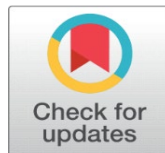


# KHALIL GIBRAN'S PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY: A MODERNIST VOICE IN ARABIC LITERATURE

Kaffeel Ahmad Bhat <sup>1</sup>✉, Rayees Ahmad Baba <sup>1</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar in the Department of Arabic language and Literature, Islamic University of Science and Technology Kashmir, India



## Corresponding Author

Kaffeel Ahmad Bhat,  
[rayeesbaba681@gmail.com](mailto:rayeesbaba681@gmail.com)

## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.6287](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.6287)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



## ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the philosophical ideas in Khalil Gibran's poetry, recognizing him as an important modern voice in Arabic literature. Gibran, who combined Eastern mysticism with Western ideas of individualism, changed Arabic poetry by introducing themes like existentialism, spirituality, and personal freedom. His poems, full of deep reflection and symbolism, moved away from traditional Arabic poetry by using free verse and a more personal style. This study explores how Gibran's thoughts on life, death, love, and the self make his poetry a way to explore intellectual and spiritual ideas. It also examines how Gibran challenged strict social and religious norms, promoting freedom of the individual and self-discovery. Through a detailed analysis of his key poems, the paper highlights Gibran's role in shaping modern Arabic literature and his influence on both Arabic and global literary thought. By placing Gibran's poetry within the context of modernist literature, this study emphasizes his importance as a key figure who helped transform Arabic poetry in the 20th century.

**Keywords:** Khalil Gibran, Philosophical Poetry, Modernism in Arabic Literature, Spirituality and Existentialism, Literary Innovation in Arabic Poetry

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Khalil Gibran, a prominent figure in Arabic literature, is renowned for his poetic and philosophical insights that resonate globally. Known for works like "The Prophet", Gibran brought a fresh voice to Arabic literature, combining Western Romantic and modernist influences with his Lebanese heritage. His writings reflect universal themes such as love, spirituality, and self-discovery, which appeal to readers across cultural boundaries. Through his poetic style, he challenged traditional norms, blending mysticism and individualism to shape a new path in Arabic literature. This research paper explores Gibran's unique philosophical voice, examining how his poetic works embody modernist ideas and contribute to the evolution of Arabic literature. It investigates Gibran's approach to existential questions, his integration of East and West, and his impact on subsequent generations. By delving into his major works, this study aims to highlight Gibran's role as a bridge between cultures and as a modernist pioneer who expanded the reach and depth of Arabic poetry.

## 1.1. JIBRAN'S BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Khalil Gibran, also spelled Jibran Khalil Jibran, was born on January 6, 1883, in Basharri, a small town in northern Lebanon, then part of Ottoman Syria. He is celebrated as a Lebanese-American writer, poet, philosopher, and artist, whose work bridges cultures and languages. In 1895, Gibran and his family immigrated to the United States, settling in Boston, where he was exposed to Western literature, art, and philosophy, which deeply influenced his later work.

Gibran's writing often merges spiritual themes with social and personal introspection, reflecting both Eastern and Western philosophies. His most famous work, "The Prophet" (1923), a series of poetic essays, achieved worldwide acclaim for its profound reflections on life, love, and human nature, becoming a staple in world literature.

Throughout his life, Gibran expressed his ideas on freedom, love, and justice, positioning him as a modernist voice in Arabic literature. He died on April 10, 1931, in New York City, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire readers around the world. His works are cherished for their universal themes and his role in promoting a harmonious blend of Eastern and Western thought.

## 1.2. JIBRAN'S POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

It's often said that a whole is always greater than the sum of its parts, and this is especially true for anything considered "alive." In fact, the complete truth about things no matter how small or seemingly insignificant always escapes full analysis. Whether philosophers, scholars, or scientists, we often end up grasping only partial truths about individuals and reality as a whole. For example, when we analyze a living body, it becomes lifeless; when we examine a growing tree, it becomes little more than wood; a concrete atom is reduced to a mathematical equation. So, our efforts to know things rationally and scientifically often only give us knowledge about them. Understanding things in their true, living essence or experiencing reality in its unified form goes beyond the limits of science and reason. Seeking to know reality itself not just the facts around it means crossing from philosophy into poetry, or from science into religion and mysticism.

Ironically, here we are, analyzing the works of Jibran Khalil Jibran, a poet and mystic. In studying his underlying philosophy, we risk reducing his world into parts, when the world of a poet or mystic isn't actually made of parts. Instead, it's a unified state of being where all elements, including thought, form one living whole that can't be fully understood by isolating pieces of it. For instance, while we can say that Jibran believed in reincarnation, and this is true, this "fact" alone is only a small piece of a larger picture. As Jibran himself once said, "a fact is a truth unsexed,"<sup>1</sup> meaning that isolating facts can strip them of their full meaning and depth.

Only half the truth about Jibran can be captured by simply stating his beliefs. The full truth or the whole, "alive" truth only becomes clear when we immerse ourselves in the idea of reincarnation as Jibran did in his poetic world. When we do, we start to see our world take on a dramatically different form. It becomes a world where, strangely enough, only those who seem mad are truly sane, only those who wander are truly at home, and only those who seem out of tune are actually in harmony. This is because, according to Jibran's view, people in the present are also the souls of past ages. Since most of us forget this, only a select few who appear out of step with their time are actually in sync with the eternal cycle of life.<sup>2</sup>

The philosophy of a great poet, I stress, is not just a way of thinking but a way of being. Jibran, throughout his work, takes on the role of a singer inspired by life's essence, avoiding appeals to logic or reason. He hopes that readers approach him through their hearts rather than their minds.<sup>3</sup> In his view, "inspiration" can only "sing" rather than explain, and "thinking" only gets in the way of poetry. His sometimes critical attitude toward relying on the mind as an alternative path to truth can even lean toward sarcasm he compares the mind to a sponge and the heart to a flowing stream, expressing surprise that so many people prefer to suck knowledge rather than let it flow.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Gibran, sand and Foam, (British edition: London, William Heinemann, 1927, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Jibran, Rimad ul-azal wa-alnnaral-khalidah, Mikhail kuymah. al-majmua al-kamilah le jibran, Darul ilm le al-Malain, Beirut, Lebanon, 3<sup>rd</sup> publication, 1987, p.241.

<sup>33</sup> Jibran, sand and Foam, ibid, p.15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

In our choice to analyze Jibran's poetry in a more intellectual way, we risk two main issues. The first is trying to study the ideas and thoughts of a poet who himself rejected such an approach. The second is reducing his poetry which is more of a living experience into a mere system of ideas, stripping it of its full depth and meaning. "Inspiration he says in one place, "will always sing: inspiration will never explain"<sup>5</sup>. At another place he declares that "thinking is always the stumbling stone to poetry"<sup>6</sup>.

Despite this, we continue our study, perhaps supported by another saying from Jibran: "Half of what I say is meaningless; but I say it so that the other half may reach you."<sup>7</sup> My hope, then, is that by focusing on Jibran the thinker the isolated, intellectual side of Jibran the poet I can still do some justice to the full, living side of him that goes beyond analysis.

In his book "The Prophet", Jibran's character Almustafa says: "Work is love made visible".<sup>8</sup> To honor Jibran, we should treat his sixteen literary works, eight in Arabic and eight in English, as distinct expressions of that vision.

These works of Jibran are the manifestations of his love. By examining the core philosophy within them essentially, Jibran's creative mind expressed through his writing we are immediately introduced to his unique view of love.

In understanding this idea of love, which serves as the central, unifying spirit of Jibran's works, we are drawn to consider the insights of another great lover and thinker, Plato. Plato's Symposium presents love as a powerful reminder of humanity's deep sense of incompleteness. To be in love, according to Plato, is to feel a yearning for someone we see as necessary to our wholeness, without whom we feel incomplete. This is why Plato describes love as "the child of want and plenty": it reflects our continual desire for something more, and our wish for fulfillment through union with our beloved. However, since we live in a world of time and constant change, we are fated to remain incomplete, always striving for something but never reaching a final end. Only by recognizing, as Plato did, that time is simply "the moving image of eternity," and that humanity is not truly bound to time and space, can we understand that our search for completeness through love is ultimately a quest for reunion with the absolute.

Seen through Plato's perspective, love reveals the two essential points between which human life stretches: on one side, humans are seeds of the divine planted in the temporary world, constantly seeking fulfillment; on the other, the absolute, where humanity originally belongs, stands as the final and desired goal. While both sides are timeless and space less, the path between them runs through our temporal world. Since most people are unaware of their true origins or their ultimate destination, they often become consumed by the temporary goals of life. They are, in this sense, the "deceived lovers." Thus, it is left to a few, those with a "platonically-minded" outlook, whose gaze remains fixed on the distant, eternal truth, to tell the story of the soul's feeling of separation from its true home and its intense yearning to return.

Jibran's writings and drawings consistently express the pain of a soul in turmoil, a spirit wandering and feeling deeply out of place in the immediate world around him, yet yearning to return to an ideal, faraway home. He was one of the rare few who captured this experience of profound alienation and an intense desire for freedom.

Being an emigrant means being a stranger in a foreign place, but for a mystical poet like Jibran, this feeling of estrangement is intensified. Besides the physical displacement, he also feels separate from conventional human society and even from the physical world of time and space. This gives rise to a threefold longing: for his homeland, for an ideal human society of his imagination, and for a higher, metaphysical realm of truth. This combined longing fueled Jibran's creativity. Across his body of work, we see these themes play out with varying emphasis, but they remain constant. Toward the end of his life, in his masterpiece *The Prophet*, the three themes the ideal world, human society, and metaphysical truth are harmonized into a unified vision.

"The Prophet", along with Jibran's other works, can be seen as foreshadowed by his early essay "Music". Published eleven years after he emigrated to Boston as a young boy, this thirteen-page essay marked Jibran's first entry into the literary world. Although called "Music", it reads more as an ode to music by a young student than an in-depth analysis. Instead, the essay reveals a sentimental young man with flowery language and a vague sense of nostalgic sadness,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.14.

<sup>8</sup> Gibran, *The prophet* (British edition: London, William Heinemann. 1963), p.7.

viewing music as a kindred spirit and an ethereal representation of everything his heart still longs to become. This passage captures the essence of the essay, both in style and sentiment, as Jibran speaks to music:

"Oh you, wine of the hearts that uplifts its drinker to the heights of the world of imagination; ... you ethereal waves bearing the soul's phantoms; you sea of sensibility and tenderness; to your waves we lend our souls, and to your uttermost depths we trust our heart. Carry those hearts away beyond the world of matter and show us what is there hidden deep in the world of the unknown."<sup>9</sup>

In his early years in Boston's Chinatown, Jibran naturally felt a longing for Lebanon, the Cedars, and during his first twelve formative years in Lebanon, Jibran's deep connection to his homeland profoundly influenced his work. His books "Nymphs of the Valley", "Spirits Rebellious", and "The Broken Wings" are collections of short stories that, despite varying names and situations, revolve around similar themes and often seem repetitive. These stories are all set in Lebanon, presented as a mystical land of unparalleled natural beauty. The protagonists, though different in each story, represent Jibran himself sometimes even directly, as he writes in the first person in "The Broken Wings" or as "Kahlil" in "Kahlil the Heretic" in "Spirits Rebellious". Lebanon, as Jibran's imagined, beloved homeland, and Jibran himself, yearning for that land, are the two main characters across all the stories. In these tales, Jibran idealizes Lebanon as a paradise, yet criticizes those he sees as unworthy "pretenders" to its spirit: the feudal lords and the church hierarchy. This leads Jibran's hero, or a hero modeled after him, to inevitable confrontations with these figures.

In *The Broken Wings*, Jibran's young protagonist falls in love with Salma Karamah, but their love is thwarted when the local archbishop forces Salma into marriage with his nephew. Here, while celebrating Lebanon's natural beauty, Jibran also critiques the church and its power.

In *Spirits Rebellious*, "Kahlil the Heretic" is expelled from a Mount Lebanon monastery for being "too Christian" for the abbot and monks. Rescued in a snowstorm by a widow and her daughter, he is hidden in their cottage until he is eventually captured and brought to trial as a heretic by the local feudal lord. Standing among humble villagers, Kahlil speaks passionately, inspiring change. This results in the feudal lord's suicide, the priest's flight, Kahlil's marriage to the daughter, and a newfound sense of natural harmony and justice within the village.

In Jibran's story *Kahlil the Heretic*, the character Jhon, a humble calf-keeper, is detained by the monks of a monastery simply because his calves wandered onto their property. In a passionate speech, Jhon accuses the churchmen of hypocrisy, calling them enemies of true faith who profit off the suffering and goodness of the common people like himself. John goes to say, "and chase these religion merchants out of your temples, for they have turned those temples into dungeons where the snakes of their cunning and villainy coil".<sup>10</sup> His sincerity and courage in speaking against a powerful social order cause him to be dismissed as a madman.

In this early period of Jibran's work, he is often seen as a social reformer and rebel, a label attributed to him by many Arab literary critics. His protagonists, equipped mainly with their eloquence, engage in struggles that are deeply rooted in social issues. The main conflicts revolve around three core themes: innocent, idealistic love thwarted by a society that prioritizes selfish interests; a church that, while claiming to represent Christ, wields wealth and authority contrary to Christian values; and an inhumane feudal system. Despite these themes of social rebellion, Jibran cannot be easily categorized as a social reformer.

Being a reformer means proposing positive alternatives to existing problems, yet Jibran's heroes rarely offer such alternatives. Instead, their solutions are simply opposites of the issues they oppose: a utopian love in "The Broken Wings", a lack of any feudal system in "Spirits Rebellious", and a vision of spirituality that abandons organized religion, leaving figures like Jhon in isolation. Without practical alternatives, these figures are more social outcasts than reformers. As a result, Jibran's heroes tend to be heretics, madmen, wanderers, prophets, or even deities, reflecting Jibran's own feelings of alienation as an emigrant in Boston, yearning for Lebanon, the idealized land of his childhood, rather than tackling the issues of its society head-on.

Jibran's vision of Lebanon is further clarified in his later Arabic essays, where he describes a land that is more a product of his imagination and nostalgia than reality.

<sup>9</sup> "Mikhail Nuymah, *al-Majmua al-Kamilah le Gibran Darul ilm le al-Malain*, Beirut, Lebanon, 3<sup>rd</sup> publication, 1987, Vol. 1, p.75.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p. 101.

In Jibran's view, Lebanon as he idealizes it stands in stark contrast to the Lebanon shaped by those he criticizes in his stories. His response to these social "corruptors" does not involve prescriptions for social improvement; rather, he envisions Lebanon in its pure, unspoiled beauty, untouched by human society.

This perspective is clearly articulated in his essay, "You have Your Lebanon and its beauty. You have your Lebanon with all that it has of various interests and concerns, while I have my Lebanon with all that it has of various interests and concerns, while I have my Lebanon with all that it has of aspirations and dreams..... Your Lebanon is a political riddle which time attempts to resolve, whereas my Lebanon is hills rising in awe and majesty towards the blue sky.... Your Lebanon is ports, industry and commerce, while my Lebanon is a far removed idea, a burning emotion, and an ethereal word whispered by earth into the ear of heaven.... Your Lebanon is religious sects and parties, whereas my Lebanon is youngsters climbing rocks, running with rivulets and playing ball in open squares. Your Lebanon is speeches, lectures and discussions, whereas my Lebanon is songs of nightingales, swaying branches of oak and popular, and echoes of shepherd flutes reverberating in caves and grottoes".<sup>11</sup>

At this stage in his career, Jibran's work shows a shift from active social rebellion to a more introspective expression of his feelings of alienation. His book "A Tear and a Smile", a collection of prose poems, captures his deep-seated sense of loneliness, homesickness, and melancholy as an emigrant in Boston. His tears reflect his personal struggles, while his smiles symbolize moments of inner peace and a spiritual connection to his idealized Lebanon. Over time, Jibran's view of Lebanon transcends geography, transforming it into a metaphysical homeland a realm of higher truth and spiritual beauty.

In Jibran's later works, this concept of alienation evolves. He depicts life as a journey where the human soul is separated from its true home in a higher spiritual realm. His yearning shifts from a longing for a physical Lebanon to a deeper, spiritual quest for reunification with a greater truth. In "Nymphs of the Valley" and "A Tear and a Smile", he portrays human life as a blend of sorrow and joy a tear for the soul's exile in the physical world, and a smile for the promise of a return to its divine origin. The sea becomes a recurring metaphor in his work: just as water is separated from the ocean and later returns, so too does the soul experience a cyclical journey of separation and reunion.

Jibran states in one of his prose poems: "Separated from the universal doll it assumes its course in the world of matter, passing like a cloud over the mountains of sorrow and the plains of happiness until she is met by the breezes of death, whereby she is brought back to where she originally belonged, to the sea of love and beauty to God."<sup>12</sup>

As Jibran's longing for his homeland evolved, Lebanon became less a geographical place and more a spiritual, platonic concept. When he still saw Lebanon as his true home, his anger was directed at those who he felt had marred its beauty the local clergy, feudal lords, and other corrupting forces. But as his idea of home transformed into a metaphysical ideal, Jibran's frustration extended beyond Lebanese society to humanity as a whole. He became increasingly critical of the way people had distorted the image of God's creation, focusing on human society at large as the source of his discontent.

This sentiment is at the heart of his Arabic poem "The Processions" (1919) and his essays in "The Tempests" (1920), as well as in his early English works, "The Madman" (1918) and "The Forerunner" (1920), which both contain parables and prose poems. Jibran found that the true source of his alienation was not the fact of being an outsider but rather his awareness of a deeper, universal human exile from its spiritual origin a reality others seemed blissfully ignorant of. His awareness of this alienation set him apart, filling him with loneliness and pride that distanced him from people who found contentment in worldly life. His pride stemmed from his loyalty to his spiritual origin, which made him view others as shallow imitations of their true, spiritual selves.

This sense of superiority and isolation is reflected in the character Youssef al-Fakhry from "The Tempests", who, living alone in a mountain cottage, is viewed as an enigmatic figure by those nearby. To Jibran, Youssef discloses the essence of his isolation: a profound spiritual awakening that allows him to see life from a transcendent perspective, lifting him beyond the everyday concerns of the world. Looking down from this metaphorical tower, he sees others as though from a higher plane, recognizing the divine self within him a realization brought on by a rare, intense moment of spiritual clarity.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, Vol. 3<sup>rd</sup>, pp. 202-203.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, vol. 2<sup>nd</sup>, p-95.



Youssef al-Fakhry sees others absorbed in their mundane, daily routines, seemingly blind to the divine potential within them. In his view, they are like hypocrites and cowards, clinging to an existence at the bottom of the metaphorical tower. He tells his guest, "I have deserted people... because I have found myself a wheel turning right among wheels invariably turning left". "No my brother" he adds in another place, "I have sought seclusion for prayer or hermetic practices. Rather have I sought in the escape from people and their laws, teachings and customs, from their ideas, noises, and wailings. "I have sought seclusion so as not to see the faces of men selling their souls to buy with the price thereof what is beneath their souls in value and honour."<sup>13</sup>

In "The Grave Digger," another story from "The Tempest", Jibran's protagonist regards these people, who have lost their souls, as dead. "But" in the words of the hero, a prototype of Youssef al Fakhry, "finding none to burry them, they remain on the face of the earth stinking disintegration".<sup>14</sup>

The hero advises Jibran that the best way for an awakened soul to serve society is by "digging graves and Jibran remarks, "From that hour up to the present" Jibran concludes, "I have been digging graves and burying the dead, but the dead are many and I am alone with nobody to lend me a hand."<sup>15</sup>

Jibran implies that to be the only wise person among the ignorant is to appear foolish to everyone else. In this tower of life, whose base represents earthly existence and peak the realm of the infinite, to seek the infinite makes one a social outcast. This is how the character in "The Madman" comes to be called mad. Once his masks, or his superficial connections to society, are stolen, he walks bare, as anyone on a journey from the physical to the spiritual must. Seeing him, someone shouts, "He is a madman." At that moment, the sun, symbolizing his true self, shines on his face, and he falls in love with this higher self, rejecting his masks and attachments. From then on, he's known as the Madman, living in opposition to society.

In "The Processions", Jibran's long Arabic poem, there's a dialogue between two voices, which seem to represent two sides of one person. Like many of Jibran's "madmen," this person embodies an individual who has realized his own divinity. He alternates between looking down at people living at the bottom of the tower and raising his voice to mock their false beliefs and insincerity, sarcastically critiquing their gods and creeds.

Jibran's character, standing above others in his imaginary "tower," views people with a mixture of disdain and disappointment, seeing them locked in conflicts and lacking vision. At times, he looks beyond earthly matters to a world where opposites merge into a harmonious whole, leading him to celebrate a universal, boundless life.

However, Jibran and his characters often portrayed as defiant, isolated, and even embittered by society have yet to find real peace. This reveals that Jibran's own path to self-fulfillment is still clouded by loneliness and frustration. Though he claims to have reached the "top of life's tower," he continues to view humanity with disdain rather than empathy, limiting his ability to experience true inner joy or appreciate the struggles of others.

As Jibran matures, his work moves beyond this bitterness. In his later masterpieces, "The Prophet", "Jesus the Son of Man", and "The Earth Gods", he begins to shift from the phase of rebellion and anger. The bridge to this new understanding is seen in "The Forerunner", a collection of his poems and parables from 1920. Here, Jibran acknowledges that life, being one unified whole, cannot be separated. He recognizes that those at the top are connected to the foundation below and that to reject others is to weaken oneself.

One of Jibran's poems namely "The forerunner" in which he says, as though in atonement for all his Nietzschean revolt: "Too young am I and too outraged to be my free self. And shall I become my free self unless I slay my burdened selves, or unless all men become free?... How shall the eagle in me soar against the sun until my fledglings leave the nest which I with my own beak have built for them?"<sup>16</sup>

In this realization, Jibran's philosophy of life as an interconnected, infinite entity gains clarity. If life is indeed one and boundless, then each person holds the potential of the infinite within them, just as a seed carries within it the promise

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, vol. 3<sup>rd</sup>, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, vol. 3<sup>rd</sup>, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, vol. 3<sup>rd</sup>, p.15.

<sup>16</sup> Gibran, The forerunner ( British edition: London, William Heinemann, 1963), p.7.

of a tree. "Every seed is" says Jibran in one of his later works "is a longing".<sup>17</sup> This perspective now shapes the central themes of his later works, emphasizing the unity and potential within every individual.

In Jibran's view, every individual, like a seed, holds within a desire and potential for self-fulfillment, along with the means to achieve it. Each person is seen as a divine essence in the making, carrying the longing of the divine within to realize its highest form. Jibran believes that everyone is destined for this ultimate state, where one's inner divinity fully blossoms.

This perspective leads Jibran to shift from his former role as a critic of society to one of enlightenment. He now sees people as inherently divine, not defined by their limitations or weaknesses but as bearers of a dormant divinity that can be awakened. Thus, rather than a figure who buries society's flaws, Jibran becomes one who seeks to spark a transformative awareness in people, helping them realize their divine nature. Jibran Says "no longing remain unfulfilled".<sup>18</sup>

In his 1923 work "The Prophet", the character Almustafa embodies Jibran's evolved role. Almustafa, who has spent twelve years among the people of Orphalese, prepares to leave as his ship returns to bring him back to his origins. People gather to seek his wisdom before he departs, asking for his thoughts on life's most pressing matters.

Almustafa reflects Jibran's own experience, who, by then, had spent twelve years in New York City after relocating there from Boston, with Lebanon remaining the "isle" of his deepest longing. At a symbolic level, Almustafa represents the soul that has transcended human limitations to unite with the divine, ready to depart toward its metaphysical homeland. The people of Orphalese represent humanity, living in a physical world yet distanced from their true divine selves. Jibran envisions this character as one who has achieved freedom from earthly constraints and is prepared for a reunion with life's ultimate reality.

Jibran's "The Prophet" suggests that humans, in their journey toward divinity, need a guiding hand to move beyond their human limitations. Almustafa, having made this journey himself, takes on the role of this guide, offering insights to help others transform.

Jibran's core idea in "The Prophet" is that life is boundless and unified, where each person's true essence is not their earthly self but a greater, infinite self connected to all existence. Self-realization, then, is about expanding beyond physical limitations to include everyone and everything, achieved only through love. Love is thus both a release, as it frees a person from narrow self-concepts, and a challenge, as it demands the surrender of the smaller, individual self for the greater, infinite self.

Pain, inseparable from love, is an essential part of this growth. Almustafa explains that pain is like the breaking of a seed's shell to allow its growth. Understood in this way, pain transforms into a form of joy, signaling the growth of the self toward its fullest potential. Realizing that pain signals our current limitations, we can view it as a drive for growth, expanding our capacity for joy. For Jibran, joy and sorrow are interconnected, with deeper sorrow enabling a greater capacity for joy.<sup>19</sup>

In this infinite and unified universe, life and death are also intertwined. Nothing truly dies; the finite forms we see are simply aspects of the infinite, temporarily expressed. Death is thus only the transformation of form within the boundless reality of life.

In "The Prophet", Jibran presents life and death as one continuous flow, where death is simply the finite self merging into the infinite, allowing the divine essence within to unite fully with God. Life isn't opposed to death, nor is death opposed to life; instead, to live is to constantly grow, which involves a continuous process of letting go of old selves. In this way, every death is a rebirth into a more profound state of being, akin to how each life phase shapes and renews the individual, forming a steady ascent toward divine fulfillment.<sup>20</sup>

For Jibran, events in life are not random occurrences but reflections of one's inner self, meaning we have a role in all that befalls us, whether positive or negative. This perspective implies that good and evil are interconnected, and no

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Gibran, Sand and foam, *ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.66.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.67.

one is entirely separate from either. Humanity moves as a collective, and each individual, whether elevated or troubled, is part of a shared journey toward the divine self.

Through this view, every person, regardless of their moral standing, contributes to the overall human experience. Spiritual elevation in one individual is connected to the challenges faced by others; one cannot rise in isolation. True growth involves uplifting others, much like a strong individual must eventually return to support those who are still finding their strength. For Jibran, as long as any remnants of darkness or unawareness remain in humanity, even the most spiritually advanced individuals remain connected to this shared human journey.

In Jibran's view, ultimate spiritual freedom is unreachable for any soul while others remain trapped in their limitations. Like the philosopher freed from Plato's cave who must return to aid those still in darkness, Jibran's prophet expresses a willingness to return and reincarnate as long as humanity needs guidance. After leaving Orphalese, Jibran's character al-Mustafa speaks of this continued return, noting he will take on new forms as required to keep aiding those on their spiritual journey.

Only five years after "The Prophet", Jibran reincarnated his message, this time through his portrayal of Jesus in Jesus the Son of Man. Although the setting and details differ, Jibran's Jesus mirrors his earlier prophet, al-Mustafa: a chosen soul who continually reincarnates to help humanity achieve greater spiritual awareness. This Jesus is an ordinary man who has reached the divine through personal transcendence, emphasizing growth over innate divinity. Like an eagle that cannot fully enjoy freedom until its young are prepared to soar, he returns to inspire strength rather than dwell on human frailty. Jibran's Jesus, rather than embodying meekness or humility, stands as a powerful guide to elevate the human spirit from the finite toward the infinite.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. CONCLUSION

In summary, Kahlil Gibran's philosophical poetry is a significant influence in modern Arabic literature, mixing traditional cultural themes with contemporary ideas that appeal to people everywhere. His writings cover topics like love, spirituality, and human suffering, delving into important questions about life, freedom, and identity. With a thoughtful and reflective approach, Gibran reshapes Arabic poetry, moving away from conventional styles to create a voice that resonates with both Western and Eastern readers.

Gibran's distinctive style combines symbolism with lyrical writing, influenced by various philosophical ideas while remaining rooted in his Lebanese background. This blend positions him as a leader of modernist thought in Arabic literature, encouraging readers to look beyond societal limits and seek personal freedom. His poetry is not just art; it also serves as a deep exploration of life and humanity. Through his work, Gibran encourages readers to reflect and connect with shared human experiences, solidifying his role as a significant figure whose influence on Arabic literature and philosophical poetry continues to be profound and lasting.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

## REFERENCES

- Gibran, sand and Foam, (British edition: London, William Heinemann, 1927.  
Gibran, The prophet (British edition: London, William Heinemann. 1963).  
Gibran, The forerunner ( British edition: London, William Heinemann, 1963).  
Jibran, Rimad ul-azal wa-alnnaral-khalidah, Mikhail kuymah. al-majmua al-kamilah le jibran, Darul ilm le al-Malain, Beirut, Lebanon, 3rd publication, 1987.  
Mikhail Nuymah, al-Majmua al-Kamilah le Gibran Darul ilm le al-Malain, Beirut, Lebanon, 3rd publication, 1987, Vol. 1

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.4.