading the works from a psychobiographical angle it may be conjectured that the grace Gibran had attained in *The Prophet* underwent a kind of balancing after that. He continued to publish the works he had already written and kept aside, and works half-written, and also the works he had conceived fully, but had not put down on paper. However, all these do not show the author any higher than he was. This is precisely because he had stayed put after completing *The Prophet*. Gibran did have the consciousness of grace in him. Though he was surprised at himself and his achievement, he was not proud of it. Had he been proud of himself he would not have published the works written after *The Prophet* for they lacked the high degree of grace characteristic of the great masterpiece. It was the decision of the man of grace to publish works of an earlier period that was not

up to the mark in the matter or manner of writing. Yet, it needs to be said that *Jesus, the Son of Man* was far above the other works written after *The Prophet*.

***Sand and Foam* (1926)**

“This is a stop-gap only between *The Prophet* and the next book,” said Gibran about *Sand and Foam* (Naimy 207). This book was not an overnight collection. In fact, Gibran had written about three hundred aphorisms and proverbs over the years and was getting ready for the publication. Many of the sayings had already been published in Arabic or English, and won acclaim. Therefore, he wanted to compile them into a ready-made book for his American audience. He showed the collection to Mary Haskell when she visited him in New York, after her marriage. He was much moved, she says, and almost in tears at that time (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 390). It was also during this period that he first met Barbara Young, who during the remaining years of his life lightened his burden of organizing, transcribing and typing his works, a point mentioned in Chapter One.

When *Sand and Foam* was published it had three hundred and twenty-two aphorisms. The *Herald Tribune* gave a negative reception by attributing to it words like ‘arid’ and ‘thin.’ Critics in

Boston too were severe in their criticism. A review in Boston said that the work is “a mixture of pungent observation, absurdities and meaningless mysticism” (qtd. in Hawi 233). Nevertheless, the book received appreciation from several sources (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 390). Gibran was so particular about the design of the book that he requested the editor to print it exactly as he had prepared the manuscript with regard to the number of aphorisms on a page and the total number of pages in the book. The sayings were accompanied by seven illustrations painted by Gibran, and each of the sayings was separated from its neighbours by floral decoration that was also from Gibran’s pen. He believed in the sanctity of certain numbers. For example, “three” and “seven” were sacred numbers for him, which he used often in this work: “Behold every closed door is a mystery sealed with seven seals” (78). “We shall never understand one another until we reduce the language to seven words” (30).

A few words in *Sand and Foam* excel some of the meditations in *The Prophet*. For example “Of Love” in *The Prophet* is surpassed by two quotations in *Sand and Foam*: “Love which is not always springing is always dying” and “Love that does not renew itself everyday becomes a habit and in turn a slavery” (28). “Of Giving” in *The Prophet* is excelled by two striking

aphorisms in *Sand and Foam*: “Generosity is not in giving me that which I need more than you do, but it is in giving me that which you need more than I do”(34). The other excellent observation is, “Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need” (66). When Gibran says, “What we long for and cannot attain is dearer than what we have already attained,” he does not say anything entirely new and yet it touches a sensitive area of our hearts (81):

There are many sayings mystical in nature and eluding ordinary human comprehension. For example, “There lies a green field between the scholar and the poet; should the scholar cross it, he becomes a wise man; should the poet cross it, he becomes a prophet”(64). This saying is only understood by a quotation from Mary’s journal: “The difference between a prophet and a poet is that the prophet lives what he teaches - and the poet does not” (30 Sept 1922 BP 397). Another aphorism that requires a rereading is: “When Life does not find a singer to sing her heart she produces a philosopher to speak her mind” (15).

Waterfield suggests that Gibran preferred to take sides with the singer: “And it is obvious which of the two he both preferred and identified with: he was interested only in appealing to the heart, and so to judge him by the head may be to miss the point

altogether” (286). Commenting on the author and the work, Salem Otto says, “It is written as though a philosopher were gazing on the activities of humanity and making comments on the passing scenes” (29). Beauty, according to Gibran, is the driving force in life: “There is neither religion nor science beyond beauty” (5). He contemplates on the strength of love that transforms everything and considers friendship “a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity” (29). He values love and relationships: “If it were not for guests all houses would be graves” (33). It is a rare privilege to have one’s words quoted at one’s own memorial services: *Sand and Foam* was quoted at Gibran’s funeral service: “Mayhap a funeral among men is a wedding-feast among angels” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 405).

The beginning of *Sand and Foam* is impressive because it emphasizes the permanence of the permanent and the temporariness of the temporary:

I am forever walking upon these shores,
 Betwixt the sand and the foam.
 The high tide will erase my foot-prints,
 And the wind will blow away the foam.
 But the sea and the shore will remain
 Forever. (1)

The ending of the work is equally thought provoking:

You may have heard of the Blessed Mountain.

It is the highest mountain in our world.

Should you reach the summit you would have only
 one desire, and that to descend and be with those
 who dwell in the deepest valley.

That is why it is called the Blessed Mountain. (85)

The very last line hints at preaching that ought to be followed by practising: "Every thought I have imprisoned in expression I must free by my deeds" (85).

In between the beginning and the end, there is a profusion of marvellous sayings: "Only once have I been made mute. It was when a man asked me, 'Who are you?' " (2). "The reality of the other person is not in what he reveals to you, but in what he cannot reveal to you. Therefore, if you would understand him, listen not to what he says but rather to what he does not say" (14). "When two women talk they say nothing; when one woman speaks she reveals all of life" (26). "It takes two of us to discover truth: one to utter it and one to understand it" (17). "Many a doctrine is like a window pane. We see truth through it but it divides us from truth" (17). "They dip their pens in our hearts and think they are inspired" (20). "We often sing lullabies

[sic] to our children that we ourselves may sleep” (23). “Men who do not forgive women their little faults will never enjoy their great virtues” (28). “Lovers embrace that which is between them rather than each other” (29). “Love and doubt have never been on speaking terms” (29). “How often have I attributed to myself crimes I have never committed, so that the other person may feel comfortable in my presence” (38). “Should we all confess our sins to one another we would all laugh at one another for our lack of originality” (45). “Is there a greater fault than being conscious of the other person’s faults?” (46). “It is the honor of the murdered that he is not the murderer” (47). “If you reveal your secrets to the wind you should not blame the wind for revealing them to the trees” (72). “You may forget the one with whom you have laughed, but never the one with whom you have wept” (79).

An enigmatic anecdote that provokes laughter is as follows:

On my way to the Holy City I met another pilgrim and I asked him, “Is this indeed the way to the Holy City?”

And he said, “Follow me, and you will reach the Holy City in a day and a night.”

And I followed him. And we walked many days and

many nights, yet we did not reach the Holy City.

And what was to my surprise he became angry with me because he had misled me. (8)

“Only great sorrow or great joy can reveal your truth” (31).

“You are a slave to him whom you love because you love him, and a slave to him who loves you because he loves you” (32).

“Strange that we all defend our wrongs with more vigour than we do our rights” (44). “If the Milky Way were not within me how should I have seen it or known it?” (54). “The truly great man is he who would master no one, and who would be mastered by none” (56). “The bitterest thing in our today’s sorrow is the memory of our yesterday’s joy” (70).

These sayings show the growth and maturity of Gibran, and evolution of love in his life. He attained the grace characteristic of love as he wrote these sayings. And this thesis proves that the grace attained here was simultaneous with *The Prophet*.

Jesus, the Son of Man

Jesus, the Son of Man subtitled “*His words and His deeds as told and recorded by those who knew Him*” is the longest work of Gibran. It was his great ambition to write on the life of Jesus. In fact, he was enchanted by the events in the Bible says Mikhail

Naimy, whose biography narrates how as a tiny boy, Gibran was found missing on Good Friday after listening to the story of the crucifixion and death of Jesus. His parents anxiously searched for him; and found him in the village graveyard, clutching a bouquet of flowers, as though to share the suffering of the Messiah (20).

As preparation for his dream-work, Gibran read everything he could get on Jesus. The work that influenced him most was Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (*Vie de Jesus* 1863). Renan, a French philologist, historian and essayist (1822-92) mingles facts from the Gospel narratives with an imaginative representation of the personality of Jesus. His portrayal "earned him both fame and persecution," according to *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* ("Renan"). Gibran was touched by one particular aspect depicted by Renan, and that was the concept that Jesus was a poet. He considered Jesus the greatest of all artists and the greatest of poets. "To call him God makes so light of him. Because as God's his wonderful sayings would be small but as man's they are most perfect poetry" (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 385).

Gibran also travelled round the places where Jesus lived and moved about in order to grasp Him at the feeling level and to contain Him in his being. With great excitement he had written to Mary Haskell about this: "And I have been all through his

(Jesus's) country from Syria to lower Palestine. And all my life the wonder of him has grown on me" (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 385). In Lebanon, Gibran had heard a number of stories passed on by word of mouth about Jesus from the olden times. He began the monologues on 12 November 1926 with the help of Barbara Young, and finished it after eighteen months of "a mighty and terrible struggle" (Young 103).

Just before starting the venture, Gibran wrote to Mary from Paris: "My greatest hope now is to be able to paint the life of Jesus as no one did before. My life can find no better resting place than the personality of Jesus" (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 384-85). While working on the life of Jesus, he and Mary Haskell were estranged. But on 18 April 1927 she wrote to him asking him about the progress of the work. In the second week of December 1927, on the day after her fifty-third birthday, she received the manuscript copy. She began to edit it with great difficulty during the wee hours of the morning, and mailed it back on 25 April 1928. They met for the last time on 2 May 1928. He was very ill, so was her husband, Florance. On 7 November he sent her a copy as she notes: "*Jesus the Son of Man* came out about two weeks ago. . . . I hope you will like it, when you see it, in spite of the many little mistakes. My publishers

seem to be extremely happy over it, and my friends here, as well as others throughout the country, say such kindly things about it . . .” (7 Nov 1928 BP 438).

Fascinated by the charisma of Jesus, Gibran used to have dreams of Jesus as early as 1908. They are recorded in Mary’s journal. He often dreamt of Jesus in ordinary day-to-day surroundings. For example, on a slope near Bisharri where there were many big stones and pieces of columns; or near a big spring, where a river sprouted out of the rock; or in a little garden near Beirut, full of flowers, and a wall and a gate where he used to study while at college. Gibran narrates one of his dreams thus: “O if I could describe Him to you: if I could only tell you of the sad joy in His eyes, the bitter sweetness of His lips, the beauty of His large hands, the rough woollen garment, and the bare feet so delicately veiled with white dust. And it was all so natural and clear” (qtd. in Bushrui and Jenkins 249). There were several other dreams too. In one of them, he reminisces fondly:

Then I saw Jesus coming toward me down the road.
The walnut and weeping willows arched over the
road, and I could see the patches of sunlight falling
through on his face. It was the same face as always -

an Arabic type of face, aquiline nose, black eyes, deepest and large, yet not weak as large eyes are so apt to be, but as masculine as anything could be, with his straight black brows. His skin was brown and healthy, with that beautiful slight flush of red showing through. (10 Jan 1914 BP 167)

Mary too was enchanted by the description, and she asked: "Was he bearded?" Gibran answered with the same excitement:

Yes, with a thin beard like the Arabs - and his hair was abundant and black but not well kept, head bare, as always. He had on the same brown robe, loose, with a cord round the waist, and a little torn at the bottom - and the same rough heavy, common kind of large sandal on his feet - they were as usual a little dusty. But he was not walking as usual. His staff was longer than in former dreams - and he was walking proudly, holding his head high, and with his bosom projecting. (168)

The last dream reported appears in the journal on 27 May 1923:

I was by the stream, gathering watercress. And He came - just the same face - with the wonderful dark eyes and the clear, outdoor skin, and the abundant

chestnut hair, and the strong frame . . . And I took some cress in my two hands and held them out to him and said, 'Master, will you not have some of this watercress?' He took a bunch of it, all wet, and put it into his mouth. His whole face smiled. . . . And he ate it with relish, as if the crispness were delicious to him. And he said, 'Nothing is more beautiful than green,' and then he knelt at the stream and drank. And when he rose, the water was sparkling on his moustache and his beard at the lips and he did not wipe it off. He just walked on. As he walked he turned his head and looked back at me - with such a smile - such a look of understanding and of having shared a pleasure. (409-10)

The figure of Jesus loomed so large in the mind of Gibran that some references to Jesus are found in many of his works even before he wrote *Jesus, the Son of Man*. His early heroes, Khalil the heretic and Yuhanna the madman had proclaimed that Jesus's mission was not to establish hierarchical institutions but to awaken humanity. With this conviction, he settled down on 12 November 1926 to write his most ambitious work in English, receiving an advance of \$2,000 from Knopf.

Gibran's concept of Jesus was a definite one, as seen from his words to Naimy: "Jesus has been haunting my heart and my imagination for some time past. I am sick and tired, Mischa (Naimy), of people who profess to believe in him, yet always speak of him and paint him as if he were but a sweet lady with a beard. To them he is beautiful, but lowly, humble, weak and poor" (Naimy 207-08). Gibran also disliked the way people presented Jesus as a sorcerer, doubted his historicity, considered him half-God and half-man: "My Jesus is human like you and me. . . . To me he was a man of might and will as he was a man of charity and pity. He was far from being lowly and meek" (208). A lot of discussion with Naimy had gone on into the writing of the book. Then Naimy asked: "Jesus is indeed a topic inexhaustible. No matter how many books have been written about him, there is always room for a new one. But how do you propose to write your book, Gibran?" He answered: "I propose to have a number of Jesus's contemporaries speak of him, each from his own point of view. Their views combined will bring out the portrait of Jesus as I see him. The scheme will be in perfect harmony with my style" (208). Bushrui and Jenkins certify that, "Gibran's imaginative reconstruction was undertaken with the aim

of challenging the one-dimensional view of Christ that had prevailed among western theologians” (256).

The significance of *Jesus, the Son of Man* is that the sketch of Jesus is more poetical than historical. It is a testimony of seventy-seven contemporaries speaking about the charismatic personality of Jesus. Many biblical stories are deconstructed and viewed from a new angle. The contemporaries are sometimes authentic like Matthew or John the Baptist, and sometimes imaginary like Judas’s mother, Cyborea, or Claudius, the Roman sentinel. Gibran boldly supplements fact by fiction. There are heroes and heroines like the disciples, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, and anti-heroes like Pontius Pilate and Barabbas.

The first account of Jesus is given by James, the son of Zebedee, who chances upon Him standing in the market place of Jerusalem, speaking to the multitudes about the kingdom of heaven. James says that as Jesus walked, many followed him until they reached the summit of Mount Hermon. There He stood looking down upon the cities, and “his face shone like molten gold” (4). He outstretched His arms and said to them: “In truth the earth is fair and all that is upon her is fair. But there is a kingdom beyond all that you behold, and therein I shall rule. And if it is your choice, and if it is indeed your desire, you too

shall come and rule with me” (4). As He spoke, Judas of Iscariot stepped forth to say, “If you will be the king of the Jews we shall stand beside you with sword and shield and we shall overcome the alien” (4). Hearing this Jesus spoke in a voice terrible as thunder: “Get you behind me, Satan. Think you that I came down the years to rule an ant-hill for a day? My throne is a throne beyond your vision” (5). As the disciples walked away, all of them turned back to look at Jesus. The only person who did not turn back was Judas. James Zebedee, the narrator, closes his account with the following words: “And from that day Judas became sullen and distant. And methought there was danger in the sockets of his eyes” (7).

The imaginary account of Anna, the mother of Mary, makes the work live and full of warm human blood. She says Jesus was born in his maternal grandmother’s home in Nazareth. The night the baby was born some Persians from the East, who were on their way to Egypt, visited them. As they did not find rooms at any inn, they sought shelter in her house. After they had supper, they requested her to show the new born. When they beheld Mary and her babe, they took out gold, silver, myrrh and frankincense from their bags, laid them at the babe’s feet, fell down and prayed in a strange tongue they did not understand.

They slept there for the night, and left in the morning for Egypt. At the time of parting they said, "The child is but a day old, yet we have seen the light of our God in His eyes and the smile of our God upon His mouth" (9).

As the child grew, Anna says, he was beloved by everyone in Nazareth. He would take away food from home to give it to a passer-by; he would climb the trees of his orchard to pluck fruits for others; he would run races and allow the other to win. Her testimony becomes more true to life as she says "And many other wondrous words He said when He was a boy, but I am too old to remember" (10). Anna is also surprised at Mary's foreknowledge regarding her babe. "She would look long upon her babe, and then turn her face to the window and gaze far away into the sky as if she saw visions. And there were valleys between her heart and mine. . . . Perhaps she knows what I do not know" (9-10).

Mary Magdalen, on meeting Jesus for the first time, becomes ecstatic at his very bearing. It was in the month of June she first saw Him walking alone in the wheat-field. Passing by with her handmaidens, she noticed that, "The rhythm of His steps was different from other men's, and the movement of His body was like naught I had seen before. Men do not pace the earth in

that manner. And even now I do not know whether he walked fast or slow” (13). Her handmaidens were equally excited. They pointed their fingers at Him and spoke in shy whispers to one another. Mary halted for a moment and raised her hand to greet Him but He did not turn his face, and look at her. She hated Him for ignoring her: “I was swept back into myself, and I was as cold as if I had been in a snow-drift. And I shivered” (13). That night she is supposed to have screamed in her sleep and been restless.

In the month of August through her window, Mary saw Jesus again, sitting in the shadow of the cypress tree across her garden, as still as if He had been carved out of stone: “And I gazed at Him, and my soul quivered within me, for He was beautiful. His body was single and each part seemed to love every other part” (14). Immediately, she clothed herself with scented garments and golden sandals and walked towards Him, not knowing whether it was her loneliness or His fragrance that drew her to Him. She wished Him and He replied “Good-morrow to you, Miriam” and looked at her as no man had done before (14). She invited Him home for food and He said, “Yes, Miriam, but not now” (14). When He said, those two words “not now” she says it was as if, “life spoke to death” (16). Suddenly

she was ashamed of her life as a harlot and became conscious of being possessed by seven devils as people used to say. As Jesus looked into her eyes, all the stars of her night faded away, she says, and she became Miriam, only Miriam, a woman lost to the earth she had known (16). Jesus spoke to her of eternal beauty: "But I see in you a beauty that shall not fade away, and in the autumn of your days that beauty shall not be afraid to gaze at itself in the mirror, and it shall not be offended. I alone love the unseen in you" (16). Saying this Jesus walked away, she says, like a breath that moved to the east, like a storm that would shake all things to their foundation: "I knew not, but on that day the sunset of His eyes slew the dragon in me, and I became a woman, I became Miriam, Miriam of Mijdel," she exclaims (17).

There is another portrait of Jesus by Mary Magdalen that finds expression in physical terms: "His mouth was like the heart of a pomegranate;" "he was gentle, like a man mindful of his own strength;" his face was "like night without darkness, and like day without the noise of day." She adds: "It was a sad face, and it was a joyous face." As she spoke to Him, she could not bear His light any longer, and so she turned and walked away, but not in shame: "I was only shy, and I would be alone, with His fingers upon the strings of my heart" (113).

The next we hear from Mary is thirty years later when she speaks about the resurrection of Jesus. Speaking with the conviction of a person who has seen Him and touched Him after his death, she also foresees that the number of those who disbelieve in Him will be diminished with the years. Imbued with confidence, she concludes with the comment, "I know what I know, and it is enough" (215).

Philemon, a Greek apothecary, testifies that Jesus, the Nazarene, was the Master Physician of His people: "No other man knew so much of our bodies and of their elements and properties" (18). He treated fever by His snow-like touch, moved hardened limbs by His own calm, and cured diseases that were unknown to the Greeks and the Egyptians. He called back the dead to life: "They say also that Jesus visited India and the country between the Two Rivers, and that there the priests revealed to Him the knowledge of all that is hidden in the recesses of our flesh" (18). Philemon is aware that Jesus's knowledge may have been given to Him directly by the gods, and not through any priests: "For that which has remained unknown to all men for an aeon may be disclosed to one man in but a moment. And Apollo may lay his hand on the heart of the

obscure and make it wise” (18). The apothecary continues his description as typically as a Greek would say it:

Many doors were open to the Tyrians and the Thebans, and to this man also certain sealed doors were opened. He entered the temple of the soul, which is the body; and He beheld the evil spirits that conspire against our sinews, and also the good spirits that spin the threads thereof.

Methinks it was by the power of opposition and resistance that He healed the sick, but in a manner unknown to our philosophers. He astonished fever with His snow-like touch and it retreated; and He surprised the hardened limbs with His own calm and they yielded to Him and were at peace. (18-19)

The testimony given by Simon who was called Peter appears as truthful as an event next door. When Peter first saw Jesus, he was on the shore of the lake of Galilee, casting his fishing net into the water with his brother, Andrew. Peter says as he looked at Jesus’s face, the net fell from his hands, and a flame kindled within him. Jesus said, “If you will follow me I will lead you to an inlet where the fishes are swarming” (20). Peter followed Him and Andrew followed suit. On the way, Peter mustered courage

to invite Him into his humble cottage, and He answered, "Yea, I will be your guest this night" (21). Peter's wife and daughter, and his wife's mother knelt before Him and kissed the hem of His sleeve. They were pleasantly surprised because they had already seen Him by the River Jordan when John the Baptist had proclaimed Him before the people as the chosen and the beloved. Peter's wife and her mother prepared supper while his daughter clung on to Jesus like a lost sheep that has found its shepherd. As they sat down for supper, He followed the ancient custom of the guest becoming the host inviting the rest to partake of the food. He spoke on various topics. As He was about to leave the family was in tears. Peter's mother-in-law wept in silence and her shawl was wet with tears. Jesus walked over to her and raised her face to His face and said: "You are the mother of all these. You weep for joy, and I will keep your tears in my memory" (23). Jesus was glad that he had caught two men in His net: "I am satisfied, and now I bid you goodnight" (24). As He left, Peter's daughter's eyes were upon Him until her father closed the door. Gratified, he exclaimed, "thus for the first time I knew my Lord and Master" (24).

The account of the enemies like Caiaphas, the High priest, adds credibility to the work. Though he is against Jesus, he

betrays his secret admiration for Him, unawares. He complains that Jesus was defiant to them and to Rome, He poisoned the mind of the simple people; and He led them as if by magic against the Romans and against Caesar. Caiaphas projects his wounded pride and his fear of Jesus's magical influence when he says, "We and Pontius Pilatus knew the danger in that man, and that it was wise to bring Him to an end. I shall see that His followers come to the same end, and the echo of His word to the same silence" (26).

A quasi-biblical description that provides thought is that of Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward. Having been considered a prostitute because she had an extra-marital love affair with a Sadducee, Joanna was brought before Jesus by the Sadducees. Their intention was to test and trap Jesus more than punish Joanna. But He reproached them and set her free. After that incident she says, "I became a woman without a tainted memory, and I was free, and my head was no longer bowed down" (28).

The biblical reference to the wedding feast at Cana is given a more human rendering from the bride's angle. Rafca, the bride of Cana, meets Jesus near her garden-gate, asking her for some water to drink. After he drinks the water, He blesses her and she invites Him to her forthcoming marriage in Cana of Galilee. Jesus

attends the marriage ceremony with his mother and brother James. While He was listening to the marriage songs, the bridegroom's father whispered to Jesus's mother, "We have no more wine for our guests" (30). Jesus heard the message and replied, "The cup bearer knows that there is still more wine" (30). As though a miracle had occurred, there was wine for all. Though one of the guests wondered why the best wine was kept aside until the end of the wedding feast, Rafca sensed that it was undoubtedly a miracle by Jesus. The people of that village still believe that, "The spirit of Jesus of Nazareth is the best and the oldest wine" (32).

The Sermon on the Mount is a repetition of the biblical sermon but it is given a unique Gibranian polish. One harvest day Jesus and the disciples climbed the hills and when they reached the heights, he asked them to take rest and tune their mind and heart as He had much to tell them. Then they reclined on the grass and Jesus sat in their midst and pronounced the following memorable words:

Blessed are the serene in spirit.

Blessed are they who are not held by possessions,
for they shall be free.

Blessed are they who remember their pain, and in
their pain await their joy.

Blessed are they who hunger after truth and beauty,
for their hunger shall bring bread, and their thirst
cool water.

Blessed are the kindly, for they shall be consoled by
their own kindness.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall be one
with God.

Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be in their
portion.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for their spirit shall
dwell above the battle, and they shall turn the
potter's field into a garden.

Blessed are they who are hunted, for they shall be
swift of foot and they shall be winged.

Rejoice and be joyful, for you have found the
kingdom of heaven within you. The singers of
old were persecuted when they sang of that
kingdom. You too shall be persecuted, and therein
lies your honor, therein your reward. (40-41)

Thus, the eight beatitudes of The Holy Bible become the mystic
number nine. After listening to Jesus, Mathew requested Him to
teach him how to pray and He answered with the Lord's Prayer.

A rich Levi in the neighbourhood of Nazareth endorses that Jesus was a good carpenter. The doors He fashioned could not be unlocked by thieves, he says. The two doors and the window Jesus made for him are so stable that they mock at the other doors and windows in that house. What is surprising now for the rich Levi is that, the same labourer, Jesus, is now considered a prophet in Israel: "Had I known then that this youth with saw and plane was a prophet, I would have begged Him to speak rather than work, and then I would have overpaid Him for His words" (52).

Salome's words to her friend is typical of a young girl's secret love for a worthy man:

Whenever He passed by, my heart ached for His
loveliness,

But my mother frowned at Him in contempt,
And would hasten me from the window to my
bedchamber.

And she would cry aloud saying,

'Who is he but another locust-eater from the desert?

(67)

Though Salome's mother dissuaded her from loving Jesus, she was determined to continue to love Him:

But my heart would not keep her words.

I love Him in secret,

And my sleep was girdled with flames. (68)

Nathaniel certifies that Jesus was not meek. People who love Jesus are so anxious to prove that He was righteous, that they end up proclaiming Him a weakling. Nathaniel argues that a soft and yielding person would not be able to declare, "I am life, I am the way to truth." He reiterates the point that Jesus was fearless. As proof he quotes His words: "I am in God, our Father; and our God, the Father, is in me;" "He who believes not in me believes not in this life nor in the life everlasting;" "Your world shall pass away and be naught but scattered ashes ere my words shall pass away" (62). Nathaniel is angry with the people who project Jesus as one confounded by the strong and the powerful:

I am sickened and the bowels within me stir and rise when I hear the faint-hearted call Jesus humble and meek, that they may justify their own faintheartedness; and when the downtrodden, for comfort and companionship, speak of Jesus as a worm shining by their side.

Yea, my heart is sickened by such men. It is the

mighty hunter I would preach, and the mountainous spirit unconquerable. (63)

Rachael, a woman disciple, gives the verdict that Jesus was a man of joy. He understood the sorrows of men and loved them tenderly. She adds: "One thing I did not use to understand in Jesus: He would make merry with His listeners; He would tell jests and play upon words, and laugh with all the fullness of His heart, even when there were distances in His eyes and sadness in His voice. But I understand now" (72).

Rumanous, a Greek poet, emphasizes that Jesus was a poet whose fingers touched and felt what others could not. "Oftentimes I have seen Him bending down to touch the blades of grass, and in my heart I have heard Him say: 'Little green things, you shall be with me in my kingdom, even as the oaks of Besan, and the cedars of Lebanon,' " he says (83). In fact, he loved all that was lovely, from the shy faces of children to the myrrh and frankincense of the south. Rumanous has witnessed Jesus, a lover of nature, gathering almond blossoms and covering His face with the petals, perhaps enjoying the gifts of nature. In His voice, there was the laughter of thunder, the tears of rain, and the joyous dancing of trees. Having considered himself a poet, until he met Jesus, Rumanous knows now, the difference

between holding an instrument with one single string, and having command over all the instruments. “And since I have known that my lyre has but one string, and that my voice weaves neither the memories of yesterday nor the hopes of tomorrow, I have put aside my lyre and I shall keep silence. But always at twilight I shall hearken, and I shall listen to the poet who is the sovereign of all poets” he says (84).

The positive accounts in the work are balanced by negative accounts also. For example a widow in Galilee bluntly says she hates Jesus because He separated her son from her to be one of His disciples: “Aye, I hate the Nazarene, and I shall hate Him to the end of my days, for He has robbed me of my first-born, my only son” (89).

A philosopher notices a difference between Jesus and other people:

To Him the lisping of a babe was not less than the cry of all mankind, while to us it is only lisping.

To Him the root of a buttercup was a longing towards God, while to us it is naught but a root. (101)

Nicodemus, the poet, was enthralled by the presence of Jesus: “I care not for what shall befall me tomorrow, for I know

that Jesus quickened my sleep and made my distant dreams my companions and my road-fellows. / Am I less man because I believe in a greater man?" (106). Ecstatically, he continues: "The barriers of flesh and bone fell down when the Poet of Galilee spoke to me; and I was held by a spirit, and was lifted to the heights, and in mid-air my wings gathered the song of passion" (107).

Phumiah, the High Priestess of Sidon, voices an invocation:

Take your harps and sing with me
 The deathless song of our Beloved . . .
 Lay by your harps and gather close around me,
 I would repeat his words to you,
 And I would tell you of His deeds,
 For the echo of His voice is deeper than our
 passion. (122-23)

Pontius Pilatus's description of Jesus is mixed with guilt. Before he met Jesus his wife had spoken about Him many times. When Jesus was ushered in as an enemy, His arms bound to His body with ropes, Pilatus's immediate desire was to go down from the dais and fall before Him, because he appeared great like the mighty Caesar. But, when the people demanded that He should be crucified, Jesus stood silent with His head held high,

reminding one that a lonely man is the strongest man. Pilatus says: "At that moment the Nazarene was greater than His race. And I did not feel clement towards Him. He was beyond my clemency" (143). Then he said to the priests "Do what you will with this just man. And if it is in your desire, take with you soldiers of Rome to guard Him" (145). He could have saved Jesus but he feared that it would cause a revolution and it was wise for the governor of a Roman province to be discreet. When Pilatus left Syria, his wife became a woman of sorrow. She began to talk endlessly of Jesus to other women of Rome. Conscious of welcoming his own tragedy; Pilatus now ponders on the distinction between what is truth and what is not truth. Deep down in his heart, he wonders, "Can it be that the Syrian is conquering us in the quiet hours of the night?" (146).

The wife of Pilate gives the most heart-rending account of the loss of a great man. She reminisces that she first met Jesus while she was walking with her maidens in the groves outside Jerusalem. Jesus was speaking to a group in a language which she only half understood: "He was speaking to His friends of love and strength. I know He spoke of love because there was melody in His voice; and I know He spoke of strength because there were armies in His gestures. And He was tender, though

even my husband could not have spoken with such authority” (180). When Jesus saw her passing by, he stopped speaking for a moment and looked kindly upon her: “And I was humbled; and in my soul I knew I had passed by a god” she says. (180). She tells the Roman lady that after that day Jesus’s image is ever in her mind and His voice governs the stillness of her nights. There is peace in her pain and freedom in her tears. Her admiration of Jesus is evident from her remark: “Beloved friend, you have never seen that man, and you will never see Him. He is gone beyond our sense, but of all men He is now the nearest to me” (181). It is a pity that Gibran does not record the Roman lady’s reaction to Mrs Pilate’s words.

Susannah of Nazareth, who knew Jesus even as a babe speaks of the youth and manhood of Jesus: “We all loved Mary’s babe and we watched Him, for there was a warmth in His being and he throbbed with the pace of his life. The seasons passed, and He became a boy full of laughter and little wanderings” (166). She gives the impression that He was like an ordinary child and yet he exhibited features above the ordinary: “None of us knew what He would do for He seemed always outside of our race. But He was never rebuked though He was venturous and over-daring. He played with the other children rather than they

with Him” (166). She records an incident that happened when Jesus was twelve years of age. He led a blind man across the brook safely to the open road. In gratitude, the blind man addressed Him as “a little boy,” but he replied, “I am not a little boy. I am Jesus” (166). Then the blind man asked for his whereabouts and He answered that God is His Father, and the earth, His mother. Thus, “He grew like a precious palm tree in our gardens” says Susannah (167). “When He was nineteen, He was as comely as a hart, and His eyes were like honey and full of the surprise of day.” He would walk the fields alone and the eyes of people would follow Him. The maidens of Nazareth were shy of Him for, “Love is forever shy of beauty, yet beauty shall forever be pursued by love” (167).

As years passed, He used to speak in the temple, in the gardens of Galilee, and he would go further down to Jerusalem and other lands in the East and in the West. “We knew not what lands He visited, yet our hearts followed Him. But Mary awaited Him upon her threshold, and every eventide her eyes sought the road for His home-coming. Yet upon His return she would say to us, ‘He is too vast to be my son, too eloquent for my silent heart. How shall I claim Him?’ ” (167-68). One day Jesus said to His disciples to go with Him to Jerusalem and witness the slaying

of the lamb for the Passover. That very day, his mother Mary asked Susannah to accompany her and other women in order to follow Jesus to the Holy City. A huge crowd awaited Him there, for His arrival had been announced to those who loved Him. That very night Jesus left the city with His men. After some time, those who were waiting for Him at an inn got the news that He was held a prisoner. Susannah says that Mary did not utter a word, or weep. She only moved among them like a ghost for she was already made aware of that promised pain and joy of her life even when she was a bride.

Then John the young son of Zebedee informed them that they should follow Jesus to the Tower of David where He was carrying a cross in the midst of a huge crowd. There were two other men also carrying crosses. Mary boldly walked with the rest. "And behind her walked Zion and Rome, ay, the whole world, to revenge itself upon one free Man" (171). As they reached the hill, He was raised high upon the cross. Susannah continues her account: " I looked at Mary. And her face was not the face of a woman bereaved. It was the countenance of the fertile earth, forever giving birth, forever burying her children" (171). Suddenly Mary noticed that Jesus had said something to the man on his right that made him happy. She wanted to know what

it was and He answered, "Mary, from this hour be you the mother of John" (172). To John He said, "Be a loving son unto this woman. Go to her house and let your shadow cross the threshold where I once stood. Do this in remembrance of me" (172). After that He did not speak. "And at that moment the heavens yielded Him to the earth, a cry and a breath," and Mary realized, "Now behold, He is gone. The battle is over. The star has shone forth. The ship has reached the harbour" (172). She returned to Jerusalem leaning upon John, the young disciple. Later she went to her dwelling place alone and lived a life providing comfort to those around her.

The evidence given by a man outside Jerusalem is fact mingled with fiction. He says that Judas came to his home on Friday, the eve of the Passover, wet and trembling in the midst of great tempests and said, "I have delivered Jesus of Nazareth to His enemies and to my enemies" (182). After saying that, like an explanation, he added that Jesus had promised them a mighty kingdom and they imagined being captains and chief warriors there, and thus dealing with the Romans as the Romans had dealt with them. Judas willingly followed Jesus's footsteps not knowing that, "His kingdom was but the kingdom of the heart. I heard

Him talk of love and charity and forgiveness, and the wayside women listened gladly, but my heart grew bitter and I was hardened” (183). He felt cheated when Jesus asked them to render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, for then he understood that Jesus had no power over Caesar. Judas’s agony is that he had loved Jesus deeply, and still he had to take the decision to put an end to Him: “He who murders my hopes shall be murdered, for my hopes and expectations are more precious than the life of any man” (183). After Jesus’s death, Judas realized that even on the cross, “He died a King” and while He was dying, “He was gracious, and He was kindly; and His heart was full of pity. He felt pity even for me who had delivered Him up” (183). Listening to Judas’s account, the narrator told him, that he had committed a grave wrong. Judas replied “Say to your sons and to your sons’ sons: ‘Judas Iscariot delivered Jesus of Nazareth to His enemies because he believed Jesus was an enemy to His own race.’ ” Saying this Judas became desperate and impatient and went out into the tempest to free his crippled spirit. Three days later, the narrator says, he heard that Judas had flung himself from the summit of the High Rock. Commenting on the distinction between Judas and Jesus the narrator says: “One man longed for

a kingdom in which he was to be a prince. Another man desired a kingdom in which all men shall be princes” (186).

Ahaz the Portly, an innkeeper, states that Jesus visited his inn three times in three consecutive years at the time of the Passover. He is proud of the fact that the other innkeepers envy him because of Jesus’s visits. He also testifies how humane Jesus was. When He saw Ahaz’s daughter, Jesus turned to Judas and asked him for two shekels (coins). Judas gave it saying that he had no more money in his purse. At that time, Jesus looked meaningfully at him and said that his purse will soon be filled with silver. Then Jesus gave the two shekels to the innkeeper and asked him to buy a silk girdle for his daughter, to be worn on the day of the Passover in remembrance of Him. Then He kissed her brow saying, “Goodnight to you all” (196). Ahaz concludes his portrait saying, “If you would know more of Him, ask my daughter. She is a woman now, but she cherishes the memory of her girlhood. And her words are more ready than mine” (196).

The last moments of Jesus are recorded by Barabbas admirably. When the people released him and chose Jesus to be crucified, he walked with the crowd to the hill where He was to be nailed on the cross. The last words of Jesus almost coincide with the account given in the Gospels. But the concluding

comment by Barabbas is significant: "I know now that those who slew Him in my stead achieved my endless torment. His crucifixion endured but for an hour. But I shall be crucified unto the end of my years" (198).

Claudius, a Roman sentinel, who guarded Jesus the night before His crucifixion, speaks of His magnanimity. When he visited Jesus in the arsenal at midnight, some soldiers were making sport of the wounded Jesus. They stripped His garment, put a dry crown on His head, gave a reed in His hand, made Him sit against a pillar, and were dancing and shouting saying: "Behold, O Captain, the King of the Jews" (199). Claudius says he was ashamed at the sight, but he did not know why. Though he had bravely fought in Gallia and Spain, and faced men dying, without fear, when he stood before Jesus, Jesus looked at him and he lost heart: "It seemed as though my lips were sealed, and I could utter no word" (200). Immediately he left the arsenal. Thirty years later, Claudius reminiscing all this, says that his sons who were babes then have grown up and served Caesar and Rome. He tells them that neither Pompey nor Caesar was so great a commander as Jesus, the marvellous man of Galilee. Now while counselling his sons, Claudius says, he speaks to them of Jesus as a man with compassion in His eyes for His slayers.

James, the brother of Jesus gives a picturesque account of The Last Supper, which is an imaginative reconstruction of the biblical account with some endearing additions. Just before Jesus was captured, James says, Jesus kissed each one of them upon their cheek. "And when His lips touched my cheek, they were hot, like the hand of a child in fever" (206). Yet when the Roman soldiers came to capture them, James says, he fled like the others because he was a coward. Then he became sick and ashamed, and returned to Jerusalem but by then Jesus was made a prisoner and was not allowed to speak to anyone.

Simon, the Cyrene, who helped Jesus to carry the cross to the hill says, he was on his way to the fields when he saw Jesus carrying the cross. Multitudes were following Jesus, and so he too walked beside Him. Jesus stopped many a time because he was exhausted. Just then a Roman soldier told Simon, "Come, you are strong and firm built; carry the cross of this man" (208). Simon was glad to be of help to Jesus. In gratitude, Jesus placed His hand upon Simon's free shoulder and "they walked together towards the Hill" (208). Several years have passed, and Simon is still gratified to think of that Beloved Man and the opportunity to carry His cross on his left shoulder: "And I feel His winged hand, here, on my left shoulder" (209).

The portrait of Jesus by Cyborea, the mother of Judas, though prejudiced is quite natural. The mother, too eager to protect her son, says that Judas was her only son, good, upright, tender, kind and loved by his friends and relatives. He hated the Romans and was caught shooting arrows at the Roman legion that passed through their vineyard. Even at that age, he would speak to the other youths of the glory of Israel. Now she has come to know the painful truth that he has flung himself from the High Rock in remorse for betraying his friend Jesus. Cyborea repeats that her son has not done any wrong except leaving her to follow Jesus. When he bade her farewell, she told him that he was wrong but he did not listen. The most life-like part of this portrait is Cyborea's plea:

I beg you question me no further about my son.
 I loved him and shall love him forevermore.
 If love were in the flesh I would burn it out with
 hot irons and be at peace. But it is in the soul,
 unreachable.

And now I would speak no more. (211)

The end of the section is typical of a loving mother: "Go question another woman more honoured than the mother of

Judas. Go to the mother of Jesus. The sword is in her heart also; she will tell you of me, and you will understand” (211).

This portrait is followed by the lamentation of a woman of Byblos who makes a request for shedding of tears:

Bid your heart melt and rise and run blood-tears,
For He who was made of gold and ivory is no
more.

In the dark forest the boar overcame Him,
And the tusks of the boar pierced His flesh. (212)

The reference to Judas as ‘a boar’ is in sharp contrast with the tender sentiments expressed by his mother, Cyborea.

The last portrait is drawn by a narrator from Lebanon, perhaps Gibran himself, who appears nineteen centuries after the incident. He claims to have been born seven times and died seven times since Jesus’s hasty visit and the brief welcome the people gave him (217). In spite of Jesus’s short visit of thirty-three years and the poor welcome given to Him, he was no less a king. The narrator who had visited many lands has witnessed Jesus’s name often, either as a prayer or an argument. He ascertains that all types of people who existed then, do exist now. There are friends for comfort and support; enemies for strength and assurance; Mother Marys whose hands rock cradles

with tenderness; Mary Magdalens who drink the vinegar of life and then the wine of life; ambitious Judases who betray Jesus; Johns, who are affectionate and consoling; impetuous Simon Peters who are still sitting by the fire denying Jesus again before the dawn of another day; Caiaphases and Annases who still judge the guilty and the innocent while sleeping on their feather bed; and Pontius Pilatuses who stand in awe of Jesus, but do not risk their position and yet dare to wash their hands.

The narrator from Lebanon also gives a list of what men have done in the name of Jesus ever since his crucifixion. They have built temples to house his name, and upon the temples, they have raised crosses, a sign and symbol to guide their wayward feet. Jesus's joy is far beyond their vision and it does not comfort them. He witnesses Jesus as the fighter among fighters, the poet of poets, the king above all kings, and a man half-naked with the road-fellows. He also narrates how the bishop bends down his head every time he pronounces Jesus's name; how the beggars request for money and bread everyday in Jesus's name; how man, high or low, calls upon His name because He is the Master of infinite compassion. In his prayer, the Lebanese addresses Jesus by several names: "Master," "Master Singer," "Master of words unspoken," "Master Poet," "Master of our lonely hours," Master

Lover,” “Master of Light.” “Master, Sky-heart,” “Knight of our fairer dream,” and “Great Heart.” The portrait concludes with a supplication of forgiveness: “And may God forgive us all” (224).

Gibran’s attachment to Jesus had already been manifested in an earlier work written in Arabic entitled “The Crucified.” Even in that work Gibran’s concept of a powerful Jesus looms large: “The Nazarene was not weak! He was strong and is strong! But the people refused to heed to the true meaning of strength. . . . He lived as a leader; He was crucified as a crusader; He died with a heroism that frightened His killers and tormentors” (*Secrets of the Heart* 55).

On 2 May 1928, when Mary Haskell last met Gibran, she was shocked by his appearance. His ambitious work had taken its toll. In the previous December, premonitions of his death perturbed him and he gave vent to his agony in some of his unpublished poems:

Thanks unto the Lord,
 We have no possessions,
 Nor have we a possessor.
 And we have no mate nor descendant nor kin.
 We walk the earth a shadow

Seen only by those in whose eyes the shadow is
hidden. (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 388)

Writing on the death of Jesus almost coincided with Gibran's own last days. "Although it was to be his last successful work, *Jesus, the Son of Man* is not the anguished cry of a failing man but a magnificent testament of a poet whose soaring prose continued to rail against the dying of the light" (Bushrui and Jenkins 266).

While the book was published in October 1928, he was struggling with pain and fighting against death. "As the first winter dawn of 1929 rose, shedding its ghostly light through the windows of 'the hermitage,' the man from Lebanon knew that his descent from the mountain had begun (Bushrui and Jenkins 269).

According to Bushrui, "What is most effectively conveyed in *Jesus, the Son of Man* is the sense of a great natural power . . . and it is this that gives the book its visionary force. Originally and strikingly real, its inspirational intensity perhaps exceeds even that of *The Prophet*. It was to be Gibran's last successful work" (77). Gibran too considered the book as the crowning of his life and mission. He concentrated on writing about how Jesus lived life to the full with its pain and happiness. At the same time, he denies the divinity of Jesus because he believed that attributing

divinity to Jesus would make him less endearing. Because of the skilful handling of the theme, the work excelled the intentions of the writer. Naturally, Jesus grew out of the pages of the book into a live figure, human and humane, strong and daring, magnanimous and magnetic. Reading the account John Haynes Holmes remarked, "It is as though a contemporary sat down, at a belated hour, to write another and different gospel" (qtd. in Bushrui and Jenkins 268). P.W. Wilson in his article, "Kahlil Gibran's *Jesus, the Son of Man*" agrees that the work satisfies a wide range of readers: "Painters have found in Jesus a picture. Medicine has hailed him as a leader. Liberals acclaim him to be a reformer. All of us are poets once in our lives and it would be strange indeed if, as poets, we did not find in him our poems" (Bushrui and Munro 167).

The grace that Gibran attained in *Jesus, the Son of Man* was already attained in *The Prophet*. This is because the thought content of this work developed side by side with the writing of *The Prophet*. *Jesus, the Son of Man* is a success because it deals with familiar biblical topics, and yet the imaginative additions furnished appeal to the readers tremendously.

The Earth Gods

The Earth Gods, completed in 1931 shortly before Gibran's death, was published posthumously. A dramatic poem, begun in 1915 and dressed in a literary garb, this work reminds the reader of the youthful spirit of the Romantics in general, and the style of the poet – painter William Blake in particular. Concerned with the unifying power of love, it is sombre in tone, more so, because Gibran was struggling in pain as he tried to finish it. At that period he was assisted by his sister, Marianna, with whom he stayed in Boston. She took great care of him, prepared his favourite Lebanese dishes, compelled him to take strolls, and welcomed the never-ending flow of visitors that came to him.

The Earth Gods is a debate among three gods. The First God, weary of his godhood is on the point of desiring annihilation, while the Second God delights in playing with things on the earth, and with men and their lives in particular. He would not be content with annihilation, but would choose the hard way to raise man from secret darkness, yet keeping his roots clinging to the earth. He would give man a thirst for life and endow him with love mingled with pain. The Third God simply delights in the singing and dancing of a young man and a maiden in the valley below the mountain where the three gods sit. He

calls them but they pay no heed at first. In the end, he succeeds in making the Second God believe that love is the first and last reality in the world.

The interest in the debate is sustained as each god emphasizes his own point. The First God, who is pessimistic, is tired of the unending cycle of life and death. He desires an end to it:

Weary is my spirit of all there is.
 I would not move a hand to create a world
 Nor to erase one.
 I would not live could I but die . . . (5)

The Second God, who is optimistic, believes that the life they see below them contains within it the seeds of transcendence. He relishes every second of his power over man:

Yea, in your own soul your Redeemer lies asleep,
 And in sleep sees what your waking eye does not
 see. (25)

There is the Third God who moderates the debate:

Love triumphs. . . .
 It is not a wanton decay of the flesh,
 Nor the crumbling of desire
 When desire and self are wrestling;

Nor is it flesh that takes arms against the spirit.

Love rebels not. (37)

Gibran himself describes the First God as melancholic and saturnine, weighed down by the enjoyment of aeons of power, and sick of the pomp of domination. He is set on the pursuit of nothingness. The Second God is the opposite of the first, an ambitious Titan, seeking power and influence. Filled with an overwhelming desire to dominate, he mocks the First God. The Third God, the youngest and most enthusiastic, believes in the power of love, which God values above all. The first two gods are opposed to each other and they underestimate the Third and younger God who succeeds in bringing him into the orbit of love. The First God gropes in the gloom of nothingness. The debate ends with the summing up of the Third God. The three gods who fight for supremacy, are deeply concerned with both the fate of their own godhead and with the destiny of man. Both destinies are the same because the three gods are projections of the human spirit reaching out to a quasi-divine existence. "They represent the conscious totality of man. In other words, they represent three tendencies in the nature of man, but magnified" (Bushrui and Munro 170).

Though the poem exalts love, the tone is grave, and death is dealt with as the only reality. Okasha notes that, "Gibran felt a

particular tenderness for this book, one he probably did not feel for any other of his works” and about “two weeks before he breathed his last, he received the first copy off the press, in black-bordered covers. Turning over the pages reflectively he began to read aloud with feeling, like one speaking to himself, as if his voice were echoing from another distant place” (Bushrui and Munro 174).

The beginning of *The Earth Gods* is stunning:

When the night of the twelfth aeon fell,
 And silence, the high tide of night, swallowed the
 hills,
 The three earth-born gods, the Master Titans of life,
 Appeared upon the mountains . . .
 Then they spoke, and like distant thunder
 Their voices rolled over the plains. (1)

Equally exciting is the ending of *The Earth Gods*:

We shall pass into the twilight;
 Perchance to wake to the dawn of another world.
 But love shall stay,
 And his finger-marks shall not be erased. . . .
 Better it is for us, and wiser,

To seek a shadowed nook and sleep in our earth
 divinity,
 And let love, human and frail, command the coming
 day. (40-41)

Suheil Bushrui in *Kahlil Gibran of Lebanon: A re-evaluation of the life and works of the author of The Prophet* says: “Critics have noted a mellowness in these lines that had not hitherto been present in Gibran’s writing . . . the high aspiration of his early manhood had perhaps been replaced by the resignation of a dying man - for Gibran knew he did not have long to live when he wrote *The Earth Gods*” (79).

Mikhail Naimy in *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and his Work* says that Gibran had given him the manuscript of *The Earth Gods* and asked him to read it aloud. While Naimy read he paused and commented on some passages. Recollecting Gibran’s reaction he says: “All through the reading that face of Gibran’s seemed bathed in a light like the light of the setting sun passing through a cloud. The cloud was the pain visited on him by life and described in the poem by the Second God” (226). Just a few moments before reading *The Earth Gods* Naimy had told Gibran to stop writing but after reading it, he regretted having said it, for he noticed that Gibran has become confused. “In my heart I was

certain that pain was the cause of the confusion and division, but my tongue refused to make any reference to that pain,” says Naimy (226). Both of them discussed the poem at length and then Gibran showed him twelve drawings he had prepared for the book. Naimy admits that even the drawings gave him a pleasant surprise for they had “a masculinity, a vigour, a depth and an ease never before so abundant in Gibran’s art” (227).

In *The Earth Gods*, Gibran exposes the mysterious inner conflicts that perturb the human soul. He probes into the human soul intuitively and lays bare the spiritual battles raging within. He considered this work, rich with the beauty of thought and rhythm: “That is why I have been intent on making it available to Arabic readers, in the hope that it will receive the appreciation it deserves as a work of personal contemplation” (Bushrui and Munro 175). Okasha Sarwat in “Introduction to the Earth Gods” says this book is Gibran’s swansong (Bushrui and Munro 169). But as the song is sung, the readers get the feel of an immature work in the hands of a man of grace, saying something he would not have been able to say so well, years back.

The Wanderer

“I am preparing another book, *The Wanderer*, and the drawing for it. It is a book of parables. My publishers wish to

bring it out next October. . . . I wonder if you should care to see the manuscript with your seeing eyes and lay your knowing hands upon it before it is submitted?" wrote Gibran to Mary Haskell on 16 March 1931 (BP 442). During the last three weeks of his life, he struggled in pain as he continued to finalize *The Wanderer*. He wrote to her about nothing else but this last work of his (BP 442). By 31 March 1931, he sent it to her for the final touch as usual and she replied: "Saturday, April 4. Reading "The Wanderer" since last Tuesday. It goes slowly" (442). When Gibran died, she was still editing his draft. Her last letter to him dated 6 April 1931 says: "Ever so happy with *The Wanderer* - and will return it as soon as I possibly can" (BP 442).

It was a week later she received Marianna's telegram and the shocking news. Mary dutifully completed the editing work and sent it to Barbara Young to have a look at it before giving it to Knopf: "You will be appalled I fear at the changes . . . but they are just what I was doing while Kahlil was alive. . . . Always it has been a matter of making his English so idiomatic that it should not sound like the English of a foreigner. . . . It is ready for Knopf" (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 407). Unfortunately, the book was edited without any of Mary's input. Young's explanation for the interference was that she wanted to maintain "the words

of the blessed one” (qtd. in Robin Waterfield 275). It is an accepted fact that the works of Gibran are what they are because of Mary Haskell - not for the matter but for the manner of writing.

Begun in 1929 in Boston, and posthumously published in 1931, the collection is the finale of *The Madman* and *The Forerunner*. The parables in each work differ in their attitude. Gibran was perhaps less bitter and more positive as he advanced in age. As Salem Otto says there is a “development from the early denouncing tone inherent in *The Madman* to the transitional phase of *The Forerunner*, and finally, to the understanding of himself and his relationship with others in *The Wanderer*” (49). Without Mary’s finishing touch, *The Wanderer*, lacks the crispness and the coordination but it does have the warmth characteristic of his works. Robin Waterfield considers both *The Wanderer* and *The Earth Gods* as tired works (267). He even goes to the extent of saying “If he had but known it, Gibran’s bid for immortality had already succeeded; if he had known how wildly successful *The Prophet* was to become, he might not have risked tarnishing his literary reputation with these other works” (267-68).

Salem Otto says Gibran used the style of the parable in *The Wanderer* probably because the parable was a literary form

prevalent in the East (66). He had spent about eighteen years of his early life in the East, and received academic training at Al-Madrasat in Lebanon. There he must have been familiar with the original language of the Aramaic parable and been impressed by the parabolic method employed by Jesus. The advantage with the parabolic method is that only those who are familiar with that style would be in a position to understand the underlying message of the parable.

The first and the last parables of *The Wanderer* have similar titles: "The Wanderer" and "The Other Wanderer". The narrator in "The Wanderer" says he met the wanderer at the crossroads, as a man with only a cloak and a staff, and a veil of pain upon his face" (3). The narrator invites him home and his wife and children welcome him "for there was a silence and a mystery in him" (3). The wanderer told them many stories filled with the bitterness of his past days, and when he left after three days, the narrator and his family did not feel that a guest had departed but rather that one of them was still out in the garden and had not yet come in. The stories narrated by the wanderer are so imbued with courage and love that the narratee is compelled to write them down for posterity. The parables that number more than fifty are the outcome of the wanderings of the wanderer's soul.

“The Other Wanderer,” the last parable of *The Wanderer* is the story of a wanderer whom the narrator meets on the road. The wanderer is a little mad and so he thinks differently from the rest of the crowd. He sounds attractive and strange when he says: “Oftentimes it seems that I walk the earth among pygmies. And because my head is seventy cubits farther from the earth than theirs, it creates higher and freer thoughts” (92). The wanderer too knows that he is different from the rest of the people. He walks “not among men but above them, and all they can see of me is my footprints in their open fields” (92). The footprints of the wanderer become a point for heated discussion among the people. They do not agree that the footprints belongs to the wanderer. On the other hand, he is confident that the narrator understands him and recognizes his footprints: “But you, my friend, you know full well that they are naught save the footprints of a wanderer” (92). The strangeness of the mad wanderer has a rhythm and a method that excel the sanity of the sane. During the blank periods of his mind, he flies to blank spaces and blank situations that cannot be comprehended by the common man. However seriously the people discuss the blanks or the footprints, they are the losers for the experience of the mad is a unique experience unknown to the sane.

The parable “The Two Poems” is set in antiquity. Two poets who meet on a road to Athens find out from each other, the details regarding their latest composition. One reads out a long poem saying it is the greatest poem ever written in Greek for “It is an invocation to Zeus the Supreme” (64). The other compliments him saying that the poem will live through the ages. The second poet reads his poem admitting that it comprises just eight lines on a child playing in a garden. Hearing it the first poet’s comment is “Not so bad; not so bad.” The narrator observes that after two thousand years the eight-lined poem came to be read in every language and loved and cherished, while the other long poem has been shelved in libraries and bookcases of scholars, neither loved nor read. The eight-lined poem stood the test of time because it reached the hearts of the people. Otto says that the success of the eight-lined poem is because the child in it “represents life and youth and wonder, symbols of growth and of nature” (66).

The parable “Peace and War” dealing with organic civilization has dogs as characters and ‘dogdom’ as the kingdom. These dogs while enjoying themselves talking and sunbathing touched on a topic of hopeful living. One dog dreamt of living in the world of ‘dogdom’ where travelling on earth, sea and air

would be unrestricted. His wishful thinking included modern inventions that would make a dog's life cosy and pleasing. The second dog concentrated on the arts. He noted that modern dogs bark more rhythmically than their fathers, and they have better eyesight. The third dog admired the tranquil understanding existing between the dogdoms. As the dogs were happily conversing, they spied the dogcatcher approaching. The narrator comments that at the sight of the dogcatcher the three dogs sprang up and scampered down the street, and as they ran, the third dog said, "For God's sake, run for your lives. Civilization is after us" (30-31). In a way, Gibran ridicules man and his concept of civilization, and his achievements. As Otto says, "Civilization has given man practically all the material comforts of life, but the things most desired - peace and goodwill among men - have not been achieved" (76).

"The River" shows Gibran's ardent love for Lebanon. In the valley of Qadisha, two little streams met, and one said to the other, "How came you, my friend, and how was your path?" and the other answered: "I struggled down oozing with the filth of those who do naught but sit and bake their laziness in the sun" (88). The first stream explained his joyous path that traversed among fragrant flowers, shy willows, men and women drinking its

water, little children paddling their rosy feet with water in the midst of laughter and sweet songs. He sympathized with the second path, "What a pity that your path was not so happy" (88-89). Just at that moment the mighty river spoke with a loud voice: "Come in, come in, we are going to the sea. . . . And you and I will forget all our ways when we reach the heart of our mother the sea" (89). Besides love for his homeland, this parable shows Gibran's love of Qadisha and the beauty of the natural settings in Lebanon.

In "Peace Contagious" two weary branches argue, "This is a dull empty day" (83). Just then, two restless sparrows alighted on the branches. One said to the other, "My mate has left me" and the other said, "My mate has also gone, and she will not return." Just then, two other contented sparrows alighted on the branches near the two restless sparrows. The contented sparrows appeared satisfied with themselves. The first two restless ones watched them and there was calm and peace" (83). Thus, the restless sparrows became peaceful and the four of them flew away happily in pairs. Seeing this the first branch said to the second: "That was a mighty zigzag of sound" (84). The second answered that it is peaceful and spacious. "And if the upper air makes peace it seems to me that those who dwell in the lower might

make peace also. Will you not wave in the wind a little nearer to me?" (84). The first branch waved to embrace the second branch. The parable insists on peace being contagious. This idea of Gibran goes against the accepted belief that peace comes from within a person. The idea that peace is contagious is a comforting thought though.

"The Love Song" gives a wild hint that Gibran's wanderer could not find a soul mate. A poet who wrote a beautiful love-song made several copies and sent them to friends and acquaintances. He also sent one to a young woman whom he had met just once. On receiving the poem, she sent a messenger requesting the poet to meet her father to arrange for the betrothal. The poet sent a refusal letter saying, "My friend, it was but a song of love out of a poet's heart, sung of every man to every woman" (9). The woman who could not grasp the poet's hymn to universal love cursed him saying, "Hypocrite and liar in words! From this day unto my coffin-day I shall hate all poets for your sake" (9).

In the parable, "The King," the people of the kingdom of Sadik gathered in front of the palace shouting in rebellion against the king. The king willingly surrendered to the rebellion, and decided to be one among them, saying that there is no need for a

king. He decided to go with them to the fields to work, provided they tell him which field to go to. "All of you now are kings," he told them (22). The people were surprised at the king's sense of understanding and they wondered why they had rebelled against such a considerate head. Subsequently, the king and the people went to the fields to work. Nevertheless, the conditions in the kingdom did not change. So the people decided to bring the king back to the kingdom and request him to rule with strength and justice. They approached him again. This time it was not to blame him, but to express their grievances against those who oppressed them. They pointed to a baron who was cruel and the king banished him. The people again pointed to the cruelty of a countess and the king banished her. Thus, the people pointed to several oppressors and the king banished them all. One day the people gathered again before the palace, and the king, thinking that they had a complaint against him, was ready to give up his crown and sceptre. They said: "Nay, nay, you are our rightful king. You made clean the land of vipers, and you have brought the wolves to naught, and we come to sing our thanksgiving unto you. The crown is yours in majesty and sceptre is yours in glory" (25-26). Thus they thanked him for maintaining the justice of the land.

The king in the parable makes the people understand that only self-discipline would help them grow. When the people were themselves weak, they thought the king was weak. When they worked hard and there was prosperity, they thanked the king for it. In fact, the king is right when he says "I am but a thought in the mind of you all, and I exist not, save in your actions" (26). The king's love for his people grew when disciplined by them. Otto says Gibran's message in the parable "is one of cooperative responsibility between the ruler and the people. One reflects the actions of the other" (62). If the people had not brought the king's attention to the specific cruelties of the land, he would not have been able to rectify the wrongs.

In "The Two Hunters," Joy and Sorrow indulge in a dialogue on the beauty of the earth and the wonders of life. Just then, two hunters pass by and one of them wonders who these two persons are. The second hunter corrects him saying "I see only one" (90). They argue for some time, the first hunter saying there are two persons while the second hunter insisting, "Only one do I see" (91). As the parable concludes the narrator says: "And even unto this day one hunter says that the other sees double; while the other says, "My friend is somewhat blind" (91). This parable concentrates on one important point - suffering as a

harsh reality of life. The joy of life becomes more joyous when it is preceded and succeeded by pain. The reality of pain as part of the happiness of life is a concept difficult to comprehend unless experienced at a personal level.

The Garden of the Prophet

In the spring of 1929, despite personal agonies, Gibran announced to the Syrian world that a book entitled “The Garden of the Prophet” was to be published that autumn. However, the book appeared only two years after his death. Many close associates of Gibran had heard about its composition, but when it actually came out posthumously in 1933, it was presented as Gibran’s own. People knew that it was obviously not Gibran’s. There is Barbara Young’s verdict to it in *This Man from Lebanon*: “the various pieces were practically complete” but as “no arrangement had been planned, however, and the thread of the story . . . was missing” she was obliged to take up the responsibility of filling in the blanks (119-20).

Barbara Young’s arrangement of Gibran’s work is disliked by many lovers of Gibran who feel that there are sections in it that do not belong to *The Garden of the Prophet*. It was an accepted fact that *The Prophet* was on man’s relation to man, and

The Garden of the Prophet on man's relation to nature. There are parts in *The Garden of the Prophet* that have no connection with this theme. Moreover, some pieces look like pieces originally meant for *The Prophet* but discarded as unsuccessful (Hawi 240). Naimy says that Gibran writhed with pain during that period and so he "could no longer see *The Garden of the Prophet* with the same clear eye with which he had seen it before" and therefore he had to keep it aside (218). Gibran had visualized a garden where insects and plants, light and darkness, men and animals coexisted in perfect harmony. He dreamt of peace, beauty and loving understanding. According to Naimy: "He had already drawn a few word pictures of that harmony of being during the intervals when he was in a state of truce with pain. Now that those intervals became shorter and shorter, that Garden was no longer the same" (218).

Whatever be the criticism against the authorship of *The Garden of the Prophet*, some passages are truly Gibran's own. For example, his idea of depicting man's relationship with nature, is clearly seen in the passages where he describes his love for the dewdrops, for the falling snow, for the stone in the path, for the slumbering groves and the vineyards. The crystal is for him, a

symbol of finiteness and limitation, and the mist, a symbol of the infinite and the boundless. Even at the beginning of *The Garden of the Prophet* when Almustafa experiences the joy of homecoming, his heart is full of nature: “Behold, the isle of our birth. Even here the earth heaved us, a song and a riddle; a song unto the sky, a riddle unto the earth; and what is there between earth and sky that shall carry the song and solve the riddle save our own passion?” (1). Annie Salem Otto rightly interprets these words thus: “Man, therefore is born with dual potentialities. He is at one with his spiritual essence and a riddle or a problem in his earthly life, and the only solution that harmonizes these two aspects of his character is his passion, which is the inherent flame of love” (153).

The authorship of Gibran is, once again, established in the passages depicting his love for the world and his consciousness of the world’s love for him:

“O Mist, my sister, much did I love the world, and
the world loved me,

For all my smiles were upon her lips, and all her
tears were in my eyes.

Yet there was between us a gulf of silence which
she would not a bridge

And I could not overstep. (54)

The finite and the infinite merge as *The Garden of the Prophet* comes to an end:

“O Mist, my sister, my sister Mist

I am one with you now.

No longer am I a self

The walls have fallen,

And the chains have broken;

I rise to you, a mist,

And together we shall float upon the sea until life’s
second day,

When dawn shall lay you, dewdrops in a garden. (55)

The Garden of the Prophet bears a striking resemblance to *The Prophet*. For example, the chief characters in *The Prophet* and *The Garden of the Prophet* are the same. In both the works, the Prophet is Gibran himself, Orphalese is America, and the return to the Prophet’s native isle is the Prophet’s return to Lebanon. In *The Garden of the Prophet*, one of the companions of the Prophet, during his journey back home, asks him to speak about the city of Orphalese where he had stayed for twelve years. The Prophet gives a speech in which the theme is contemptuous pity for the fate of Lebanon:

My friends and my road-fellows, pity the nation that
is full of beliefs and empty of religion

Pity the nation that wears a cloth it does not weave,
eats a bread it does not harvest, and drinks a
wine that flows not from its own wine-press.

Pity the nation that acclaims the bully as hero, and
that deems the glittering conqueror bountiful.

Pity a nation that despises a passion in its dream, yet
submits in its awakening.

Pity the nation that raises not its voice save when it
walks in a funeral, boasts not except among its
ruins, and will rebel not save when its neck is
laid between the sword and the block.

Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox, whose
philosopher is a juggler, and whose art is the art
of patching and mimicking.

Pity the nation that welcomes its new ruler with
trumpetings, and farewells him with hootings,
only to welcome another with trumpetings again.

Pity the nation whose sages are dumb with years and
whose strong men are yet in the cradle.

Pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragments
deeming itself a nation. (9)

This piece was written about two years before the First World War and Gibran used to call it, "The Nine Pities" (Young 122). People in Lebanon knew this was a real description of Lebanon's plight and they adored Gibran for his deep understanding of their predicament. "Yet in Mrs Young's arrangement . . . these 'nine pities' are pronounced over Ophalse, that is America or New York. It is obvious enough that this cannot have been Gibran's intention" (Hawi 24). Hawi's in depth study provokes him to suggest that "Mrs Young should not have taken on the responsibility of rearranging the book and providing a plot, but should have contented herself with publishing the pieces as they were" (241-42).

As Gibran had hinted, several times he had nothing to say after *The Prophet*. Perhaps *The Garden of the Prophet* did not give him the confidence for publication. Moreover, there is nothing new in *The Garden of the Prophet*. Therefore, the mood is one of darkness and preoccupation with death. He had also designed "The Death of the Prophet" to express the relationship of man to God thus completing the Prophet trilogy. But he could write only one sentence: "And he shall return to the city of Orphalse . . . and they shall stone him in the market place, even unto death; and he shall call every stone a blessed name" (Young 119).

It is possible to believe that Gibran had taken special care to compose *The Garden of the Prophet*. In December 1929, a poem entitled “Snow” which he had been saving for “The Garden of the Prophet” appeared in the magazine section of the *Herald Tribune* edited by his friend Madeline Mason Manheim. Perhaps, he knew he would not be able to complete it. After his death, when Mary Haskell requested Barbara Young to send the English manuscripts of his works, she sent a trunk in which “*The Wanderer* and the unfinished *The Garden of the Prophet*” were missing. Mary challenged her to retrieve them by legal means. But Barbara concocted a story that the manuscripts had not been in the studio but in her possession at the time of Gibran’s death. Moreover “He had so often said, ‘Take this and keep it for me. Then I shall know it is safe’ ” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 414). But when *The Garden of the Prophet* was completed in 1933, Mary was generous in her response. She wrote to Marianna in June 1934: “I have *The Garden of the Prophet* and am so glad Barbara could get it out, and I think she did a beautiful loving work in it” (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 416). Though the comment proves Mary Haskell’s broad-minded attitude, it also proves her love for Gibran and all that is Gibran’s.

All works written after *The Prophet* reflect suffering and depression. *The Prophet* had shown the growth of the self and the

attainment of grace in Gibran. However, the author stayed put after writing *The Prophet*, a point already stated at the beginning of this chapter. In other words, the works after *The Prophet* show a kind of balancing or “giving up” as Scott Peck says (68). The ecstasy of writing had waned over the years and Gibran needed to give up writing. He was, in fact, unwilling to suffer the pain of giving up. “Giving up” is the most painful of human experiences” (Peck 69). Gibran’s desire to win was too great. But being physically ill and affected by alcoholism he had to give up writing. He would have easily given up had he known that *The Prophet* would reach such heights.

From a psychobiographical angle too, it is evident that Gibran had attained maturity and grace to bring forth an impressive work like *The Prophet*. On the other hand, *Jesus, the Son of Man* and the other works completed after *The Prophet* bear the marks of an earlier period. This is because they were conceived and begun years back, only to be completed hurriedly towards the end of his writing career. At this stage, Gibran was smarting with pain and the suffering thereof. Therefore, the optimism after *The Prophet* was on the decline. However, he could sustain optimism in *Jesus, the Son of Man*.

The cybernetics of love or the evolution of love into grace had already set in at the time *The Prophet* was composed. Gibran was in a state of grace even as he completed *Jesus, the Son of Man*. The man of grace remained the man of grace ever after. The only drawback was that his failing physical health hampered with his mental longing. So, the work after *The Prophet* could not be transformed, as he wanted to. The raw materials saw light, as they were intended years back. Thus, it can be concluded that the cybernetics of love was complete with *The Prophet*.

Gibran did not go in search of grace. Grace dawned on him instead. This is the natural way of the dawn of grace, as Scott Peck says: "We do not come to grace; grace comes to us. Try as we might to obtain grace, it may yet elude us. We may seek it not, yet it will find us" (328). Even those who have no taste for spiritual life may be chosen by God if he so wills. But when grace dawns on a person, he becomes aware of it: "Those who are the closest to grace are the most aware of the mysterious character of the gift they have been given," a point discussed at the end of Chapter Three. They are not only conscious but also astounded at themselves for the gift they have received: "The common experience of those who have achieved a

state of grace . . . is one of amazement at their condition” (328). What is more significant is that they are not proud of the achievement for they know that it is a God-given gift: “They do not feel that they have earned it. While they may have a realistic awareness of the particular goodness of their nature, they do not ascribe their nature to their own will; rather they distinctly feel that the goodness of their nature has been created by hands wiser and more skilled than their own” (Peck 328-29). This is true of Gibran for though he was proud of every line of *The Prophet*, he was also conscious that he could not have written anything worthwhile after that stupendous venture had drained away his energy.

**“Love is a precious treasure; it is God’s gift
to sensitive and great souls.”**

Kahlil Gibran

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

A Psychobiographical Reading of Gibran's Cybernetics of Love

“Mikhail Naimy’s biography demonstrates to the reader how Gibran’s life and works were a very close unity. The sincerity and tenderness of his verse and prose flow directly from his character and experience, without being either distorted or sophisticated” (“Publisher’s note” Naimy iii). That Naimy should be requested to write Gibran’s biography and that he should gladly do it is quite natural and obligatory on his part because both Naimy and Gibran were Arabic writers living in New York, sharing similar viewpoints. Both of them wanted to bring about a revolution in Arabic literary standards. What Naimy chose to write was a biography but what he wrote is a psychobiography, as the publisher notes:

Here is a man with a keen and sympathetic regard for human beings, a devotion to high principles and a man whose passion, moreover, was always directed towards the privacy of the self, towards the rescue of the self from the world’s demands. This thoughtful biography sheds much light on the

personality of a man who will forever keep his place in literature. (Naimy iii)

The prophecy of Gibran's fame was a foregone conclusion among the literati then. A note taken from Mary Haskell's private letter dated 16 November 1913 says:

Your . . . real work is beyond what in this generation or perhaps for many generations even you can realize. Only the future can show its scope. . . .To you now, what you write and paint expresses mere fragments of your vision. But in time the whole vision will appear in it. For man will learn to see and hear and read. And your *work* is not only books and pictures. They are but bits of it. Your work is you, not less than you, not parts of you . . . Your silence will be read with your writings some day, your darkness will be part of the LIGHT (qtd. in Ghougassian 186).

Gibran's fame did spread far and wide with the publication of *The Prophet*, a point discussed in Chapter Three. Sentences have been culled out of Gibran's writings and quoted profusely without acknowledging the author.

A curious fact about Gibran's thoughts is that many of his words are so well contained even by great persons that they flow

out of their lips as naturally as their own. For example, in almost every American home there is a common plaque hanging on the wall with the inscription:

“Ask not what your country can do for you,
but ask what you can do for your country.”

This statement is commemorated as the words of the late President John F. Kennedy while actually it is written by Gibran in Arabic about fifty years before President Kennedy said it. The title of Gibran’s article when translated is “The New Frontier” and the words spoken when translated means: “Are you a politician asking what your country can do for you or a zealous one asking what you can do for your country? If you are the first, then you are a parasite; if the second, then you are an oasis in a desert” (qtd. in *Mirrors of the Soul* Sheban 53). There are several similar examples but many of them go unnoticed as they are originally written in Arabic and translated years later. In certain cases there are two or more translations and the translation commonly available may not be the one quoted from, and hence unnoticed.

The greatness of Gibran is more accepted privately than publicly. Hence he will surely live on. A reader of Gibran responds to his words as a reflex action, only to chew the cud

of the experience off and on. His thoughts have been labelled 'Gibranism' and this proves the immense love people have for him. Claude Bragdon defines Gibranism thus:

The character and depth of his influence upon the entire Arabic world may be inferred from the fact that it gave rise to a new word, *Gibranism*. Just what this word means English readers will have no difficulty in divining: mystical vision, metrical beauty, a simple and fresh approach to the 'problem' of life . . . extraordinary dramatic power, deep erudition, lightning like intuition, lyrical life, metrical mastery, and Beauty which permeates the entire pattern in everything he touches (qtd. in Barbara Young 37).

Of all Gibran's works, *The Prophet* turned out to be an eponymous one, the message of which is the overwhelming power of Love. Bushrui and Haffar testify the importance of love and the sum-total of his thoughts: "According to the mystic tradition which Gibran followed, the key to all things is love; once that is possessed it frees one from greed, ambition, intellectual pride, blind obedience to custom, and awe of persons of higher social rank" (Introduction xii). It is God's message that

Gibran proclaims in *The Prophet* - the need for man's love for man, man's love for God, and God's love for man.

In Chapter thirteen of "Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians," Paul, the disciple, introduces love thus:

I may be able to speak the languages of men and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell. I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains – but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burnt – but if I have no love, this does me no good. (13: 1-3)

Gibran was inspired by the Bible at a very impressionable age, because his mother's father, a Maronite priest, whom he admired, had inculcated in him the desire for Christian virtues. It is evident that Gibran's concept of love was based on Paul's definition: "Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope and patience never fail" (13: 4-7). In the words that follow

the definition, love is considered the greatest of qualities “When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am a man, I have no more use for childish ways. What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete - as complete as God’s knowledge of me. Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love” (13:11-13). Perhaps Gibran accepts St Paul’s directive: “It is love, then, that you should strive for. Set your hearts on spiritual gifts, especially the gift of proclaiming God’s message” (14: 1).

Gibran was imbued with the spirit of love: love for the Lebanese countryside, love for his mother and other family members, his first teenage love, his love of women, love of Lebanon and its people, love for the Church and Christian faith, love for America, love of Art, his love of the Greater Self, his love of suffering, his love of self-realization, and his love of Beauty, Truth, and God.

Gibran’s love for the Lebanon countryside was irresistible. The land of Lebanon was not very fertile but the dwellers of the mountain slopes were compensated by a plentiful supply of hardy cedar, planted there by the hand of God. The inhabitants

of Lebanon built boats, sailed seas and traded their only wealth to Egypt and to the valley of the Euphrates. This precious wood was used to build doors and furnishings, beams of temples and the caskets inside the sarcophagus for the Pharaohs. The Holy Valley of the mountain slopes is known as Wadi-Quadisha (the Sacred Valley), the name by which this valley has been reverently called for unknown centuries. Along the rim of the valley are clusters of stone houses, clinging to the mountainside and forming the few scattered villages of Wadi-Quadisha. This Sacred Valley differs from other parts of Lebanon because of its abundant water and its numerous groves. As George Keirallah notes in the Introduction to Gibran's *The Procession*: "Walnut and oak . . . poplar and willow trees dot the landscape; graceful and airy pines interspace it here and there, and its terraced slopes are planted with mulberry, fig, fruit trees, and extensive vineyards" (5). The traveller who ascends the Mount Lebanon is thrilled by the beauty of the snow-clad mountain and the sacred grove of cedars. A short distance below the cedars, and slightly to the right, is the Lebanon town of Bisharri, the birthplace of Gibran Khalil Gibran. These Lebanon towns are composed of compactly built homes, constructed of stones and pine logs. The ceiling is made of stone slabs over which earth and gravel are packed so

as to make a flat, waterproof roof. In autumn they preserve wheat, lentils in separate bins and oil and grape molasses in earthenware jars. The houses of the well to do in Lebanon are spacious and artistic but Gibran's home was a modest one. As George Keirallah notes: "Their greatest gifts, however, were not cedar, weaves, purple dyes, glass or metal castings but rather the moral and spiritual revelations which their poets, seers, and prophets gave to the world" (2). That is perhaps the reason why Gibran longed to come back to his roots in Lebanon, for a new life in the heart of nature – among the golden fields of wheat, the green meadows, the flocks of sheep being led to the pasture, the roaring falls, and the rising mist reflecting in the rays of the sun. In Gibran's last letters there is evidence of his desire to go to the Middle East, to Lebanon, to Bisharri, to Mar Sarkis, to that hermitage carved in the rock and overlooking the most breathtaking sight of the whole valley.

Gibran's love for his mother and the rest of the family members deserve special mention. His mother Kamileh was first married to a cousin of hers, Hanna Abd-al-Salaam Rhame, with whom she migrated to Brazil where he died. She returned with her infant son Peter, to her father, Stephen Rahmy, a Maronite priest, as mentioned earlier. Later she fell in love with Khalil

Jibran and they were married and she bore him three children: Kahlil, Marianna and Sultana. The family was a close-knit one. The mother taught them music, Arabic and French. As they grew up, a tutor was hired to teach them English. Later the children were sent to city schools. The mother often took them to the church where their capable grandfather served Holy Mass and preached impressive sermons. In the Maronite church in certain ceremonies, the whole congregation participated, chanting in Syriac, the language Christ spoke. The church services were a memorable experience for Gibran. Kamileh's religious inclination, her melodious voice in the church, and the religious atmosphere of the family were behind the creation of *Jesus, the Son of Man*.

Gibran loved his half-brother Peter who at the age of eighteen wanted to go to America to improve the prospects of the family and to lighten the load of his jolly step-father. In the early nineties, news had gone round the Lebanon hills that in America the sea immigrants were hospitably received irrespective of their faith or nationality, and that they were paid wages in encouraging dollars. Some poor youngsters who had rushed to the Promised Land made an unbelievable fortune and sent money to their parents back home. The mother consented to Peter's wish and thus she and the four children left while the husband stayed

back to take care of their small property. On 25 June 1895 the Gibrans settled in Boston's South End, which hosted the second largest Syrian community in the US, the first being New York. Kamileh supported the family by working as a peddler on the impoverished streets of South End Boston. The poverty and pain of these years left an indelible mark on young Gibran. Fortunately, he received scholastic education from the charity institutions that took care of immigrant children.

Gibran loved his sisters and regretted that they could not enter school because of the Middle East tradition, and even more, because of the financial strain in the family. This was perhaps the reason why he championed the cause of women's emancipation and education later on. He was fortunately admitted to school on 30 September 1895, two months after his arrival in the US. He was placed in an ungraded class reserved for immigrant children as he had to learn English from scratch. However, his sketches and drawings attracted his teachers. In the meantime, Kamileh's hard work improved the financial situation in the family. Peter set up a goods store and the two sisters worked in it. Gibran who was pensive and reserved by nature began to mingle with Boston's social life and was introduced to its cultural side - the theatre, the opera and other artistic galleries. When

Gibran was fourteen (1897), Kamileh decided to send him back to Lebanon to complete his education in Arabic. Then realizing his talent and ambition, she consented to allow him to enter the College of Al Kikmat at Beirut in 1898.

Gibrab began to love the life in Beirut. He remained there for five years, spending the summers near the cedars and travelling with his father through the Middle East. At the end of five years, Gibran visited Greece, Italy and Spain on his way to Paris to study art. Gibran was called back, because of Peter's consumption, Sultana's intestinal disease and his mother's developing cancer, and he left Lebanon in March 1902 but arrived too late for Sultana died on 4 April 1902. His mother remained bedridden nearly fifteen months before she died. Gibran witnessed his mother groan in pain as she underwent an operation in Feb 1903 to remove a cancerous tumour. During this time, Peter went to Cuba for better prospects, and Gibran had to take on his family business and run the grocery store abandoned by his brother. In March 1903 Peter returned from Cuba, fatally ill and died a few days later of consumption. This was the greatest shock in Gibran's life. On 28 June 1903 his mother died, and seeing that Gibran fainted, blood foaming from his mouth.

Marianna miraculously survived the tuberculosis. She remained a faithful kin to the very end. She bought the monastery, Mar Sarkis, to fulfil Gibran's desire to rest there, forever - his refuge only in death. Gibran's love and admiration for his artistically inclined mother is eloquently expressed in *The Broken Wings*:

The most beautiful word on the lips of mankind is the word "Mother," and the most beautiful call is the call of "My mother." It is a word full of hope and love, a sweet and kind word coming from the depths of the heart. The mother is everything – she is our consolation in sorrow, our hope in misery, and our strength in weakness. She is the source of love, mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness. He who loses his mother loses a pure soul who blesses and guards him constantly. (82)

Gibran loved his father very much and was glad to be able to spend some time with him during his days back in Labanon for his studies. They even travelled together during vacations. Unfortunately, the relationship became strained because of his advancement in studies. Subsequently he had to move out and live an impoverished and shameful life with his cousin. Later when he received the news of his father's death in 1909, he

consoled himself with the thought that his father may have changed his attitude towards him and blessed him before dying.

Gibran's first love was a formative influence in his life. As already discussed in Chapter Two, when he was eighteen he fell desperately in love with a teenager whose father married her off to someone else. Though there are several conjectures about the identity of the girl, many of Gibran's neighbours and biographers agree that she is Hala Dahir of Bisharri and that he first met her on the premises of Mar Sarkis. Later he wanted to buy the monastery because of its sentimental value for him. What is most significant in this incident is that it opened Gibran's eyes to the concept of grief as a component of love:

Grief and agony laid its stamp on this hypersensitive boy throughout his life. It opened chasms of problems and questions before him; it extended his vista into the Empyrean, heightened his sense of colour and attuned his subconsciousness to the most delicate light and shade, and welled his springs of sympathy and tenderness. Isaiah's eloquence mingled with Jeremiah's sorrow within him. (Keirallah 16-17)

Women remained a powerful influence in his life. In 1928, in a letter to May Ziadah, he wrote: "I am indebted for all that I

call "I" to women, ever since I was an infant. Women opened the windows of my eyes and the doors of my spirit. Had it not been for the woman-mother, the woman-sister, and the woman-friend, I would have been sleeping among those who seek the tranquillity of the world with their snoring" (*A Self Portrait* 82). Gibran is supposed to have had relationships with several women. To begin with, there is the story about Micheline whom he met in Boston, and who followed him to Paris. But when she requested him to marry her, and he refused, she left his apartment. The major influence was that of Mary Haskell who visited his exhibition in 1904. She was closely attached to his paintings and to him. She encouraged him to go to Paris to study art, and later became his sponsor, his editor, his confidant and much more, as discussed in the previous chapters.

Barbara Young became acquainted with Gibran only during the last seven years of his life. She first heard of him as she listened to a reading from *The Prophet* in 1923. She wrote to him and was invited to his studio at Old West Tenth Street. Climbing four flights of stairs she found him smiling, welcoming her a tall, beautifully-built and light-complexioned English teacher and bookstore operator from Devon, England. Her description of Gibran is spectacular: slender, five feet four inches tall, having large,

sleepy, brown eyes fringed by long lashes, chestnut hair, a generous moustache framing full lips and a strong body possessing a powerful grip. She was the first to write a biography, *This Man From Lebanon* which is a kind of eulogy in fact: "If he (Gibran) had never written a poem or painted a picture, his signature upon the page of eternal record would still be inerasable. The power of his individual consciousness has penetrated the consciousness of the age, and the indwelling of his spirit is timeless and deathless. This is Gibran" (79). She lectured about Gibran the rest of her life. She was so close to him that she was at the hospital when he passed away. It is believed that she took away the precious painting and effects left in the studio where Gibran had lived for eighteen years, a point discussed in the previous chapters. Though Barbara Young was one of the significant persons in Gibran's life, she was conscious of the fact that people would consider her a woman who appeared from nowhere and claimed a great man for herself when he died.

May Ziadah, a Lebanese girl, whose family moved to Egypt, conveyed her love to Gibran through letters. They never met each other. Educated in the Middle East and in Europe, she wrote articles in her father's magazine and other Arabic and

French publications. At this time, Gibran's articles too appeared in papers and magazines, and these were topics of conversation in her father's literary circle. May took the initiative to write to Gibran informing him of the great effect his writings had on the Egyptian community. He responded by sending her a copy of *The Broken Wings*, a point discussed in Chapter Two. At that time, the intelligentsia of Egypt were planning to honour a Lebanese poet and Gibran was chosen to speak on the occasion. He did not have the money to go, so he sent an article under the title "The Poet of Baalbek." May was requested to read Gibran's article because of her contact with him through correspondence. This was her first attempt at public performance; yet her reading earned an ovation. Her letters to Gibran were not simply of love; she criticized his thoughts and urged him to write for the people of Lebanon, reminding them that as powerful men they should not humble themselves before the Turkish Governor. Gibran asked May to come to the US but she refused because being a woman, custom did not permit her to do so. She invited him to Egypt but he could not though it was a lingering desire until his end. Her love found expression in words like "I do not know what I am doing but I know that I love you. I fear love. I expect too much of love, and I fear that I never will receive all

my expectations” (Introduction, Bushrui and Haffar xvii). They never met but he could bid her a touching farewell in the words “You know, May, every time I think of departing, that is, in death, I enjoy my thoughts and am contented to leave” (xviii). When Gibran actually departed the nineteen-year old passionate love affair on paper came to an unfulfilled end.

Gibran loved Lebanon and its people. He was grieved over the fact that his country was subject to the ruthless Ottoman Empire, which exploited the Middle East for more than four hundred years. The economy of the land was miserable because the Turkish authorities collected food from the starving people to feed their armies. With the onset of World War I, Gibran became more active politically. To liberate Syria from the Ottoman rule, he tried to organize a united Arab military front, and then seek the help of the Allies. He requested Muslims and Christians to unite their forces against the oppressive Ottoman regime. He also wanted to go to Lebanon and take up the post of a fighter. But, Mary Haskell, who could see the romantic-idealist through and through, opposed the idea strongly. Moreover, she knew about his fall at the age of ten from off a cliff that had wounded his left shoulder seriously. In order to relocate his broken shoulder, Gibran was strapped to a cross and wrapped up for forty days.

This incident symbolic of Christ in the wilderness was etched in Gibran's memory for years. The left shoulder became weak for the rest of his life, but what was more painful was the haunting memory of his physical inability. At the age of thirty-two the pain in his left shoulder was so acute and in a semi-paralysed state that he underwent electrical treatment. The physical pain became mental agony too. The War years specially were years of depression for Gibran because all his efforts for the Arab uprising against the Ottomans failed. But he found relief by sending money to the starving Syrians. He tried to distract his depressive thoughts by joining the literary magazine, *The Seven Arts*, in 1916. Gradually Gibran became a name in literary circles, and people longed to hear recitations from his books and writings.

Gibran's passion for Syria is evident in several letters to and from Mary: "Poor Syria. Her children are nothing but poets. And though we sang as angels in her ear, she would not hear. Poor Syria!" (3 May 1911 BP 38). Sensing his infatuation for Syria one of his friends suggested, "Gibran, go to Syria – go to your Old Mother – she loves you much – go to Syria, Gibran" (12 May 1911 BP 14). Gibran's passion for Syria went unnoticed especially because of his revolutionary spirit. "The Golden Circles" did not function as he had expected. The Syrian

community perhaps feared Gibran's demand for self-reliance. And he was convinced that his compatriots were more interested in making a living than in working for an idealistic patriotism.

Later the centre of agitation for Syrian nationalism shifted to Paris. The result was The Syrian Arab Congress of 1913 attended by Syrians from all over. As an outspoken speaker, Gibran was asked to represent the Syrian community in North America. He flatly refused the offer because he said, "after talking things over with a committee of Syrians I found that we do not agree on any point . . . I was to speak their minds – not mine!" (10 June 1913 BP 127). The Syrian Arab Congress of 1913 at Paris was widely applauded, and there was talk of a second one in New York. But Gibran's mind was set on revolution because he believed that Arab military strength is enough for a revolution. Gibran was so serious about the revolution that when Guiseppe Garibaldi visited New York, he provoked him to take interest. The idea never worked because the Syrian community opposed it.

The outbreak of the First World War and the consequent famine in Syria caused 120,000 starvation deaths in Mount Lebanon alone. The American Syrians set up a Relief Committee. Gibran rushed to the rescue along with Amin Rihani and Mikhail

Naimy, and served as secretary of The Syrian Mount Lebanon Relief Committee. The committee was highly responsible at first but as the War dragged on, personal disputes distilled in. In the spring of 1917, there was a call for the creation of The Syrian Mount Lebanon Liberation Committee for the purpose of bringing the Syrian national cause to the forefront of the international political scene. It was Amin Rihani's idea but it won the consent of several leading figures, including Gibran. But, like The Syrian Mount Lebanon Committee this committee also did not achieve anything worthwhile. Though Gibran was disappointed, he suffered it out. When the War ended, success came to him as to all Syrians. With Turkey's defeat, Syria was rid of the alien yoke of four centuries.

Gibran's excitement took shape in the form of a delightful sketch called "Free Syria" which appeared on the front page of a special victory edition. But his jubilation soon turned into disappointment. As the post-war diplomacy took its natural course, it became clear to everyone, that Turkey's defeat was more a sweet victory to the Allies than to the Syrian nationhood. Nevertheless, Gibran became more idealistic and began to address a new public. He became busy in his literary life and yet he

continued to work for the cause of Syria. As time passed, his capacity for action dwindled but his enthusiasm was strong.

Gibran's love of the Church and Christian faith went through controversial stages. Religious authorities in Lebanon were subservient to the Turkish authorities, and in a way, silently approved the oppression meted out to the people. In fact, the Church could not go against the Muslim Ottoman Empire. At that same time, the authorities needed the support of the rich and the influential church in order to remain in power. With the publication of *Spirits Rebellious* in 1903 written during his first visit to Paris, he invited the anger of authorities. Gibran had already revealed himself as a champion of freedom through three short stories. He clamoured for freedom against enslavement by tyrants, against subjection to convention, and against oppression by the materialistic demands of the church. He insisted on the point that Jesus came for the common people and not to establish a worldly institution. Though the arguments were just, both the Turkish Government and the Maronite Church pronounced an anathema on him. They also wanted to excommunicate and exile him. Copies of the book were burnt in public in Beirut. Gibran's state of frustration is understandable. He considered himself a prophet with a special mission to liberate his people from various evils,

that had befallen them as a result of their sluggishness, customs and traditions. If the Ottoman Empire had been less oppressive, Gibran would have led demonstrations to awaken the consciousness of his people. The neglect and the cruelty did not compel him to withdraw the book. His writing always targeted the overpowering rich and corrupt clergy. Throughout his life, he championed the freedom of a simple life and a sincere, personal religion. Though the decree of exile was annulled in 1908, Gibran did not return to Lebanon. Nevertheless, Lebanon continued to be a theme until the end of his life. Gibran left Lebanon after his studies. But he did not know then that he had left his homeland for good. After his demise, his body was returned to the land of his birth.

Gibran loved America where he spent the adult period of his life. Besides, his short travels and the long stay of two years at Paris, he lived in Boston and then moved to New York in 1911. He loved New York though he did not approve of the consumerist and other values there. All the same, he developed an attachment for the place because he had friends there and a career full of promises. He was also the centre of a circle of literary friends who were expatriate Lebanese writers. They called themselves "Arrabitah" which in Arabic means "The Pen-Bond."

This group became famous throughout the Arab nations. They also found America a better place for their literary activities.

Gibran's artistic drawings were irrepressible, his teachers knew. In 1896 they contacted Fred Holland Day, an artist and a supporter of artists, who set Gibran on the path to artistic fame. Day introduced him to Greek mythology, World literature, contemporary writings and photography. Day's liberal thoughts and unconventional mode of portrayal influenced Gibran. Having suffered as a poor immigrant, Gibran became an introvert until Day boosted his self-esteem. During one of Day's art exhibition, Gibran drew the sketch of an unknown poet and writer, Miss Josephine Peabody, which led to a long-term friendship with her. Some of his images were printed as cover designs for books in 1898. This brought him early fame but his family decided to send him back to Lebanon to finish his education and learn Arabic. His strong-willed nature refused to abide by the parochial curriculum. He demanded a separate college-level syllabus catering to his educational needs. The school, probably because of his intellectual and artistic calibre, tolerated his arrogance, bordering on heresy. He immersed himself in the study of the Bible in the Arabic language. In spite of his rebellious nature, his unconventional long hair and mocking eye, his loving but

controlled heart, his self-confidence and his individualistic behaviour impressed his teachers. He ignored the school's discipline, skipped classes and religious duties, and drew sketches on books.

At school, he met Joseph Hawaïik, with whom he started a magazine called Al-Manarah (the Beacon). Both of them edited it together while Gibran did illustration also. Through drawing and painting, he made small sums of money. He posed for artists and was paid in paints. Though he sold out a few drawings, he steadily struggled with pencil and brush to collect a body of work for an exhibition. Thus with the help of Day and Josephine, he launched his debut art exhibition on 3 May 1904. His symbolic charcoal drawing fascinated Boston's society. Some of the visitors criticized, laughed, praised or were indifferent. But no one even asked the price of his work exhibited in the universal language.

A significant outcome of this exhibition was that Josephine with the help of her future husband invited a schoolmistress, Mary Haskell to examine Gibran's drawings. Mary was attracted by the imaginative and religious quality of his works. Sensing her interest, he explained his allegories, and their acquaintance ripened into a deep friendship. Her self-contained soul proved to be a spiritual and moral refuge and anchor for Gibran. Sponsored by

Mary Haskell he left Boston for Paris on 1 July 1908 to study at the arts school. The French cultural scene made Gibran conscious of his lack of artistic training. However he abandoned the academy to pursue art on his own. Together with Joseph Hawaïik, his classmate in Lebanon, he visited exhibitions and sketched models. Backed by Mary's secret source of income, and her artistic contacts, Gibran grew in fame.

Gibran the artist, Gibran the poet, and Gibran the philosopher are not entirely different persons. He succeeds in conveying his poetic message and the philosophic content in his artistic drawings. His prose is biblical in style and so he assumes the same parabolic approach in his paintings. Like parables, they narrate a story and hide a moral lesson. Even a casual observer of his paintings notices that his art portrayed only human forms, and they were naked. Mary Haskell once asked Gibran why he painted bodies naked. He gave his explanation: "Because life is naked. A nude body is the truest and 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 see in the mountain a heap of living things, and in the waterfall a precipitate current of life" (Naimy 59). All artists believe that art is creative. So does Gibran: "If you think more deeply on the subject, you

will find that arts reflect and influence customs, styles, religious and social traditions – every aspect of our life” (*Spiritual Sayings* 78). The same thought is conveyed in the line “Art is a step from nature toward the Infinite” (*Sand and Foam* 83) and “Art is a step in the known toward the unknown” (*Spiritual Sayings* 20).

In 1919, when Gibran published *Twenty Drawings* Alice Raphael wrote an introduction to it in which she remarked that Gibran’s art is an attempt to unify the East and the West: “The quality of the East and the West are blended in him with a singular felicity of expression, so that while he is the symbolist in the true sense of the word, he is not affixed to traditional expression, as he would be if he were creating in the manner of the East” (9). In his art, there is no conflict between emotion and thought; neither dominates and there is a natural blend of the two. “They co-exist in harmony and the result is an expression of sheer beauty in which thought and feeling are equally blended,” says Alice Raphael (9). Ghougassian is right when he says of Gibran’s art “In his art work and writing he is a mystic with a special evangelic message” (248).

Gibran believed that suffering can awaken man from the slumber of routine. In *A Tear and a Smile* Gibran says, “Who has not seen sorrow cannot see joy” (33). At a very young age when

he lost his mother, sister and half-brother in quick succession he knew that pain and suffering are conditions in life that coexist with joy. He says in *The Broken Wings*: “Hearts that are united through the medium of sorrow will not be separated by the glory of happiness. Love that is cleansed by tears will remain eternally pure and beautiful” (32). Love involves self-sacrifice. Selma and her lover decide to undergo that sacrifice for love. When Gibran depicts love as a sentiment that gives pain, he also adds that that pain is equal to pleasure, a kind of pleasure that can be understood only by one who has a sense of responsibility: “The pain that accompanies love . . . and responsibility also gives delight” (*Spiritual Sayings* 36). The concept of pain is indicated in the counsel “Of Love.” Gibran considers love an atom prepared by a chemist. In *Spiritual Sayings* he says, “The chemist who can extract from his heart’s elements compassion, respect, longing, patience, regret, surprise, and forgiveness and compound them into one can create that atom which is called LOVE” (36-37).

“The basis and the essence of the wisdom of *The Prophet*, as revealed in his sermons, is the belief in the Greater Self” says Hawi (224). It is the ‘Greater Self’ that speaks to him and through him. It is the same self that “becomes active while his own self is passive and inactive” (224). Like a hunter, he hunts

the Greater Self of man: "I hunted only your larger selves that walk the sky" (*The Prophet* 87). The lesser selves are diverse but they will realize that they are one when they desire to attain perfection and "walk together towards your God-self" (37). The same thought is expressed in the words: "It was the boundless in you; / The vast man in whom you are all but cells and sinews" (102). The 'vast man' according to Hawi includes within him, the ordinary man and God himself. It means "the organic unity of all men" and Almustafa uses the terms like God, life, ocean, flaming spirit to mean the same. The ordinary man cannot be evil because he is the root of God. Gibran believed that Evil cannot exist in the root because the tree cannot bear a sound fruit when its roots are evil. If man becomes God in the end, he cannot be evil. Love is the most significant point for the Prophet. Hawi opines that the Prophet considers Love "the chief virtue for without it the individual cannot expand his self into a greater self which includes all humanity" (225).

Gibran believed that in every way, man is dependent on other men. This is not a new thought because the idea that man is a social animal has held sway from Aristotle's times. Gibran repeats the idea that man is a communal creature. He advises man to nurture good interpersonal relations instead of negative attitudes for the sake of one's own and others mental health. *The*

Garden of the Prophet points to the principle of brotherhood and love for self-realization.

We live upon one another according to the law,
ancient and timeless. Let us live thus in loving-kindness. We seek one another in our aloneness, and we walk the road when we have no hearth to sit beside.

My friends and my brother, the wider road is your fellow-man. (24)

True love develops one's personality. Only when an individual shares his life with another 'self' there can be a discovery of the self. In other words self-knowledge or self-realization is possible only when the self opens out to another self. Barbara Young narrates a conversation between herself and Gibran in his studio. He told her that it is not possible to understand one another until we reduce the language to seven words. Then he asked her to guess those seven magic words, that is, the words she would keep, supposing she were compelled to forget all other words. She tried to answer but could not complete. Then he said that the most important words for him are "You" and "I" and completed the list: "These are my seven words: You, I, take,

God, love, beauty, Earth ” (91). Then he combined the seven words and composed a poem:

Love, take me.

Take me, Beauty.

Take me, Earth.

I take you,

Love, Earth, Beauty.

I take

God. (92)

The realization how love works in marriage, parenthood and friendship is explicated by Gibran in many of his works. In a successful marriage, Gibran does not expect the couple to copy each other. Instead, there should be mutual respect, he says in *The Prophet*: “Love one another, but make not a bond of love” (15). Parenting often produces the generation gap because parents expect children to conform to their ways of thinking and doing. Parents do not realize that possessiveness and extreme protection can cause more harm than good to children. Regarding friendship, Gibran says

Your friend is your needs answered. . . .

For you come to him with your hunger, and you
seek him for peace. . . .

And let there be no purpose in friendship save the
deepening of the spirit. (69-70)

Gibran's metaphysics of love concentrates on the value of the being.

Gibran's love of Beauty, Truth and God is derived from the great masters of the past. In *Kahlil Gibran: Wings of Thought*, Ghougassian divides Gibran's approach to Beauty into three major aspects: psychological, metaphysical and theological.

Psychologically, "Beauty is a matter of sensation, feeling and experience. Beauty speaks to the heart and the spirit without using the language of proof or analysis" (254). As proof, Ghougassian quotes *The Broken Wings* in which the narrator explains "Only our spirits can understand beauty, or live and grow with it. It puzzles our minds; we are unable to describe it in words; it is a sensation that our eyes cannot see . . ." (24).

Eulogizing beauty, he repeats "beauty has its own heavenly language, loftier than the voice of tongues and lips. It is a timeless language, common to all humanity . . ." (23). According to Ghougassian, Beauty could originate from joy or sorrow (255).

Gibran found Beauty in a tear and a smile: "Beauty is that harmony between joy and sorrow which begins in our holy of

holies and ends beyond the scope of our imagination” (*Tears and Laughters* 69). Gibran is not wholly optimistic or wholly pessimistic. He is aware that life is an amalgamation of happiness and suffering. If beauty is psychological it is also “therapeutic” says Ghougassian: “It stimulates or soothes us; it changes the rate of the heart beat, renews our spirits, exciting us and giving us courage to overcome the existential vacuum that dashes upon us at the time of despair” (257). The idea is conveyed in *The Broken Wings*. When the narrator heard the painful news of Selma’s misfortunes, “he turned his head toward the window as if he were trying to solve the problems of human existence by concentrating on the beauty of the universe” (16). The psychotherapeutic effect of Beauty on an anguished soul is also given in “Song of Beauty”: “Youth beholds me, his toil is forgotten, and his life becomes a stage for sweet dreams” (*A Tear and a Smile* 161). Gibran believed that Beauty, like Art, can soothe an anxious mind. One is reminded of John Keats’s “Endymion” which begins, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever” (Briggs 271).

The metaphysical concept of Beauty is portrayed in *Sand and Foam* clearly: “Great beauty captures me, but a beauty still greater frees me even from itself. Beauty shines brighter in the heart of him who longs for it than in the eyes of him who sees it” (67).

In the essay “Nature and Man” Gibran asks “Is Truth Beauty? Is Beauty Truth?” (*The Voice of the Master* 85). Keats’s poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn” needs to be quoted here:

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’ – that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know. (Briggs
294)

Commenting on Keats’s beauty-truth couplet, Mathew Arnold says, “For to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth, and Keats knew it . . . with beauty goes not only truth, joy goes with her also” (116). The concept of the relationship between Truth, Beauty and Joy is the concept of God or ‘Sachidananda’. The beauty-truth relationship is imbibed by Gibran as much as by Keats. In “Song of Beauty,” Gibran ascertains that Beauty is Truth (*A Tear and a Smile* 161). In another essay, “Before the Throne of Beauty,” Gibran proclaims that Beauty leads to truth. It is “a stepping-stone for the wise to the throne of living truth” (*A Tear and a Smile* 52). For Gibran, Beauty is harmony, order and truthfulness.

Gibran’s theological approach to Beauty is portrayed in the essay “Creation” in *Tears and Laughter*. “God separated a spirit from Himself and fashioned it into Beauty” (61). The Beauty found in nature is proof of the existence of God, he says: “Are

you troubled by the many faiths that mankind professes? Are you lost in the valley of conflicting beliefs? Do you think that freedom of heresy is less burdensome than the yoke of submission?" (*The Voice of the Master* 27). He continues, "If such be the case, then make beauty your religion, and worship her as your godhead; for she is the visible, and manifest and perfect handiwork of God . . . believe instead in the divinity of Beauty that is at once the beginning of your worship of Life, and the source of your hunger for Happiness" (28). In other words, to worship God is to worship Beauty. Ghougassian remarks: "The intention of Gibran being an attempt to unravel the presence of God, we understand now why in all his art work and literature he pursues Beauty" (261). It is because, "Beauty is the acid test of God's existence" (261).

The existence of absolute Truth, Goodness and Beauty comes from Plato. There is the reality of eternal standards, according to Plato:

There are many (more or less) good things; there is one absolute Good. There are many (more or less) beautiful things, there is one absolute Beauty. There are many (more or less) just persons; there is one absolute Justice (idea or ideal of justice). The

attainment of absolute Truth, Goodness, and Beauty is impossible for humans, but the belief that they exist and a glimpse of them from time to time is a rare moment of insight. (capitals added for emphasis)

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It is an accepted fact that what motivates a person to think, to enquire, to deliberate, and to strive is the consciousness of an Absolute standard. Gibran's concept of Beauty, Truth and God owes a great deal to the knowledge handed down from the past.

The psychobiography of Gibran's life is symbolically portrayed, in a nutshell, in "The Ambitious Violet." A placid violet that loved her life and swayed happily amidst other violets, noticed one morning, a tall rose standing proudly and reaching high into space. The violet became aware of her unfortunate small stature and humble position in comparison with the rose. Hearing the complaint of the violet, the rose made her conscious of her fragrance and beauty but the miserable violet could not bear the preaching of the fortunate rose. She was keen on being a rose for a day. Mother Nature understood that greed had entered the heart of the violet and numbed her senses. "Change me to a tall rose, for I wish to lift my head high with pride" the violet requested (381). Nature yielded to the request, with the

warning, "Oh ignorant and rebellious violet, I will grant your request. But if calamity befalls you, your complaint must be to yourself" (381-82). Thus Nature's magic touch converted the violet into a tall rose, rising above all other flowers in the garden.

The same evening, a tempest laid waste all the flowers, except the clan of small violets hiding by the wall of the garden and close to the earth. One of the violets remarked, "Because we are poor in height the tempest is unable to subdue us" (382). Seeing the converted violet distorted upon the wet grass like a limp soldier in the battlefield, the queen of violets exhorted her clan to meditate on what greed had done to the violet who became a proud rose for just one hour. But the dying rose made her feeling understood. She says she was once satisfied and contented with her life. But contentment acted as a barrier between her existence and the tempest of life. Contentment also confined her to a sick and sluggish peace and tranquillity of mind: "I could have lived the same life you are living now by clinging with fear to the earth . . . I could have waited for winter to shroud me with snow and deliver me to Death, who will surely claim all violet. . . . I am happy now because I have probed outside my little world into the mystery of the Universe .

. . something which you have not yet done” (383). The rose’s dying words became very effective when she spoke about the heavenly world thus: “Ambition beyond existence is the essential purpose of our being” (383). It was this knowledge that encouraged the violet to revolt and long for a position higher than her limited existence.

Saying this, the rose became silent for a moment. In a weakening voice, mingled with pride and achievement, she said: “I have lived one hour as a proud rose; I have existed for a time like a queen; I have looked at the Universe from behind the eyes of the rose; I have heard the whisper of the firmament through the ears of the rose and touched the folds of Light’s garment with rose petals. Is there any here who can claim such honour?” (384). Saying so the rose lowered her head, and with a choking voice gasped, “I shall die now, for my soul has attained its goal. I have finally extended my knowledge to a world beyond the narrow cavern of my birth. This is the design of Life. . . . This is the secret of Existence” (384). As the rose folded her petals forever, there was a smile of fulfilment and hope and purpose in life. Thus, the violet that loved life and was contented with it wanted to be a rose and live the life of a rose for one day. She conquered the secrets of the rose for only one hour. Having

thus fulfilled her ambition, which was beyond her existence, she surrendered to the grief of growth and attained grace.

If “The Ambitious Violet” is an autobiography of Gibran, then *The Prophet* is much more an autobiography. In “Gibran’s Painting and Poetry,” Kheirallah, says that *The Prophet* is an unconscious autobiography of Gibran: “The poem represents the unconscious autobiography of Gibran: Gibran the sage, mellowed beyond his years and Gibran the rebel, who had come to believe in the Unity and Universality of all existence and who longed for simple, impersonal freedom, merged in harmony with all things” (qtd. in Sheban 36). It is out of this harmony that Gibran formulated his cybernetics of love, the topic of the present study.

Cosmopolitan by background and education, he became an interpreter of America, Europe and the Middle East. Thus through him the East and the West merged in thought and style. To his Arabic readers he introduced the simplicity of English expression and the freedom of thought and frankness. His concept and style were considered revolutionary by the Arab world. To his English readers he introduced family traditions, and the poetry and philosophy of the Middle East. It is true that he criticized law, religion and the customs prevailing in the social

structure of the Middle East. This is because he loved his fellowmen, and loved to teach them how to carry the torch of love throughout their lives. He believed in a doctrine of kindness, brotherhood and justice, and waged a long and bitter struggle in favour of love. He was thus largely responsible for many of the social, political and religious reforms finally undertaken by the rulers of the East. Conscious of man neglecting the cybernetics of self for the cybernetics of a scientific reality, he advocated the cybernetics of love for a peaceful society. In a loveless world, it is encouraging to listen to the voice of the poet-prophet of love. As a cyber-man of love, he will live on and grow through the centuries.

This dissertation is an attempt at studying the psychobiography of Gibran in relation to *The Prophet* and the cybernetics of love as revealed in *The Prophet* and the works before and after *The Prophet*. In the chapter "Before *The Prophet*," the cybernetics of love is viewed from the point of view of love disciplined. The love disciplined in the works before *The Prophet*, moulds the author for the prophet's role he hopes to take in his major work. In his desire to set right wrongs, Gibran sought discipline, which according to Scott Peck, is a requisite to solve life's problems. Discipline for Gibran, as for Peck, is a technique

for dealing with grief. Only love can accept discipline, the kind of love that Selma Karamy (*The Broken Wings*) was capable of and that which she instils in her lover. Gibran's characters suffer just as he suffered but he could transform his suffering into grace. For example, the experiences of his teenage love for Hala Dahir, and his admiration for his ideal Josephine Peabody, he could transform into a dream novella. This is proof of how he could attain grace through grief. From a psychobiographical angle too it is clear that Gibran was growing through discipline and the pain of discipline. Love grows when it is disciplined. Peck maintains that, "the energy for the work of self-discipline derives from love, which is a form of will" (167). In other words "self-discipline is usually love, translated into action" and "any genuinely loving relationship is a disciplined relationship" (167). Discipline is the only path of finding joy. There could be other paths that provide ecstatic joy but such joy is fleeting and elusive (171). Discipline is part of Gibran's cybernetics of love in the works before *The Prophet*.

The Chapter "The Prophet" shows that that awe-inspiration little book was proof of Gibran's transformation. The evolution of love from grief, from growth to grace makes Gibran extend himself for spiritual growth. If "Love is the will to extend

oneself for spiritual growth,” Scott Peck says, that that love is grace, a point mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (320). “Genuinely loving people are, by definition, growing people” and “people’s capacity to love, and hence their will to grow, is nurtured not only by the love of their parents during childhood but also throughout their lives by grace, or God’s love” (320-21). Some people resist the call of grace, because it is a kind of promotion by which one is called to exercise a higher responsibility. Those who become aware of grace and accept it, experience an inner tranquillity and peace. Therefore, “The call to grace is a call to a life of effortful caring, to a life of service and whatever sacrifice seems required. It is a call out of spiritual childhood into adulthood, a call to be a parent unto manhood” (322-23). Most people desire the privilege of adulthood and the self-confidence thereof. But they do not desire to accept its duties and obligations and responsibilities. There is no doubt that it is difficult to grow up with grace. “Those who are the closest to grace are the most aware of the mysterious character of the gift they have been given” (329). Consequently, they prepare themselves to be fertile ground to welcome grace. The journey of spiritual growth requires preparation - courage, initiative and independence of thought and action.

All these Gibran had for sure. *The Prophet*, the internationally acclaimed eponymous book which has now been translated into more than hundred languages and which has remained one among the ten best-sellers for fifty continuous years, speaks of the psychobiography of the author. Gibran's courage, initiative and independence of thought and action have helped him attain spiritual growth. It is from a spiritual orientation he discloses his cybernetics of love. Gibran received the call of grace to exercise a higher responsibility towards mankind. He was gifted with grace and so he could exercise his obligation towards man responsibly. His love of man encouraged him to lead a life of service, to be a parent to mankind. Thus, he attained grace. The evolution of love and the attainment of grace is Gibran's cybernetics of love.

The chapter "After *The Prophet*" proves that *The Prophet* was the last meaningful work. So the prophetic role he adorned stayed put after completing *The Prophet*. "I can't publish anything later than 'The Prophet' which shall be any way less than 'The Prophet' " wrote Gibran to Mary Haskell, a point discussed in Chapter Three (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 342). These words reflect the sense of gratification that Gibran experienced while writing *The Prophet* and after writing it. This statement may have been true if he were to start on a new work altogether. He had

visualized composing a few books side by side with the “The Prophet” and even done a considerable amount of spadework on them. Subsequently, he did publish some works after *The Prophet*. They are *Sand and Foam*, *Jesus, the Son of Man*, *The Earth Gods*, *The Wanderer* and *The Garden of the Prophet* all of which are clubbed together in this chapter. Of these *Jesus, the Son of Man* is on par with *The Prophet* according to some critical reviews. A few critics opine that it is even superior to *The Prophet*, but if sales speak true, then *The Prophet* can in no way be out beaten, a point discussed in Chapter Three.

Gibran had a habit of writing something and keeping it aside for future correction, wrote Mary Haskell in the journal: “When he has completed a thing he keeps it for months - and then returns to it. Then he revises - may put away again - either to revise finally later, or never to publish, but just to keep for a few lines in it worth using in something [sic] he shall care to publish. Thus he has much he never will publish - and some now of old date that he may yet publish” (12 June 1912 BP 86). There is enough evidence to prove that all the above-mentioned works were written either before *The Prophet* or during the insightful flashes, he had while writing it. In every sense, this was the last meaningful work. So the prophetic role he adorned

stayed put after completing *The Prophet*. Khalil S. Hawi makes the point in a slightly different way:

After writing *The Prophet*, Gibran felt that the book did not express his whole “word,” and he had still to state it fully. But in fact his next book *Sand and Foam* (1926), contained no new thought, while *Jesus, the Son of Man* (1928), which came next, was rather an application of the Prophet’s doctrine to the historical character of Jesus than a new departure. Beliefs and ideas which he had expressed before *The Prophet* found their way into these two books as well. (233)

The optimistic vision of *The Prophet* began to give way because of Gibran’s illness and suffering. Yet, he succeeded in maintaining an optimistic view of life. Hawi’s contention is that *Jesus, the Son of Man* was Gibran’s last song of praise for life: “Afterwards a mood of gloom and bitter irony somewhat like that he had expressed in . . . *The Madman* returned. Considering how he alternated between optimism and pessimism all his life, it is likely that this might have happened even if his health had not broken down” (233).

The period of composition of *Sand and Foam* stretches over a long period. This is a credible fact taking into consideration the

nature of the work. It is a collection of aphorisms. Barbara Young gives the impression that they were collected after *The Prophet*. This is perhaps to show the readers her involvement in the work because she became acquainted with Gibran only after this captivating work was published. Hawi opines that it can be proved from Gibran's works in Arabic that some of these maxims were given shape in that language, while he was working on *The Prophet*: "The first group of these sayings appeared in 1921. Besides, the sentiments expressed in them belong mainly to the doctrine of *The Prophet*" (234).

There are different dates about the composition of the book *The Earth Gods* (1931). Hawi thinks it "heralds the return of darkness to his mind" (237). Barbara Young describes it as one "written out of the poet's hell" (113). "Mr. Naimy thinks it was not begun until after *Jesus, the Son of Man* was finished, while Mrs. Young states two-thirds of it was written during the years 1914-15, and claims to have Gibran's word for this; however, we know that neither he nor she was particularly devoted to accuracy where dates were concerned," says Hawi (237). *The Earth Gods* was perhaps conceived towards the end of the First World War, the same time probably *The Madman* was written. It is possible to make this conjecture because of the prevailing pessimistic thought

of the times, and because Gibran was going through intense mental conflict. It was also a period he had not matured enough to accept love as a unifying principle, as he later did. Hawi disagreeing with Young's date of composition of *The Earth Gods* suggests: "It is possible that the book . . . belongs to a phase in Gibran's life when he was undergoing a period of inner division and tension which he went through in 1918" (237).

The Wanderer, Gibran's last book, was completed shortly before his death, says Young (116). In this work, there is the same "irony that met our eye in *The Madman*" (117). Hawi too testifies that *The Wanderer* "adds little or nothing to what Gibran had formerly expressed in *The Madman*" (239).

The Garden of the Prophet appeared in 1933, two years after Gibran's death. He had often declared that it was "on the way," says Barbara Young (119). Naimy, in an interview in September 1957, could not say whether it was completed by Gibran or not (qtd. in Hawi 240). Young says that the various pieces were complete but as "no arrangement had been planned," and as the thread of the story was missing, she took up the responsibility of editing it (119-20). However, when the book was published it was presented as Gibran's. It is obvious from the book that Gibran

had no new thought to convey in *The Garden of the Prophet* different from *The Prophet*, Hawi maintains:

It may be that Gibran had nothing more to say of the relation of man to nature and their oneness, after . . . *The Prophet*. Perhaps this was why *The Garden (of the Prophet)* was always “on the way” but never finished. It is also possible that he was not satisfied with what he had written and did not intend to publish it, for there is nothing in *The Garden (of the Prophet)*, either in thought or imagery, which does not remind us of Gibran’s previous works. The mood is one of darkness and preoccupation with death. It is Gibran’s farewell to life, and expresses his longing to dissolve into nature. (242)

The cybernetics of love or the communication of love, manifested from the psychobiography of Gibran as he composed these works, shows that he was full of graceful love for humanity, and he considered it his duty to acquaint people with the profuse knowledge he had imbibed, collected, modified and improvised all his life. The works of Gibran written after *The Prophet* have the marks of illness, suffering and the consequent

depression. Reading the works from a psychobiographical angle it may be conjectured that the grace Gibran had attained in *The Prophet* underwent a kind of balancing after that. He continued to publish the works he had already written and kept aside, and works half-written, and also the works he had conceived fully, but had not put down on paper. However, all these do not show the author any higher than he was. This is precisely because he had stayed put after completing *The Prophet*. Gibran did have the consciousness of grace in him. Though he was surprised at himself and his achievement, he was not proud of it. Had he been proud of himself he would not have published the works written after *The Prophet* for they lacked the high degree of grace characteristic of the great masterpiece. It was the decision of the man of grace to publish works of an earlier period that was not up to the mark in the matter or manner of writing. Yet, it needs to be said that *Jesus, the Son of Man* was far above the other works written after *The Prophet*.

All works written after *The Prophet* reflect suffering and depression. *The Prophet* had shown the growth of the self and the attainment of grace in Gibran. The works after *The Prophet* show a kind of balancing or “giving up” to put it in the words of

Scott Peck (68). The ecstasy of writing had waned over the years and Gibran needed to give up writing. He was, in fact, unwilling to suffer the pain of giving up. "Giving up" is the most painful of human experiences" (Peck 69). Gibran's desire to win was too great. But being physically ill and affected by alcoholism he had to give up writing. He would have easily given up had he known that *The Prophet* would reach the heights it has reached today.

From a psychobiographical angle too, it is evident that Gibran had attained maturity and grace to bring forth an impressive work like *The Prophet*. On the other hand, *Jesus, the Son of Man* and the other works completed after *The Prophet* bear the marks of an earlier period. This is because they were conceived and begun years back, only to be completed hurriedly towards the end of his writing career. At this stage, Gibran was smarting with pain and the suffering thereof. Therefore, the optimism after *The Prophet* was on the decline. However, he could sustain optimism in *Jesus, the Son of Man*.

The cybernetics of love or the evolution of love into grace had already set in at the time *The Prophet* was composed. Gibran was in a state of grace even as he completed *Jesus, the Son of Man*. The man of grace remained the man of grace ever

after. The only drawback was that his failing physical health hampered with his mental longing. So, the work after *The Prophet* could not be transformed, as he wanted to. The raw materials saw light, as they were intended years back. Thus, it can be concluded that the cybernetics of love was complete with *The Prophet*.

Gibran did not go in search of grace. Grace dawned on him instead. This is the natural way of the dawn of grace, as Scott Peck says: “We do not come to grace; grace comes to us. Try as we might to obtain grace, it may yet elude us. We may seek it not, yet it will find us” (328). Even those who have no taste for spiritual life may be chosen by God if he so wills. But when grace dawns on a person, he becomes aware of it: “Those who are the closest to grace are the most aware of the mysterious character of the gift they have been given,” a point discussed at the end of Chapter Three. They are not only conscious but also astounded at themselves for the gift they have received: “The common experience of those who have achieved a state of grace . . . is one of amazement at their condition” (328). What is more significant is that they are not proud of the achievement for they know that it is a God-given gift: “They do

not feel that they have earned it. While they may have a realistic awareness of the particular goodness of their nature, they do not ascribe their nature to their own will; rather they distinctly feel that the goodness of their nature has been created by hands wiser and more skilled than their own” (Peck 328-29). This is true of Gibran for though he was proud of every line of *The Prophet*, he was also conscious that he could not have written anything worthwhile after that stupendous venture had drained away his energy.

“I know now what I did not know before.”

Kahlil Gibran

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