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KAHLIL GIBRAN'S "THE PROPHET": A GUIDE FOR PEACEFUL LIFE

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Kahlil Gibran was born in Lebanon which was under Ottoman dominion. The Mount Lebanon area was a troubled region, due to foreign interferences. The people of Mount Lebanon had struggled to gain independence from the Ottoman rule.

Since childhood Kahlil Gibran enjoyed solitude in the natural surroundings of the cascading falls and the rugged cliffs, this had symbolic influence on his paintings and writings. Due to his poverty, he did not receive any formal education or schooling, only regular visits to a village priest; there he learnt the essentials of religion and the Bible, and Arabic languages.

In the Arab world, Gibran is regarded as a poetic rebel. His family immigrated to the US when he was twelve. He returned to study in Lebanon three years later, and was moved by the injustices imposed upon peasants by the Ottoman rulers.

Gibran can be considered as diasporic writer. While in United States, he felt an intense connection with his homeland. He was politically active to voice the problems of his motherland. Though he was brought up as a Christian, being an Arab he was influenced by Islam, by the mysticism of the Sufis in particular. He acknowledged that Lebanon's disturbing history strengthened his belief in the fundamental unity of religions. The Prophet for Gibran is a dream close to his heart. He had Lebanon in his mind when he wrote the book. It is quite likely that Gibran speaks of his own nostalgia; his own desire to return to his land.

The story revolves around the central character "Almuftasa", who lived in the city of Orphalese for 12 years. On the day of departure to his homeland, he contemplates about the time he has spent on that island. When the time has arrived for him to move towards the sea and board the ship, all the citizens of the city gather to bid him fare well.

Then "Almitra", a seeress who had supported him in his quest, asks him to enlighten them with the eternal knowledge. So that the coming generations can carry the light. She keeps probing questions about various aspects of human life, and he gives them the much needed knowledge.

Here, I would like to discuss few aspects which were spoken about in the book.

Love: "Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; for love is sufficient unto love."

In any relationship pertaining to men, Love is the most essential element but still one cannot own it but embrace it.

Marriage: "Love one another but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup."

Marital life would be a peaceful bonding if it does not turn into bondage. Both the partners should be given enough space to pursue their lives.

Children: "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."

Our children should not be treated as our possessions instead as free beings.

Work: "Work is Love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy. "

Work related stress is cause of many other anomalies, if one can learn to enjoy his work life would be much easier.

Houses: "You shall not be trapped nor tamed. Your house shall be not an anchor but a mast."

Rather than being tied down at home, one must find it as a place of peace after a great adventure.

Freedom: "For you can only be free when even the desire of seeking freedom becomes a harness to you, and when you cease to speak of freedom as a goal and a fulfillment."

A man will be truly free when he stops seeking it elsewhere.

Pain: "Much of your pain is self-chosen."

As truly said in the book most of our pains are the outcome of our own worry and anxiety. It is we who determine whether we make our life less painful or not

Self knowledge: "For self is a sea boundless and measureless. Say not, I have found the truth, but rather, I have found a truth."

Learning is an ever going process, so one shall never think that he has gained the whole of knowledge but rather should say I gained a fraction of it.

Friendship: "For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill? Seek him always with hours to live. For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness."

Friend shall not be the one to accompany you in your leisure hour, but the one who shall strive with you to help you reach your goals.

Religion: "Is not religion all deeds and all reflection. Your daily life is your temple and your religion."

Our thoughts and chastity is the only religion we can practice.

Later in the twilight, he leaves to his homeland, while Almitra still stood alone upon the sea wall till the ship vanished into the mist.

Gibran's masterpiece "The Prophet" holds a unique place in the field of English literature. It cannot be completely categorized as a literary text; rather it is a philosophical text. Gibran combined his mysticism with the social reality, hence showing us the path to the sublime. Gibran has translated his life experiences into art emotion, with high literary value. His works are full of cosmic wisdom, aesthetic value and mystical truth.

Reference: The greatest works of kahlil Gibran (Twelve books in one omnibus edition)

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