

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Linguistic Discourse on Philosophy and Psychology in Kahlil Gibran's 'The Prophet'

Rameez Raja¹, Research scholar, Chandigarh University. Ananya Dasghosh², Independent Researcher, Calcutta.

Abstract

Kahlil Gibran's classical book "*The Prophet*" examines a wide range of human experience throughout the journey of life and manifests a myriad collection of prose poems covering the subtle nuances of our lives. There's a plethora of representation which examines through the lens of the book in clear terms. A wide range of literary devices has been employed throughout the work in fragments and parts which clearly states the deeper level of study of Gibran in this book. The various analysis divided into the form of chapters evokes a sense of spiritualism and the concept of mystery in life. His artistic taste and the aesthetic touch give a unique flavor to the book. While we delve deeper into the various themes of the prose poems there's not only a subjective hint of expression playing a liberal role but there is also a language of silence and abstract elements as well.

Keywords: Prophet, abstract elements, language, conflict, religion, realism, psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Gibran's masterpiece focuses on the realm of representing wisdom and leading idealistic life. Each chapter represents a spiritual, prophetic wisdom that hopes to breathe through our veins for generations. The Lebanese poet represents a world that is beyond whimsical practices and hails good things for one another. *The Prophet* clearly visualizes a life that is from the poet's way of treating life. There's a magnanimous study of Gibran's outlook on life from respect to religions and customs and the messages of God. he tries to provide an impeccable balance in life by portraying answers to questions that support and encourage harmony at a large scale. It seems that Gibran tries to resolve cultural and human conflict by transcending the barriers of East and West(Buck, 2010; Acocella, 2008). There's an underlying thread of perfection that creates a fiber in the entire book with the perspective of moral philosophy in consideration. His

ideology reflects that of the Romantic era where spiritual elements rested in a person's soul. Irwin(1998) points out that the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) announced Gibran as: "the Blake of the 20th century" (Irwin, 1998, p. 1).

It seems that Gibran tries to encounter and resolve the various agonies and dingy melancholies of life through the lessons learnt by him throughout a decade. In addition to this, he passionately asserts the belief and wants to spread the message of oneness through his writing and holds a very optimistic belief on life cradled by his Eastern philosophy and doctrines. His thoughts have universally reached a lot of people and acknowledged as well but some truths lie unfolded and the excavation is due. Gibran, through his unique way of articulation delves deeper into the realm of human living and the relationship with the creator and vividly gives us answers with the Prophet himself. The various interpretations between the dual spectra represent a narrative through various styled segments. Furthermore a lot of study implies the various criticisms that explore the book in general. Various cultural aspects and perspectives have also come into light while dealing into the intricate details of the book.

ABSTRACT ELEMENTS AND LANGUAGE

Gibran's language follows the path of a hermit with spiritual content and bleak flow of lucid thoughts. Gibran " And what is word knowledge but a shadow of wordless knowledge?" (chapter - Farewell). He talks of wisdom and knowledge but the readers are in a paradox because of certain incoherency in the frame of language. He balances the scale of joy and sorrow by suspending the thoughts of sorrow and not addressing the pangs of sorrow which leaves hollowness in our rising beliefs. According to Fairclough, text is not only concerned with language in use only, but also it may have invisible sets of values, beliefs and ideas in social circumstances. He points out:

"the question of discourse is the question of how text figures (in relation to other moments) in how people

RESEARCH ARTICLE

represent the world, including themselves and their productive activities. Different discourses are different ways of representing things associated with different positions.” (Fairclough, 2000, p. 170).

Gibran addresses the readers through the voice of Prophet in the context of an apple crushed by teeth

“ Your seeds shall live in my body,
And the buds of your tomorrow shall blossom in my heart,
And your fragrance shall be my breath,
And together we shall rejoice through all the seasons.”
(Text : Eating and Drinking”)

While analyzing Gibran’s cumulative patterns of thought regarding social constructions and social relations it is captured that his approach and realization is far beyond the realistic realms of life and that surfaces through his use of literary devices and diction throughout his work. To even clearly distinguish the fact we observe that constructive elements are hindered because the language used should be simultaneous to the flow of thoughts and structural patterns. While analyzing the text we get an important aspect of critical elements which showcases the abstract elements embedded in the form of language. As suggested by Brown and Yule (Yule and Brown, 1983, p. 133), “the general knowledge about the world underpins our interpretation in discourse”. The language used should have a bridge and help to vision the sets of thoughts and beliefs at a larger scale. To justify and analyze Gibran’s way of positioning language in his famous work there’s a lack of coherency and systemic functionality of language in the sense that the language implies and includes a lot of assumptions of social construction. It implies on the reader to decipher the information and underlying statements. In this context, according to (Dryzek, 1997, p. 8) a discourse is a: “... shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgements, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements, and disagreements.” Gibran’s way of preaching includes the way in which he tries to persuade his fellowmen and uses language as a medium but to the readers it is treated as a distorted communication.

RELIGION AND REALISM

Gibran through his mouthpiece, the Prophet tries to articulate the various impetus related to the drastic changes that a human mind as a whole experiences. He tries to critically have an aerial view about the conventions of man-made living and the religion as a constitution. His idealistic concepts about life and religion heralds his idealistic approach to life. To generalize this thought reference can be brought from ‘*Utopia*’, a land of perfection and of the highest self-esteem. The underlying question lies on the fact how far and beyond these idealistic patterns align with the realism concept of life. Gibran asserts people into the concept of the universal theme of brotherhood and fraternity which eventually started changing patterns with the advent of industrialization and in the early 20th century when World War became a changing phenomenon already. Infact Gibran’s exquisite work clearly states how he continues to disclose the organic relationship among human mind, body, soul and universe. His way of maintaining a social decorum by overshadowing certain true facts about life and the realistic thoughts about life makes it quite evident that how he envisions life and the world as a dingy place and not a perfect place to achieve human success. He lays powerful wider vision on the shallow deformed moral society but there wasn’t a holistic approach to maintain a balance between virtue and vices.

Gardner shows how the poets of 1914-18 “found a brotherhood that transcended the barriers of class, strong at the time; of religion, of race, of every facet of society” (Gardner, 1976, p. xx). While trying to bind the world with religion and humanity along with spiritual perfection, Gibran overlooked the miseries of life and the perils that were engulfing human minds and to evaluate his work there’s a lack of realism. Nassar and Gibran assert that “Gibran was of the mold of William Blake: both angry social reformer of old cultural contexts and the prophet of an expanding cosmic consciousness beyond any need of a given cultural context” (Nassar & Gibran, 1980, p. 24). Gibran’s way of religious and spiritual worship cascaded upon his readers an aspect of goodness and transcendence. To cite verses from Gibran’s work –

“My God, my aim and my 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.”
(Chapter - The Madman, p. 10)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gibran harbors the concept of human superiority with the cosmic energy and defines self, love, prayer and above all the transformation of a human mind to a greater self but he somehow manages to look into the spectrum of human sufferings rooted deep into homes and society and there's no cleansing he depicts in there. Each chapter on prose poetry expands into an infinite realm of active self-assertion without teaching human kind the essence of microcosmic derivation from the macrocosmos. All the messages passed and forwarded seems a juvenile study of offerings to human life disputed with justifiable facts and draw a line between good and bad without usefully adopting and organizing the human actions.

PSYCHOLOGICAL REALM

Gibran wanted to promote his message worldwide and throughout the nations with sincerity and honesty. With a certain sublime interpretation on life and living Gibran wanted to carry universal meaning for the world. We have always learnt that literature is an art and through this art we try to plunge into the insights of life and try to connect the dots. Owing to that perspective, if literature interprets the various oeuvres of life then the various psychological clouds and stages should be put into light from a wide lens. According to Gibran (1980), "The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness" (67). When Gibran wants to propagate the message of universal knowledge through various themes he doesn't acknowledge the facts of psychoanalysis. He speaks on the concrete knowledge that he had accumulated for years and intends to transfer the same to human civilization. There's no mention of the conscious and unconscious state of an individual or to be precise the balance between the conscious and the unconscious. The famous psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud mentions the personality theories of human nature which can eventually be a counterpart of Gibran's way of envisioning life and people.

Every human has a unique way of perceiving thoughts and with their repressed emotions and unconscious thoughts and emotions they look into life. Gibran's way of analyzing and exploring the facets of life can be termed as 'generalization'. His religious inspirations are undoubtedly a fact of serenity and silence in tranquility but studies can found that pain and tribulations flow like a perennial river in a human life and

hence interacting with individual problems and hollowness is difficult from Gibran's perspective. The same answers and the outlook do not match everyone's psychological realm. In his writing, Gibran appears to denounce the unjust in order to show goodness his way of judgements do not follow to provide justice to one and all. His life lessons are a collective study of philosophical learnings. Chapter *Pain* states,

“And you would accept the seasons of your heart,
Even as you have always accepted the seasons that
Pass over your fields.

And you would watch with serenity through the
Winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.

It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you
heals your sick self.”

This embodies that pain is self-inflicted and a person must be accused of his pain but nowhere do we get a mention of the way to heal such pain from the psychological point of view. His way of bearing the torch for mankind somehow overlooks the deeper levels and personal concerns which eventually caters and sums up to universal issues that cause torments and injustices to the world. It is not possible for us to neglect his contribution and creative thoughts and conditions related to the environment we live in. He passes his views on reformation through a set of allegory disguised in the prose poems and the way he advocates the man and the religion too but we still find that there's a subtle refusal of his acknowledgement to realistic conditions and there's no revolt in there too. His dictionary deals with an ideological concept of life and a freedom that can enter human life if there's a purity of thoughts. Ludescher states that “Gibran was not interested in reforming the corrupt social system by replacing oppressive laws with progressive ones, but instead was advocating absolute freedom”(Ludescher, 2010, p. 114).

CONCLUSION

This study renders Kahlil Gibran's brilliant contribution through *The Prophet* during times of conflict between the church and the state. Gibran's way of admiring religion along with his ideology, belief, wisdom, thoughts on various aspects of life clearly shows his maestro on learning philosophy. Many studies have followed which showed how elegantly he approached the answers to the various issues in life and wanted his

RESEARCH ARTICLE

fellows to perceive his thoughts on the same too. His way of critical approach to moral values and wise teachings stand as an image in our society. The principles of his message allow many followers to dictate the same and religiously believe in these thoughts too. He is sternly against hegemonic ideology but there's an ignorance on certain facts too. If taken as a whole the study implies that Gibran's study and metaphorical work is a spiritual liberation of a human soul leading to situational solace but absolute liberation is still unfathomed from a lot of aspects. Some thoughts of Gibran are comforting in parts for our mind at the moment but human life is a long journey and thus the expressions of greater unity seem lacking in various parts. He preaches messages in solidarity but there's an infinite source still left to be fathomed on human experiences. In short he advocates a peaceful society and believes that his message would reach the world completely. But in the body of literature there's still a bridge left unconstructed that can fill the gap between the individual and the society.

REFERENCES

- [1]Acocella, J. (2008). *The Khalil Gibran Phenomenon*. Retrieved July 12, 2013, from

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2008/01/07/080107crbo_books_acocella#ixzz1KSNltcO

- [2]Naimy, M. (1950). *Kahlil Gibran: His life and his work*. Beirut: Khayats.
- [3]Khazraji, N (2013). *Critical Reading To Gibran's World In The Prophet*.
- [4]Halliday, M. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd ed.). London: Edward Arnol.
- [5]Acocella, J (2007). *Profit Motive: The Kahlil Gibran Phenomenon*. The New Yorker.
- [6]John, D (2020). *A Psycho-biographical Perspective of kahlil Gibran's The Broken Wings* .
- [7]Kalem, G (2018). *Injustice and collective responsibility in Gibran's Thought , The Kahlil Gibran Collective*.
- [8]Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/09579265030146008>
- [9]Gibran, K. (reprinted 2021). *The Prophet*. Fingerprint.
- [10]Nassar, E. P., & Gibran, K. (1980). *Cultural discontinuity in the works of Kahlil Gibran*. *MELUS*, 7(2), 21-36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/467082>