

**MIKHAIL NUAYMAH: HIS WORKS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS SHORT
STORIES AND POETRY**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in part-fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SYED RASHID HASAN



**Centre of Arabic And African Studies
School of Languages, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 67
2001**

مركز الدراسات العربية و الأفريقية



Centre of Arabic and African Studies
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067
जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय, नई दिल्ली-110067

Date: 23 July, 2001

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled “MIKHAIL NUAYMAH: HIS WORKS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS SHORT STORIES AND POETRY”, submitted by Syed Rashid Hasan, is in the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is his own work.

We recommended that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. S.A. Rahman

(Chairperson)

Dr. A. Basheer Ahmad

(Supervisor)

(Syed Rashid Hasan)
Scholar
Centre of Arabic & African Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-67

TO MY PARENTS...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	page nos.
INTRODUCTION	2-7
1. MIKHAIL NUAYMAH: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION	8-33
i. In The Native Land	9-11
ii. American Diary	12-31
iii. Return To Homeland	32-33
2. SHORT STORY	34-75
i. Development Of Arabic Short Story	35-39
ii. Style: A Comparative Study	40-43
iii. Themes	44-75
3. POETRY	76-112
i. Introduction	77-78
ii. Stylistics	79-81
iii. Themes	82-112
4. NUAYMAH THE MYSTIC	113-143
i. Zaad-ul-maad	114-128
ii. The book of mirdad: a comparison with the prophet	129-143
CONCLUSION	144-147
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	148-152

INTRODUCTION

Arab writers, who migrated to America, are rightfully considered to have steered the salvation of the modern Arabic thought from the archaic layers of ignominy. They are believed to have taken the lead in liberating the Arabic literature from the slavery of tradition and conformism. The clouds of orthodoxy in thought and belief gave way to innovation and experimentation. Their service to Arabic literature is laudable and is evident from their splendid contributions in various genres that rejuvenated and invigorated the aesthetic faculties of the learned mind.

These migrants, who left their motherland for diverse reasons, took with them, along with the aspiration of a better life, a soul that was unspoiled and a mind that was sound. Never before in its long, pulsating history had Arabic literature witnessed such an upbeat phase as when it became full of life and passionate appeal at the hands of these migrants, the merchants of dreams and spirituality, who had crossed oceans to challenge both minds and souls of the generations to come. They left no genre of literature untouched and employed all possible literary devices to express their soulful philosophy that was not devoid of a compassionate humanistic outlook.

Prose as well as poetry represents their monumental literary output. Essays, criticism, biographies, comments, stories, novels, drama, and articles and columns in the journals and magazines, the authors of *Mahjar*, occupied their days and nights producing literature formatted in accordance with their ideology and belief. The *Mahjar* or *Migrant* group believed that the literature is a component of life, which can choose any medium for its expression. Fine arts, painting, music, sculpting, all symbolize literature at a higher level of cognition.

The contributions of the *Mahjar School* symbolize the maturity and deep understanding of the internal affairs of humankind and confirm the presence of a strong insight that was the driving force behind all the creativity and expression. *Mahjar School* has contributed in a significant way to the Arabic literature in the form of short stories and novels. The contribution is attributed to both *Northern* and *Southern Mahjar*, though *Northern Mahjar* has a longer and richer history of association with these literary efforts in the alien climes.

Jibran is said to be one of the pioneers of the short story in Arabic literature. Others who followed him were Nuaymah, Al-Raihani, Naseeb Aridah, and Abdul-Maseeh Haddad. The pioneering efforts by this group of associates to master a very western genre were later considered to be the major factor for the development of art of story writing in the Modern Arabic Literature.

Much has been said about Nuaymah's achievements as a critic. His other achievements have more or less remained under his own shadow of a great critic. My work lays more emphasis on Nuaymah's other areas of works, though the First Chapter comprehensively talks about his ideas on criticism and criticism of his criticism. Nuaymah was a critic by choice. He was as gifted a poet as any great poet of his time and as adroit in the technique of short story writing as any other maestro of the art, but he chose criticism. Though he kept dabbling in other genres, poetry, short story, etc, as means for giving a shape to his theories. And he proved himself to be the master of all *the* genres he wrote in.

His short stories represent a wide spectrum of thoughts and unfold varied dimensions of the life. They throw light on the contemporary society of Lebanon and the social reality therein. The Second Chapter talks of Nuaymah as a short story writer. There is a brief discussion on Nuaymah's prose style along with comparison with the contemporary practitioners of the genre. Ten short stories

and a long short story have been discussed and analyzed. It was possible, due to its compactness, to present the collection *Kana ma Kana* with all of the stories. The collection is a bunch of sweet and sour grapes. All the six stories in the collection are painted on the canvas of *Social Realism* and various shades of light and dark colors have been used to convey important messages of humanism and social well being.

Many of the stories uncover the pretentious society that is intolerant, selfish, and opportunist. Though the settings and characters in these stories are at variance with each other, they draw our attention toward the same fundamental rhetoric in Nuaymah's works. That basic tenet is the need for paying attention to one's higher self. The next theme *Humanism* has been represented in five stories, which also have diverse settings and characters, though all of the stories seem to allude to the eternal conflict between the good and bad in the society and in the human mind.

The dogmatic issue of barren woman has also been depicted in two of the stories. These differ in their perspective but. These stories have been presented in a psychoanalytical format that reveals the peculiar nature of the women. The stories are visualized in a psychosocial dimension relating with barren women, who lose their identity due to not being able to be pregnant.

Nuaymah, in some stories has depicted his idea of Unity of Existence. Nuaymah has been influenced by the transmigration of souls. There are stories based on transmigration of souls, one of the key faiths that Nuaymah frequently mentioned. One of those stories has been discussed here also. Even Jibran has written extensively about this philosophy. There are allusions also at many occasions in their writings.

The third chapter makes a survey of Nuaymah's poetry. A brief description of his stylistic has been carried out followed by a thematic presentation of his select poems. Some more select poems have been analytically discussed in the end. All the poems are found in his only collection of poems *Hams-ul-Jufoon*. These poems are mostly meditative and reflective in nature.. Efforts have been made to gain an acquaintance with the depth of the thought and the inherent beauty of the ideas expressed.

The Fourth and the last Chapter is a concise capsule of Nuaymah's Philosophy and his thoughts. This is the chapter that is still holding my interest. While working on this chapter, I underwent many hues and nuances of emotions. At times I was held in awe with the effect of the words. Words are not just syllables and phrases. Power of word is realized best when it is presented as if it is the only way to gain salvation. I was astounded by those simple expressions that pierced the innermost chambers of the heart. Although the time spent on this chapter was comparatively much less than the other ones, yet it was one of the most pleasing academic exercises for me. I have the feeling that I might just not be able to pull myself out of my obsession with Nuaymah's ingenious and exalted ideology. My association with his works is hardly more than two springs, but it appears to me as if I have ruminated throughout my life with these ideas.

Zaad-ul-Maad contains Nuaymah's thoughts on a variety of themes. They have been put forward to be read, mulled over, and to be taken seriously.. that is what at least I feel. *The Book of Mirdad* has been presented vis-à-vis *The Prophet*. *The Prophet* has been my favorite reading in the pastime. The striking resemblance of themes and ideas and the delicate way to put them across the reader makes this comparison an essentiality. I have tried to pick some astoundingly similar themes and ideas for the comparison.

I need to convey my thanks to all those who have extended their help at each possible moment. First of all I want to thank Reyazuddin, Ata-ur-Rahman, and Jaspreet for always being there for help and encouragement. I wish them luck for their future course of life.

I would also like to thank my honorable teachers, Prof. Abdul Haque Shujaat Ali, Dr. Zahoor-ul-Bari, Prof. F.U. Farooqi, Prof. Aslam Islahi, and Prof. S.A. Amanatullah for their constant encouragement and affectionate chidings, due to which I am able to accomplish this task. I feel honored to be able to thank Prof. Syed Ahsan-ur-Rehman, Chairperson of the Center, for his benevolent disposition. He has been a great source of inspiration behind my efforts, and I continue to look at him as a prolonged source of guidance.

My supervisor, Dr. A. Basheer Ahmad, has been teaching me for the past six years. At all stages of my academic career, he has been a benign voice of encouragement. It is his encouragement and support that geared me to finish my dissertation. During the course of my dissertation, he has been more than a supervisor to me. I profoundly thank him for his appreciative nature and candid attitude. I shall be, in the future also, looking up to him for guidance and encouragement.

I would specially like to thank all my family members for their love and kindness. It was possible for me to complete this work because I was not alone. Susan, my wife, despite the responsibility of her own dissertation and other indulgences was a great support in more than one ways. It is not possible to thank Papa and Mummy for the kind of love and affection I have received from them. Their blessings have eased the going on me. Sonu has been a great help despite his own engagements. Appi despite her own dissertation has constantly been concerned for me. I give my best wishes to her also.

There is not enough space here to enumerate each and every person to whom I owe my gratitude in some way or other. All my friends here and back home have also been very encouraging and supportive, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

This dissertation is an effort to introduce Nuaymah and his writings to the people in India who are passionate about quality literature. The purpose behind choosing English as the medium of my presentation was to make this work available to a larger reading circle. This kind of a comprehensive work on Mikhail Nuaymah's life and works has not been attempted so far in any of the institutions to the best of my knowledge.

Syed Rashid Hasan

July 23, 2001

New Delhi

CHAPTER ONE

MIKHAIL NUAYMAH: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

IN THE NATIVE LAND

AMERICAN DIARY

RETURN TO HOMELAND

IN THE NATIVE LAND

If the Arabia, rather the entire East, lives by its thinkers and takes pride in its philosophers, poets, and men of letters, then we, the scions of the Arabia, can rightly place Mikhail Nuaymah at the acme of our spiritual and literary luminaries of this Age. Mikhail Nuaymah remains a distinguished school of thought and an illustrious stream of human thinking.¹

A list of contemporary Arabic literary figures would be incomplete without a profound mention of Mikhail Nuaymah. A Critic, Poet, Essayist and Mystic all rolled in one, he was a noted scholar whose works had a far-reaching effect on the spread of *Mahjar* poetry in North America.

Mikhail Nuaymah was born in Biskinta in Lebanon on October 17, 1889 as the third son of his parents. He had four brothers and a sister. Like most of the people in those times, Nuaymah's parents were also illiterate. But they were determined to provide the best education opportunities to their children. Nuaymah's father, Yusuf, was the only son of his parents, and a much valued child with three sisters.² Mikhail Nuaymah was very fond of his grandfather, who was called Bu-Yusuf, as a child. Though he died when Nuaymah was only seven odd years old, he recalled many events related to his grandfather.³

Nuaymah's childhood was spent in the lap of nature. In his autobiography, he has described his childhood extensively. In his own words:

¹ Editorial, Al-Misri, November 24, 1945

² Mikhail Nuaymah, Sabaoon Vol I, page 34

³ Mikhail Nuaymah, Sabaoon Vol I, page 34

The wonderful sky was over us with the shining sun. The white Sinneen shone in an attire of light before us. The sparrows chanted in harmony on the trees around us, and the rocks, high and steep, protruding from the ancient, awesome valleys¹.

In his childhood days, he was essentially an isolated and confined person with an intense love for nature. Since his early days, he was inclined towards isolation in the nature to be lost in its colors. He used to attain delight with the sunrise and its setting, flight of birds in the sky, with the serpentine movement of water in the river, with the splendid and verdant surroundings of his native place. He used to wonder at the perfection in the Nature.

Nuaymah completed his primary education at Biskinta. Later, he moved on to the Russian Teacher's Training College at Nazareth. After completing his preliminary education, he then went on a scholarship to Russia, at the University of Poltava, for higher education. He was exposed to the immense treasure of Russian literature there and read the writings of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gorky, and Dostovesky among other great luminaries and imbibed the western ideas and thoughts.²

Mikhail Nuaymah was a brilliant scholar from the beginning. It is said that even at this tender age he had all the making of a great scholar, brought forth by his ability to assimilate and comprehend his thoughts with utmost clarity and precision. Nuaymah spent five years in Poltava, where he acquainted himself with the Russian and European art, literature, and culture. He also started writing poetry and wrote his first ever poem in Russian, which was titled as *The Frozen River*. Then he returned to his native land.

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Sabaoon Vol I, page 38

² Surayya Malhath, Mikhail Nuaymah: al-Adeeb as-Sufi, Beirut 1964

After spending some time in the beautiful valleys of Biskinta, Nuaymah left for North America with his brother Deeb.¹ There he occupied himself with the learning of English and improving his grasp on Russian for admission in the Washington University for studying law.

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Sabaoon Vol I, page 38

AMERICAN DIARY

After reaching to America, Mikhail Nuaymah came in touch with Naseeb Areedah who was a fellow student at Russian College at Nazareth. He had launched a literary journal for Arabic literature called *Al-Funoon*. Nuaymah started contributing for *Al-Funoon* on a regular basis and became a part of the team. It was only then that Nuaymah discovered his critical abilities. The acquisition of a copy of Jibran's *Al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira* coincided with his receiving the first number of *Al-Funoon*. His joy and enthusiasm of the evidence of life, originality and strength in the literary material published in *Al-Funoon* (it contained Jibran's famous *Ayyuhal-lail* and al-Raihani's *Bulbul-al-Maut-wal-hayat*) launched him on his career as a critic.¹

His first critical article entitled *Fajr al-amal baada Lail-al-yas* included a seasoned attack on what he called *mummified literature*. This he described as being nothing but sorry imitation and worthless decoration. He also dared to comment on Jibran's *al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira*, which was almost unheard of at that time. Nuaymah's cultural background was of far richer quality than that of the other emigrant Arab writers and poets of his time. His ideas pertaining to the necessity of a drastic change, even to the extent of a revolution in the way Arabic literature was expressed by various writers, must have originated from a comparison with European literature, and Russian literature in particular.

In subsequent years Nuaymah wrote innumerable articles for *Al-Funoon*, which were all on criticism, and seem to have been immensely appreciated by his readers and by other literary figures in North America. In 1914, only two years after the

¹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol I*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 119

publication of his first article, Areedah went so far as to write to him and say that his articles had made *Al-Funoon* popular in Syria, Egypt and Southern *Mahjar*. When *Al-Funoon* was suspended from Publication in 1914 owing to financial reasons, Nuaymah continued to publish in other North *Mahjar* papers. In 1916, however, *Al-Funoon* came back to life only to be finally suspended again during the war, and *Al-Saih*, whose editor was Abd-al-Mahsih Haddad, another former schoolmate of his, became the platform for North *Mahjar* literature and for Nuaymah's critical writings. These writings, which were mostly bent on establishing a real change in the form of language, attitudes, and methods of approach of Arabic poetry, greatly helped to sow the seeds of change which a critic can detect in the poetry of some of the poets of 'Al-Rabita', but although Nuaymah's influence was great in this respect it could not match Jibran's direct example of original literature of a high caliber.¹

An interesting thing to note is that the first collection of Nuaymah's critical articles, which was formerly published in a piecemeal manner in *Al-Funoon* and *Al-Saih*, were later published in totality in 1923 in Egypt and not in America. This publication was mostly due to the efforts of Muhyial-din Rida a great enthusiast for the literature of the *Mahjar*, and at Nuaymah's request, Al-Aqqad wrote the introduction. Contrary to popular belief, *Al-Ghirbal*, it must here be emphasized, was not influenced by *Al-Diwan fi' I-Naqd wa I Adab*, written by al-Aqqad and al-Mazini. This was so because this book of criticism was written in 1921, and most of its articles came to fore only by the second decade of *Mahjar* periodicals. The two avant-garde movements, which till now had been advancing along parallel line both in Egypt and in America, came into contact for the first time in 1922. They both answered the pressing need of Arabic literature to forge new links and to free it from crystallized traditional attitudes and stereotyping based on the authors' perception.

¹ *ibid*, page 121

Both groups moreover had been exposed to western culture influences. Nuaymah, on receiving a copy of Al-Diwan in 1922, managed to include in his collected essays and articles on the two volumes of Al-Diwan in which he hailed the appearance of this work of criticism in the following curious words:

God Bless Egypt, for not all that she writes in chatter, and not all the verse she produces is mere affectation. I used to think that she ...adored the decorative and sanctified the [mere] stringing together of rhymes, for how often she has glorified a clone and cheered a fake... ”¹

Despite his sincere joy in discovering an avant-garde critics in Egypt, it is apparent he was unable to cancel his former lack of admiration for the literature produced in that country, an attitude completely overlooked by some Egyptian writers who spoke of the two movements and carelessly made *Mahjar* authors dependent on the Egyptians for their ideas on innovation. Nuaymah’s attitude, it seems, was shared by other members of ‘Al-Rabita’.

During the First World War, Nuaymah was conscripted into the Army and was sent to France. Nuaymah was a peaceful and nonviolent individual. After the firsthand experience of the war, he started abhorring war. The meaningless killing of human being and massive loss of innocent lives affected him deeply. He condemns the war and fights very strongly in his works at many places. In France, he exploited the opportunity for learning. Along with a group of university peers in the army, he went to the University of Rennes in April 1919. There he enriched himself with the history of France, along with the French art, literature, and

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah

constitutional law along with learning French.¹ Thereafter he returned to America in the same year.

Nuaymah came in touch with the group of writers who made up *Pen Association or Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* which was instituted in 1920.² The *Pen Association* consisted of ten members. Nuaymah had played an important role in the establishment of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* and was appointed as its secretary with Jibran as the president. He busied himself with all the activities of the Association and became its leading ideologue. He became very close to Jibran in the twelve years of their association in America until Jibran's demise in 1932.

Nuaymah himself, although more cultured than many of the other members of "Al-Rabita" does not to have been particularly knowledgeable in classical Arabic literature. In his high school the subjects other than Arabic were taught in Russian. In Arabic they studied *Kalila wa Dimna* and "Alfiyyat ibn Malik", and ended by studying the history of Arabic literature as written by a Russian Orientalist. Nuaymah admits that Nasib Arida was the most knowledgeable member of the *Al-Rabita* in classical Arabic literature.

Classical Arabic literature was at that time in the process of being re-discovered. Nuaymah's readings in foreign literature and his comparatively scant knowledge of the classical heritage led him to believe in its worthlessness, comparing it with modern European literature. His lack of interest in the classical heritage is also shown by the fact that, unlike his contemporary avant-garde Egyptian critics, he did not devote any criticism to poets of the Classical period. His rebellion, which was timely and vital, caused him to turn his back on the classical roots of modern literature.

¹ Surayya Malhath, *Mikhail Nuaymah: al-Adeeb as-Sufi*, Beirut 1964

² *ibid*

Nuaymah's was the first critical output in Arabic to concentrate solely on the modern contribution. His condemnation of classical heritage gave a new impetus to a trend already begun which was to become very strong in the fifties, that of criticizing the old classical heritage, belittling its value and throwing doubt on the vitality of the connection between modern Arab poets and writers and classical literary past. Many futile arguments were to take place throughout the subsequent decades, and many rather unintelligent accusations, and even abuses, were also exchanged. However, it is not surprising to note that most of those who spoke against the Classical heritage knew little about it. It is most unfortunate that most of those who spoke for the Classical heritage were old fashioned and reactionary.¹

Nuaymah's attack on the importance which contemporary writers in the Arab world attached to the language and on their great dependence on the lexicographer's inflexible attitude is quite legitimate. Behind him there was already a growing tradition of belief in the vitality of the spoken language, as we have seen. The loose ties these poets and the writers had with the Classical language made it easy, even necessary, for their more adventurous minds to discover the vitality that resulted from a less rigid towards assimilating into the classical colloquial words which seemed more appropriate to the meaning. Neither Nuaymah nor Jibran seemed to have had any conscious connection with those foreigners in Egypt who, in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, called for the use of the colloquial in literature.

Nuaymah's arguments on language were well informed:

¹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol I*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 122

*Language is one of life's phenomena and only obeys the laws of life. It chooses the suitable and preserves the best of it. It is like a tree that changes its dead branches for green ones, and its dried leaves for living ones...*¹

Those who he calls *frogs of literature* and who would keep the language from growth make of the writer a tool in the hands of language. Their tragedy is that life goes on while they remain static. But to him, language is mere symbols, has no value of its own. It is a means for denoting things that are 'greater and loftier' than itself, which are the human thoughts and emotions.²

In order to defend his argument, Nuaymah tends to exaggerate his statements. It must have been these exaggerations that al-'Aqqad, found unacceptable in his introduction to the *Ghirbal*. Nuaymah really means that although "it is good to pay attention to polishing [the language] and arranging it in such a way as to grant it sweetness and accuracy", we must not forget that it is mere symbols, nor believe it to be perfect in itself. But al-'Aqqad and Mandur were misled by the enthusiastic of his argument.

Like Jibran, Nuaymah believes that it is the poet and writer who are the makers of language and its patrons. There should be no cause for worry if they produce new symbols or change old ones. Al-Aqqad and Mandur overlooked the observation he makes at the end of his long argument that if people like the newly forged symbols [or word, to be more precise] they will keep it, whether lexicographers and grammarians like it or not, and if people neglect it, it will automatically die.

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *al-Ghirbal*

² R.C. Ostle, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M. Badawi], Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 99

Nuaymah was the first critic in Arabic who preferred content to form in literature. The history of criticism in Arabic shows the equal value, which most Classical critics gave to the two.¹

It is of course natural that when there is a general spiritual bankruptcy, writers and poets turn to the decorative. Embellishments become an exercise of wit when the intuition and the spiritual communion lie dormant. Nuaymah, however did not realise the temporariness of the situation. In fact, he would not have been expected to realise it, for in history of rebellions, the first two elements required for success are enthusiasm and vehemence, and these two qualities depend on limited perspective, on this great concentration on a special situation that is given priority over everything.

Nuaymah's ideas on meter, however, are not quite so mature. He makes many mistakes and falls into some contradictions as he attacks the sham versifiers of his times. His criticism of exaggeration and banality in poetry, which he refers to the laws of prosody, is irrelevant and shows a hasty judgment.

Poetry has its laws of prosody, whether written or orally transmitted. Quantitative meters may have stricter laws, but this springs from the very nature of that language and the inter-relation of word structure, which decides the metrics of its poetry. The laws of prosody are not imposed on a language. They are drawn only on the basis of what has already happened in the verse of that language. With the many variations and allowances used by the early Arab poets and thereafter taken as rules of prosody, there is ample scope for variety, but also for committing mistakes. Laws of prosody, like laws of music, are necessary to help poet avoid

¹ Surayya Malhath, Mikhail Nuaymah, al-Adeeb as-Sufi, Beirut 1967

this last tendency. It is true that good poets in Arabic need hardly refer to these laws, but there are always poets whose ears are not quite as sensitive.¹

The laws of Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad need not stop any gifted poet from making innovations, for they have basic rules which apply broadly to any number of variations within their own limitations. Nuaymah's arguments are out of focus in this respect. The fact that there were many versifiers in Arabic who wrote banal, decorative verse is not due, as Nuaymah claims to their ability to versify according to al-Khalil's laws of prosody. Just because laws of prosody are accessible to would be versifiers does not necessitate the production of hallow verse. In fact, Arabic laws of prosody should be more difficult to assimilate than, say English laws of prosody. Indeed, there is no poetry in any language, which does not have long trains of versifiers and imitators. Nuaymah, moreover claims that the accessibility of the laws of prosody has not only harmed our poetry, but also all our literature. For would be novelists and dramatists, seeing the possibility of becoming able to write verse (a highly honored art among the Arabs) through learning the laws of prosody, confined their literary activity to poetry and "here we are today with no novels and no plays and no science...". This is really amazing from an intelligent and sensitive critic like Nuaymah.²

But this rebellion against prosody, despite its uninformed background, helped to shake the reverence in which metrical, established by the al-Khalil, were held. Al-Khalil's great achievement was really misunderstood by both the traditionalist who held it sacred, and the innovators who spoke scathingly about it. Very few people saw it for what it really was: a record of the development of Arabic meters which poets, prior to al-Khalil, had achieved, and a description of their formation.

¹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol I*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 124

² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol I*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977

Nuaymah, like many of his avant-garde contemporaries, never really had any settled ideas about meter. For despite the absurdity of his argument concerning meter, al-'Aqqad remarked only on Nuaymah much milder attack on language. Though later even al-'Aqqad contradicted himself with regards to meters. Nuaymah's uncertainty on the question of meter is obvious right from the beginning. For while he claims in one article that neither meters nor rhymes are necessary for poetry, in another article he says that meters are necessary but rhyme is not. However, his verse shows an ear sensitive to music in poetry and a good grasp of meter, and in his attempt to define meter, he rightly says that the primary aim of meter is to achieve harmony and balance in the expression of emotion and thoughts.

Nuaymah is at his best when he speaks about the role of criticism and the role of poetry. To him the aim of criticism is to sift literature and differentiate between the good and bad in it. The personality of the author is no concern to the critic. Every critic, moreover, has his own sieve. This is, of course the attitude of a subjective, impressionistic critic, as Mandfir said, "although it is hard to see how a critic can ever be completely objective in criticism, even if he should limit it to an interpretation of the text. Critics, Nuaymah continues, although they differ from each other, have one quality in common: a natural power of discrimination. There are three other qualities that a critic can possess: firstly, a critic can be creative, for he can discover the value of a neglected piece of literature. Secondly, the critic can also be an original writer, for in discovering the beauty of a literary work he gives to his readers his own concepts of beauty and truth. And thirdly, the critic can be a guide for he can show the creative artist his true path and his worth.

What was wrong with Arabic literary criticism was the lack of good critics: *The arbiters of literary world*, he insisted, *were sham, timid and ignorant*.¹ The strong stand Nuaymah took concerning this question shows great courage.

If this aspect of Nuaymah's attack is less relevant today, other aspect of his criticism are still fresh and alive. His insistence that *Man* is the axis around which literature must evolve is still valid in modern criticism, and was of great importance in the fifties. It would be pointless to say that most poetry, even in Nuaymah's early days, speaks about that to do with *Man*. What Nuaymah meant is what the moderns critics mean now: *man's inner soul* and his actual experience on earth, in short, the human condition.²

DISS

O, 28, 3, M 89: 9 P1

But no great change has taken place in the ideas of critics concerning the 'criteria of literature', since Nuaymah wrote his famous article of the same title. There are literary criteria, in his opinion, which are permanent because they depend on permanent human needs. These needs are primarily four: our need to express our feelings and ideas, our need for guiding light in our life to show us the truth, our need for the beautiful (he is speaking here of absolute truth and beauty), and our need for music. These needs do not vary in their essence with the change in time and place. Literary criteria, therefore, are judged by their ability to satisfy those needs.

Nuaymah is not quite sure about the role of poetry. He is aware of the two schools of thought existing in his days, the one insisting on art for art's sake, and the other that it should serve the needs of humanity. However, he maintains that the poets must not be a slave to their own time and to their own people, but at the same time he must not shut his eyes and ears to the needs of the life around them. He gets

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *al-Ghirbal*

² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry* Vol I, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977

TH-9122 21



out of his impasse quickly by stating that the poet, as long as he takes the nourishment of his talent from life will necessarily reflect that life in his poetry.

This is one of the earliest examples of the long controversy on committed literature, which flared into a battle of wits in the fifties, prompted mainly by the writes of the nonrealistic school and the other patriots.

But despite Nuaymah's wavering ideas with regards to 'committed' literature' (a term as yet unknown in Arabic), his basic criteria of literature are not really absolute, although to talk about some of them today may seem rather old fashioned. The need to express oneself, the need for beauty, truth, and music are still basic requirements in literature and art (if we exchange the word 'music' for the word 'harmony'), whether this art is socially minded or not. The most that contemporary critic can say about Nuaymah's early ideas is that they are deficient.

As was usual among critics of his time, Nuaymah's main interest was poetry. The writers whose work he criticised were poets, and it was on poetry that he lavished in romantic fashion his most glorious definitions:

Poetry is life in its smiles, its tears, its silence, its expression, its cheering, its moaning. It is the answer to a spiritual need in man, in fact, the poet is the one who stretches the fingers of his inspirations to the curtains of your heart and thoughts and lift them to let you see what is hidden under them; then you shall see emotions and thoughts which you might think are the poet's, but which are in fact your very own'. For he is a "prophet, a philosopher, a painter a musician and a priest."¹

¹ Nuaymah, al-Ghirbal

This romantic picture of the role of the poet is strengthened by Nuaymah's belief in inspiration:

*The true poet never writes except when he is driven by an internal impulse that he cannot control. In this he is slave. Moreover, he will describe what his spiritual eye sees and what has matured and fermented in his heart.*¹

This reminds one of the insistence of recent avant-garde criticism on experience in poetry.

Nuaymah has no hesitation in expressing his sorrow at the fact that most men of letters in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria were "blaring trumpets and bubbles floating on the surface of our literary life". Poets were expressing what they did not feel. Indeed the whole nation "has been talking with its tongue, while its heart was silent".

An iconoclast of the first order, his strongest advice was to do away with the traditional idols, to find the way to the truth and authenticity:

Clear your temples of the wooden idols to which you have been burning your incense... build in your hearts new temples for new gods, and lofty pulpits for lamps that burn with the oil of truth, zest and sincerity.

Despite a general critical gloom, there is charm and sincerity in Nuaymah's early writings, unequalled among the critics of the time. He seemed to an Arab listening post overseas for Arab talent everywhere: Egypt, the South *Mahjar*, Syria and the *Mahjar*. He openly expressed the sheer pleasure of breaking rigorous taboos in

¹ ibid

language and the poetic concept. The zest to teach, to pave the way, to open up new horizons is hardly ever marred by the bitterness to the point of direct abuse which makes al-Aqqad's criticism sensational and sometimes irritating. Nuaymah's attack on Shauqi is perhaps too prejudiced. Shauqi is depicted here, not as a revivalist of the best of the Classical output, but as instrumental in prolonging the Classical tradition. However, such misinterpretations cannot spoil the overall picture. The reader can still react to the creative approach and the enthusiasm without failing to realize the radical attitude Nuaymah's words must have represented in those days. Yet, despite the interest they can arouse nowadays in the educated reader, the feeling persists that they are mostly a part of a bygone era; that Nuaymah is speaking to simple inexperienced but obstinate readers, whom he must strive to convince.

This is the reason for his long and sometimes oversimplified explanations. But this is also one of the elements that gave his writings their charm. He was helped in clarifying his critical methods by a great volubility and fluency of style. His method of explaining his ideas is not to appeal directly to the emotions, as Jibran did, but rather to the common sense of the reader. His essays follow a special method: they are divided into sections that seem to grow organically towards an end. Beginning with logical introduction, he builds on it, giving details and clarifying his points through argument and sheer common sense until he arrives at the natural conclusion. One feature of his prose persists also in his poetry: the many detailed variations and parallelisms on the same idea. Examples are unnecessary here, for all his writings abound with it.

The staunch rebel of the early decades seemed, however incapable and unwilling to adapt to changing conditions. His basic idea of the aims of poetry and literature to express beauty, truth, and goodness persisted with him for a certain length of time until it later became clouded through an increasing mysticism. When, in

1954, he wrote his famous article 'Mahiyyat al-Adab wa Muhimmatuh', he still believed in those criteria and launched his attack on three contemporary trends. Firstly, the neo-Realistic trend which revolved around what he called man's need to be free from hunger: for him, man does not live by bread alone, and although it is treasonable of literature to forget about the hunger and poverty, it is even more treasonable to forget the hunger of the heart, the mind and the spirit.

Secondly, he attacked the literature, which revolved around sex, and the physical passions, no one denied the great effect of the sexual passions but they were only dirt and prostitution when measured against the great aims of mans existence in this world. And thirdly, he attacked without actually using the term, committed literature, which revolved in the orbit of state, nationalism and politics.

In this article, however he was able to reflect other contemporary literary problems. He insisted that Arabic literature was still immature and would remain so until three things were secured: firstly, a traceable language; secondly, a nation free off an inferiority complex,(he attacked here the blind adoption by poets and writers of western criteria, methods and ideals); and thirdly, freedom of speech.

But the contradictions into which Nuaymah falls with regard to his former literary criteria can be exasperating. For, while he condoned in his *Sabaoun II*, his former ideas in *Al-Ghirbal* he had rejected them in a mystical fashion some years before at an Arab literary conference in Damascus in 1956. In this conference, in which he delivered a lecture entitled 'Al-Adib wa 'I-Naqid.' He declared that no critic was capable of distinguishing absolute beauty, truth and goodness in a work of literature, for "each critic has his own personal criteria" and that criticism was not necessary for literature "for time is the best judge of literary works". Then, proceeding further with his mystical fervor, he advised critics to try to write their

own works instead of writing about other people's works. He gave the example of Nature, which embraced all creatures and rejected none.

What Nuaymah calls *personal criteria*, G.Santayana would call *subjective human knowledge*. He says about the attitude of a mystic: *If the data of the human knowledge must be rejected as subjective, how much more should we reject the inferences made from those data by human thought. The way of true wisdom, therefore, if true wisdom is to deal with the absolute, can only lie in abstention...* The relativity of a category of thought is a reason for its rejection. A mystic would therefore *aspire to see, reason, and judge in no specific or finite manner --- that is not to see, reason or judge at all*; which brings him nearer to the Infinite. Nuaymah's above-mentioned example matches perfectly this attitude described by Santayana, this *tendency to obliterate distinctions. Nothing is 'really' right or wrong, because in Nature all things are regular and necessary*. The similarities between Santayana's descriptions of a mystical attitude and Nuaymah's ideas in his lecture cannot fail to suggest an eruption of mystical fervor on Nuaymah's part before the preparation of this lecture. However, his fellow delegates did not quite realize the mystical basis of the aged critic's attitude, and his lecture caused a great stir at the conference.

If Nuaymah had wanted to shock the audience, he could not have said anything more at variance with the whole mood of time. He seemed a strange voice coming from another world and preaching acceptance to an Arab world plunged in the heated arguments of committed literature in the 'fifties. In this lecture he not only imposed on himself a spiritual isolation, but also diluted all his former critical concepts, thereby largely destroying the beloved image of the iconoclasts who, in the earlier decades of the century, had led the way when the spiritual and artistic needs of his people were pressing. In fact, it is strange that Nuaymah should

continue to write, when the interest of the majority were quite out of sympathy with his mystical attitudes.

Although Nuaymah is primarily a prose writer, he was able, unlike Jibran, to assert himself as a poet through a few but highly effective poems. Seen in the context of Arabic poetry in the first three decades of this century, Nuaymah's *Al-Nahr al-Mutajammid* and his famous *Akhi*, both written in 1917, are marvelous examples of a poet ill at ease in a complicated and powerfully established poetic heritage.

Nuaymah wrote his poetry in Arabic only within a limited period (1917-26). His spiritual tendencies, which increased gradually with the years, his natural inclination to explain his ideas in detail, to illustrate and elucidate what he is describing with numerous examples, the intellectual basis of his literary output, all these were bound to divert him from the path of poetry and to lead him to express himself in the more voluble medium of prose.

Nuaymah's poetry was new. The novelty was both in the content and in the technique. His thematic adventures, however, were mostly of the meditative kind, saved only by an ardor of emotion, which proves an authentic spiritual tendency. All his poems, except *Akhi* were of the directly subjective type expressing the poet's inner personal experience, spiritual and emotional. *Akhi* could well belong to the poetry of the 'fifties, with its social consciousness expressed through the personal consciousness of the poet. It is important to note Nuaymah's tendency to write about a true experience, an element lacking in the poetry of the neo-Classicists, including much of Mutran's.

The authenticity of his meditative basis is also significant when set alongside similar poetry of the North *Mahjar*. Nuaymah's influence on his fellow writers was considerable, although his own spiritual attitude was in turn enriched by

Jibran's pervasive influence. His spiritual themes, which steadily increased in their meditative attitude until they gave mystical expression to his beliefs, were accepted by the Arab world without much effort, despite their novelty. Nuaymah was writing his poetry during one of the most exciting periods in modern Arab literary history, when it was possible to impose on the reading public a great variety of themes, as long as they did not touch the basic dogma of religion, the sanctity of the heritage or the jealously guarded code of honor. The first four decades of the century are marked by a rare freedom to experiment, by what can be termed an "individual sensibility".

The main change achieved by Nuaymah through his poetry was a change in the poetic tone. The achievement of this new, subdued tone was a real victory for poetry. The great resonance of the neo-Classical poetry has gone. Even Jibran's passionate rhetoricism seems pompous and pretentious compared with the gentle and rather sad tones of Nuaymah's poetry which flows like the ripples of a gentle stream, which, three decades later was to move M. Mandur, Egypt's foremost critic in the 'forties. Nuaymah confirmed Jibran's adoption of Nature as an object of spiritual love and spiritual experience. His spirit merged in it with awe and wonder, finding it evocative of emotions and spiritual yearnings.

Nuaymah early enjoyed a great popularity as a poet and short story writer in the Arab world. When *Majmuaat al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya* was published in 1921, it contained five of Nuaymah's poems. These and other poems in the collection were memorized by the growing generation in the Middle East and their influence was great on the following generation of Arab poets.

Abbas and Najm are probably right in their suggestion that Nuaymah's poetry may have been influenced by the Lebanese folk-song.¹ Nearly all the mountain people in the Lebanon memorize these songs which cover many happy and sad aspects of life. The Lebanese folk-song is characterized by the detail and repetitive phrases that give different aspects of the same theme. Nuaymah's poetry, like his prose, shows an exhaustive insistence on detail, which is an anti-poetic characteristic. His desire to express everything in his mind, or at least to give many sides to the same object or idea treated in the poem may be the cause behind the simplicity of his language in verse, a simplicity more characteristic of prose than of poetry.

One cannot, however, fully agree with Abbas and Najm in their suggestion that the parallelisms of his style were caused by his prosaic tendency, for the short sentences or phrases he crowds into his poems are not always prosaic. Good Classical poetry, moreover, abounds with the parallelisms and antithesis. Nuaymah, however, exceeds anything known before or after him in this, showing this tendency also in his prose, although there is a longer history of such a style in Classical Arabic prose.² This is, in fact, a persistent trend throughout his poetry, but perhaps the most flagrant example of it is his poem "Ibtihalaat"; the following is a typical extract:

*In the song of the thrush, in the lament of the crow;
In the slow march of the ant, in the blowing of the wind;
In the humming of the bee, in the screeching of the hawk;
In the scream of the night, in the whisper of the morning;
In the crying of the infant, in the laughter of the old;
In the supplication of the hungry and naked;*

¹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol I, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 119

² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol I, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 120

*In the moaning of the flute, in the beating of the drum;
In the prayer of the king and the bondman.
If death approaches them, if deafness overtakes,
Then put Your seal on them, Oh God, till the dead rise again.*

See how he propagates his message of altruistic Love:

*Oh God, make my heart an oasis giving drink to friend and stranger, its
water faith, its trees hope, love and long-suffering, its air honesty, its sun
loyalty, truth and sweet mercy.*

His dualistic attitude towards life and death is beautifully conveyed in this verse:

*Speak to me of a breath that gave Adam life from the dust. Such a breath, that
showed us a point of light in the darkness of existence ---- and we became
more blind! We did not wear life till we wore death in the folds of the robe of
life. When we seek consolation, our hopes end in disaster.*

He expresses his opinions about good and evil, love and hate in the following manner:

*I offered my love to those who hated me, as a reward for their spite against me.
My recompense from those who hated me was that my love returned to me as
hatred.*

All the above samples of his poetry confirm his mystical inclination and the presence of a deep meditative philosophy.

But despite its many achievements, Nuaymah's poetry was also an example of dilution and verbosity. He knew not how to be precise. It was akin to Jibran's poetic prose style. Arabic poetry would struggle for a long time to rid itself of the effects of a diluted style, greatly confirmed by writers of the North *Mahjar*.¹

To sum up Nuaymah's achievements as a poet, when dealing with the poetry of contemplation which mirrors the moods and the inner states of mind, Nuaymah is seen to have arrived at a high degree of fluency and charm, a real achievement in view of the difficulty with such poetry to remain poetical. Unlike Ilya Abu Maadi, Nuaymah achieved a permanent change of poetic tone. Moreover, he developed the poetry of experience and paved the way for truth and authenticity. He also came closer to the language of daily speech and of the simple song than did any of his contemporaries. Unlike al-Aqqad, Shukri and al-Mazini, Nuaymah was able to give in his poetry a successful example of his literary criteria.²

¹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, Vol. I, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 112

² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, Vol. I, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 121

RETURN TO THE HOMELAND

After Jibran's death, *The Pen Association* also ceased to be effective and Nuaymah at the age of forty-two returned from civilization and society to his good, old native place in Lebanon. There he busied himself with publishing his books and articles. There he chose a cave, which he called *al-Falak* and used to spend most of his time there in solitude meditating. He settled in the modest family farm undertaking literary activities.¹

It was from Lebanon that he published most of his major philosophical and meditative writings including *Zaad-ul-Maad* in 1936. Nuaymah was an extremely accomplished poet. His classic collection of poems entitled *Hams-ul-Jufoon* was published in 1945. Then he published *Al-Bayadir*, *Saut-ul-Aalam*, *Karm ala Darb*, and the latest reprint of *al-Ghirbal*. His achievements as a critic of literature overshadowed his other accomplishments as a writer. He is better known for his stupendous work in the field of essays on criticism of poetry. *Al-Ghirbal* which is a collection of Nuaymah's eighteen comprehensive essays on criticism, was initially published in 1923.

During the course of his long involvement with literature, Nuaymah published many books on varied themes. His philosophical, mystic work *The Book of Mirdad*, which was originally published in English, was translated and printed in Arabic in 1952 in Beirut. Nuaymah has also written a painstaking and detailed account of his life in the form of his autobiography *Sabaoon*, which is a matter-of-factly narration of his life events. It is a caricature of a complete human life, a mystic's life, who ponders, meditates, and becomes anxious with the possession of

¹ Ismat Mahdi, *Modern Arabic Literature*

mystical secrets. It is a marvelous work in three grand volumes. It was published in 1959-60.

In the following chapter, there will be a discussion on Nuaymah's short stories. Nuaymah has produced several volumes of short stories. All his short stories, though varied in theme, carry the mark of his humanistic philosophy and the idea of Unity of Existence that is the hallmark of Nuaymah's belief. The chapter deals with his prose style, particularly in short stories, and technique of presenting his ideas along with the comparison with some contemporaries.

CHAPTER TWO

SHORT STORY

DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC SHORT STORY

STYLE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

THEMES

DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC SHORT STORY

In the Arab world, the short story has emerged as the most popular and arguably the most significant literary medium. Though one can trace its descent from other traditional forms of narrative going back to the *Arabian Nights*, the short story in the modern sense of the term is a new literary genre that developed in the last few decades of the nineteenth century and reached maturity only in the early decades of this century.¹

A new literary genre evolves from an accompanying metamorphosis in the social and cultural outlook of a society. It is a part of a lengthy and intricate process that leads to the transmutation of social attitudes and human values before there is any change in the discourses that process these experiences. This kind of a change started at the beginning of the nineteenth century and continued to seep slowly into every aspect of social and cultural life in Egypt and Levant.²

The Arabic literary renaissance, which started with a neoclassical literary attitude also explored the Western culture thoroughly. The novel and short story, essentially from European literary sack, appeared in Arabic literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. These new genres were circulated and gained popularity through the nonofficial magazines and newspapers being published in Syria and then Egypt.

Arab writers were already endowed with a vast and rich traditional legacy of narrative when they were adopting the new genres of novel and short stories. These forms were influenced by the ancient literary treasure of the Arabs, which

¹ Sabry Hafez, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 270

² *ibid*, page 271

was being rediscovered and resurrected in the wake of the Renaissance. The short story with the passage of time became a tool in the battle for public influence and a weapon for the subversion and destruction of the traditional intellectual establishment and its social status.¹

At the onset, these efforts were made in the form of a highly refined neoclassical style, which basically aimed at recondite erudition and pompous, florid language.

Meanwhile, a lot of literary compositions were translated from English to Arabic, which firmly established the novel and the short story as Arabic forms. This was the setting which led to the birth of short story and novel written in the increasingly flexible and straightforward prose style of the translators and journalists.²

Following the translation from the western sources, the learned mind grew more curious and adventurous. Then came the age of adaptations from European sources, which were rendered into Arabic with utmost care and refinement. This was done by reproducing characters, settings, and circumstances in the Arab guise. Mustafa al-Manfaluti made a remarkable contribution in this art of adaptation and presentation.

Now, Arab issues and problems were discussed in great deal, as witnessed in Jurji Zaidan's eighteen historical novels, written in functional, fast-moving prose, for educating the public to Arab history and culture and recreating national pride in the glory of the Arab past. M.H. Haikal's *Zainab* is another landmark in this regard. Referred to as *the first Arab novel*, it narrates the romantic tale of an

¹ Sabry Hafez, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 283

² *Reading in Modern Arabic Literature-Volume One* [edited by William M. Brinner and Mouna A. Khouri], Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1971, page ix

Egyptian girl who symbolizes the modern woman moving in a changing social dimension in a progressive world.

The Arabic short story and novel has been enriched by several generations of contemporary Arabic fiction writers. Their works are a gallery of the literary, social, and intellectual changes, which occurred in the Arab world during the present century.

Each author's style reflects his education, his social and religious milieu, and his total cultural setting. There are found to be a full range of literary 'schools' among these writers on the lines of the global trend and conforming to their own individual sensibilities.

Taha Hussain represents the old generation, Azhar-trained scholars, who depicted the Egyptian society and observed the life of the Egyptians in his writings. He presented themes from the Islamic past as well in his writings.

Mahmud Taymur, one of the key contributors to the maturation of the Arabic short story in Egypt, initially wrote in a strictly classical style imbibed in legacy from his father Ahmad Taymur. With the passage of time he developed a considerably informal style. He went to the extent of including colloquial Arab in his composition that shows in his latest works. He is one of the major short-story writers of his generation.¹

Taufiq-al-Hakim introduced symbolism into the Arabic literature to illustrate spiritual truths. He has also contributed with works of incisive social and political satire. His style has ranged from a well-pruned classical elegance to a literary

¹ Sabry Hafez, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 283

Arabic close in structure and word choice to the spoken dialogue in his play *Al-Safaqah*, which can be read either as literary or colloquial Arabic.

Taufiq Awwad has excelled as a writer of short stories among the middle generation of contemporary authors. His stories depict an intense social realism paralleled with the potently concrete style of his language.

Najib Mahfouz adopts a psychoanalytical approach in analyzing the lives of the Egyptian people in his novels and short stories.

Among the younger group of writers, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, using a highly westernized style, has produced novels and short stories centering on deep introspection and on his personal experiences as a Palestinian.

Yusus Idris portrays the intense psychological problems arising out of the drastic changes of Egyptian revolutionary society.

In the last half a century, the novel and the short story have superseded poetry as the main literary reflection of Arab social and political currents and as a mirror of the personal struggles and aspirations of the Arab soul and conscience in a rapidly changing milieu. In the wake of the expanding literacy among the Arabs, these new genres have reached a fast-widening audience and have thus attained a powerful cultural guiding force.¹

In the early twentieth century, the Arabic novel and short story were in large part an experimental and imitative pastime for an educated elite, and were written in traditional Arabic prose with its full range of intricacies. Now, the novel and short

¹ Reading in Modern Arabic Literature-Volume One [edited by William M. Brinner and Mouna A. Khouri], Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1971, page ix

story have emerged thoroughly Arabicized, truly reflecting the Arab minds and composed in a direct, effective, simplified Arabic style in which aesthetic techniques are inherent in the narrative itself rather than in the previous artificial succession of literary Arabic tradition.

Several Syro-American writers---in particular, Jibran and Nuaymah---possessing an intimate knowledge of American English and in the case of Nuaymah, Russian literature, produced novellas and short stories in a new liberated Arabic style dealing with crucial issues of the early twentieth century. They are considered to be the pioneers of Romanticism in Arabic literature.

STYLISTICS

Romanticism involves a break with traditional form. As a new movement in Arabic literature, its spread was accompanied by a change in the perception regarding the traditional legacies of the Arabic literature. Those who were sensitive to such changes and to the needs of the new reading public began to develop certain aspects of the form and to familiarize the readers with some narrative conventions necessary for the receptions of the short story.

Unlike his compatriots in the *Mahjar*, Nuaymah maintained strong ties with Lebanon and his solid knowledge of its reality is clearly reflected in his early short stories that he wrote between 1914-25 particularly in the literary journal *Al-Saih*. These stories compare favorably with the most mature works of the early pioneers of the genre and are marked by their understanding of the nature of artistic experience and the techniques of its presentations.¹

In the Lebanon the major romantic short story writers at this time were Nuaymah and Said Taqiyy-ul-Din. Whereas Nuaymah divided his attention between several literary genres, Taqiyy-ul-Din chose to write only short stories and made his mark as the most active and prolific Lebanese short story writer in the 1940s and the early 1950s. His short stories endeavored to encompass what he saw as a major feature of Lebanese society--the divide between those who stayed at home and those who emigrated.

Both Nuaymah and Taqiyy-ul-Din manifest their strong love for the homeland in their writings. Although Nuaymah had to choose to stay away from his

¹ Sabry Hafez, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 279

motherland, he came back to it at the first opportunity he got. The desire to communicate with its beauty and social environment is an element shared by these two authors.

For Taqiyy-ul-Din, the motherland is the main source of emotion and vision in his world and it has the power to hold the Lebanese in its grip even if he is far from its geographical domain. As soon as the link between the Lebanese and their motherland is weakened this opens the floodgates of deviations and destruction.¹ Nuaymah also seems to have been nurturing the same ideology, which reflects in his decision to choose Lebanon as his permanent abode.

In most of his stories, Mikhail Nuaymah has employed philosophical method to convey his ideas. Most of the times he does not explicitly state what he feels or what he wants to say, rather he prefers to let the reader derive his own outcome from the juxtapositions of the narration. Nuaymah writes assuming that he is speaking to simple, inexperienced, but obstinate readers, whom he must strive to convince. Thus, his writings tend to become explanatory and sometimes oversimplified. But this style has its merits too, as it is one of the elements that give his writing a kind of charm that he is known for.²

Unlike Jibran, who appeals directly to the emotions to explain his ideas, Nuaymah prefers to appeal to the common sense of the reader. Nuaymah's writings begin with a logical introduction, then he builds on it, giving details and clarifying his points through arguments and sheer common sense until he arrives at a natural

¹ Sabry Hafez, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 297

² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry-Volume One*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 116

conclusion. Thus, his writings are divided into sections that seem to grow organically towards an end.¹

Nuaymah, although he was more cultured than many of the other members of *al-Rabita*, was not particularly knowledgeable in classical Arabic literature. Nuaymah's reading in foreign literature and his comparatively scant knowledge of the classical heritage led him to believe in its worthlessness, comparing it with modern European literature. Thus, we see a marked lack of complexity in his writings and simple use of language without much concern for the puritanical concerns for grammar.²

Nuaymah attacked those also who attached much importance to the language and lexicographical dependence, because this made the language inflexible and stagnant. He rather believed in the vitality of the spoken language thus assimilating colloquial words, which seemed more appropriate to the meaning.

Nuaymah believes the language to be one of the life's phenomena, which only obeys the laws of life. He believes in choosing the suitable and preserving the best of it. He feels that language is like a tree that changes its dead branches from green ones, and its dried leaves for living ones.³

Both Jibran and Nuaymah believe that it is the poet and the writer who are the makers of language and its patrons. There should be no cause of worry if they produce new symbols or change the old ones.⁴

¹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*-Volume One, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 116

² *ibid*, page 110

³ Mikhail Nuaymah, *al-Ghirbal*

⁴ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*-Volume One, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, page 111

Nuaymah chose to lay more importance on the content than the form in his writings.¹ He preferred to avoid unnecessary embellishment and decoration with the words that mar the sensibility of the writing. He laid more importance on spontaneity and non-deliberateness in his stories. As a writer, he lets things run their course, allowing characters to surface or ideas to develop without 'deliberateness' of any kind. But he was not aware of the art of omission, as he did not like to contain his thoughts or state them in a curtailed form. Perhaps this gave his writings a unique variety of innocuousness.

¹ Surayya Malhas, Mikhail Nuaymah: Al-Adeeb al-Sufi, Beirut 1964, page 39

THEMES IN NUAYMAH'S STORIES

- ***SOCIAL REALISM: KANA MA KANA, MAUIDAAN, ALA-LLAH***
- ***HUMANISM: REPENTANCE, ASFAR-AL-NAAB, HADYAT-UL-HAYZABOON, JAHANNAM, ABU BATTAH***
- ***WOMANHOOD: UMM WA LAISAT BI UMMIN***
- ***UNITY OF EXISTENCE: MEELAD JADEED***
- ***TRANSMIGRATION OF SOUL: LIQA***

SOCIAL REALISM

KANA MA KANA

Mikhail Nuaymah has dealt with a variety of themes in his short stories. He has written numerous stories on various subjects. *Kana ma Kana*, which is a collection of six stories namely *Saat-ul-Coco*, *Sanatuh-al-Jadeeda*, *Al-Dhakheera*, *Saadat-al-Bik*, *Shoorti*, and *Al-Aaqir* presents a gallery of social reality in contemporary Lebanon. These stories were mostly written in America but published after his return to Lebanon. Each of these stories is essentially a depiction of the society in Lebanon and the Oriental Arab in general.

In one of these stories, *Sanatuha-al-Jadeeda*, Nuaymah portrays the taboo and dogma governing detest for the girl child in the East, especially the lamentations at her birth. In this story, a person who had been endowed with everything but a son (who shall carry his generation forward) buries his own newborn daughter alive in the ground. *Al-Dhakheera* is basically a mockery on the society as it deals with the issue of superstitious people and their blind faith in magic and miracles. We still find a lot of people, though pretending to be modern, having staunch faith in the miracles and occult. The story *Saadat-al-Bik* is a story told in a lighter vein, which mocks the obsession of Oriental people with titles. Its main character is Al-Sheikh Ahmad Al-Daooq who cannot tolerate being called anything but *Saadatloo Ahmad Beek Al-Daooq*, *Saadatloo* being a honorific title.

The story *Shoorti* deplures war and recounts its causes. Mikhail Nuaymah himself had a firsthand experience of witnessing a war from a soldier's eyes. Wars, he observes, make a man kill his own brother. As a fellow human being, people should help each other, but they are made to participate in the bloody carnage without knowing any reasons.

Aaqir is a tragic tale of a barren lady, who was forced by the circumstances to commit suicide. In this story, Nuaymah presents a novel dimension of the issue. Here he depicts the consequences of holding woman the sole responsible person for not begetting a child. He highlights this extremely serious issue, which causes a lot of familial tragedies and misery in the East, at more than one occasion in his writings.

In this story, Azeez and Jameela fall in love with each other and get married. Even after a considerable amount of time lapse after their marriage, Jameela could not conceive a child. This led to a lot of change in everyone's behavior toward her. Azeez's mother prayed in temples and took refuge of the saints, but all in vain. Azeez's love for Jameela was not the same, and he started avoiding her as he started believing that she is a barren woman and would not bear any child for him. However, by *God's grace* she becomes pregnant. Everyone thought that this was all because of her mother-in-law's prayers and devotion. Azeez also starts loving her again with the same zeal.

However, the truth was something else. Azeez was not the father of the child. Jameela was left with no option but to commit adultery to prove that she was not barren. But her conscience could not take the burden of the sin and she could not forgive herself for committing adultery, so she committed suicide.

Nuaymah depicts a society where all blame goes to women for anything. This drives them to the point of craziness and sometimes they commit suicide, or moral suicide as we saw in the story. Azeez was forced to commit adultery, because she had no other option left with her. Her husband was impotent and he wanted a child!

DEPICTION OF SHALLOW RELATIONSHIPS IN 'MAUIDAAN'

In another story *Mauidaan*, Nuaymah depicts the reality of the young lovers of this age. This is a story about two appointments being fixed by two sets of lovers at the same time and at the same venue. But what came out of this sheer coincidence cannot be termed as a mere coincidence.

A young girl entered a café. She looked around as if searching for someone. Eventually, she settled down on a corner seat facing the window, with her back toward the main entrance. The waiter came to take the order, but she told him that she was waiting for someone and shall call him later.

After a short while a youth entered the café. He looked around and then moved toward the same girl surreptitiously. He covered her eyes with his hands as if giving a surprise. The girl also acknowledged his gesture and turned lovingly toward him. Seeing each other's face, they were taken aback. The youth immediately stepped back and the girl jumped from the chair. The youth was profusely apologized for his mistake, but the girl gave him a piece of her mind. As the guy explained to her that he also had an appointment at the same time with his fiancée who looks like her from behind, things calmed down. The girl offered a chair to him and they settled down.

The girl was also waiting for her fiancé. They expressed each other's anger for their respective fiancés. Both of them said that their fiancés would have to pay the price for this delay. After a while they seemed to grow more and more intimate. They ordered food and jokes were shared, hands were held. After some time when they left the café, they were hand in hand, looking intoxicatingly in each other's eyes.

Some moments later, another youth entered the café. He was looking around all over as if searching for someone. Then he sat on the same table facing the window and he sat with his back towards the door. When the waiter came to him he asked whether a girl of such and such description had come here. The waiter was rather surprised and told him that she sat there for ages and then a youth came and sat with her, they talked, ate, and then left together some time back. The youth's face became pale and he became nervous. He kept sitting there and fiddling with the glass in his nervousness.

Meanwhile, another young girl entered the café and rushed toward this youth. She patted his shoulders laughing and said that she was late due to some urgency and he would forgive her if she tells the reason to him.

When the guy turned and looked at her, she jumped back astonishingly. She said sorry to him. The youth responded with ease, because he was equally alarmed. He said that anybody is prone to make mistakes.

She told him that she took him for her fiancé who had an appointment with her at this place. Now she was two hours late because of some important thing. The youth told her that even he is waiting for his fiancée and late for the schedule. Then he told her that she had already arrived and then went away with some guy that he does not know about. The girl suspected if it was her fiancé who went with this guy's fiancée.

She called the waiter and described her fiancé to him. Indeed he was her fiancé only.

They also sat together and ordered food and drink and when they left, they were walking leisurely and talking in whispers. The girl asked the boy whether he

would regret what he did. The boy was assured her that he was confident of what he is doing and they embraced each other kissing each other passionately.

As they passed through the long trees, two figures appeared in the moonlight, a youth and a girl holding hands. The girl was telling the guy that when she made an appointment with her fiancé actually she was making an appointment with him. The guy also said the same thing. They asked each other whether they would ever regret this, and both of them decided that this is the best thing that could happen to them. Then they kissed each other.

This story depicts a rather extreme variety of the shallowness that has been creeping into the relationships between people in general and between men and women in particular. Though one can think of it as an exaggerated and too coincidental narration, there is no denial from the fact that there is alarming crisis in all kinds of relationships that human beings are having these days.

A girl befriending a boy in a few minutes and surrendering herself beyond reasonable extent despite the fact that her fiancé is scheduled to arrive...well you might shudder, but things have actually turned out to be like this. It might not be the same amount of time that is depicted here, but with a slight change in parameters we find that this is a common phenomena. It is also noteworthy that both the girl and the boy, who arrive early, took the late coming of their fiancés as a personal insult and they wanted to teach lesson to them.

Nuaymah throws light on how in today's materialistic age everything is getting into a consumable shape. You have relationships that resemble a commodity. If you do not get instant gratification from your friend, or fiancé, or any other relationship, what is the use of it? Just dump it and carry on.. Why not, you have

better options. How long can you wear the same pair of shoes? Or how long can you use same brand of perfume? You need a change after all!!

VIRTUE OF CHARITY IN 'ALA-ALLAH'

Mikhail Nuaymah's works are very diverse. In his short stories, he chooses characters from all walks of life. Rich, poor, young, old, myth, reality, he presents every topic with such a perfect blending of the characters that it is hard to find any flaw.

Ala-Allah is the story of a trader, who was a heart patient. His doctor advised him to reduce his weight at any cost and suggested some physical activities. The trader decided that he would abandon his car and take walk to and fro his shop.

In the morning when he was walking toward his shop, he encountered a female beggar with a child. She lamented and stretched her hand for the money. The trader said, "ala-Allah!"--God should (give). He was very bitter toward the beggars and said that the woman must have borrowed someone's baby to gain sympathy while collecting alms. As he moved on he encountered five different beggars with varying disabilities. To all of them he gave the same reply, "Ala-Allah" (God should give). He felt very awful and kept cribbing that the government should chase them out of the city.

He reached to his shop and sat himself on a chair. As he was going to see the day's newspaper, his neighboring trader entered reciting *Inna Lillah wa Inna Ilaihi Rajeoon*¹ (we are from Allah and to Allah we return). The trader read the signs of worry at his neighbor's face and thought that someone was dead. When he asked

¹ A Quranic expression recited on someone's demise or in the event of some unavoidable fatality

him who he was, he said, “all of us including you and me are dead, because the Commercial Bank had announced bankruptcy. They had deposited all their money there. The trader's face became pale and he became dumb out of shock.

At the same time a female beggar stretched her hand for money. The neighbor rebuked her and told her the same thing, “ala-Allah”. He said that tomorrow they would also be taking alms from others.

The trader still shocked muttered to himself, “If everything is given by God what do we give then.” He realized that God has made everyone means to give to another person. His means, Commercial Bank went bankrupt, and now he was feeling how it feels to be deprived.

In that state, he went to his home. In the night he suffered a massive heart attack. The doctor was immediately called. He examined him and dispensed the medicines required. The wife asked about her husband's condition. The doctor told her that he had done his best but, “Ala-Allah,” only God can give (life) now!

The trader, who overheard what the doctor said to his wife, whispered in a broken voice:

علي .. الله .. !
وماذا علينا نحن؟ .. لا شيء؟!

“God should give...What should we do then? Nothing?”

Many years have passed since that incident. Nobody remembers the Commercial Bank and its bankruptcy, but people still talk with great respect and regard about

the orphanage for the poor and old people in the best locality of the city, which was funded by the widow of the trader according to his last will.

There was an inscription on the main gate:

على الله ..وعلينا...

“Allah should give... and we should also.”

It appears that Nuaymah has been very influenced by the misery of the destitute. He has talked about the mendicants at more than one occasion in his stories. This story draws our attention to the basic human value of empathy towards the poor and deprived. Only sympathy is not sufficient for doing enough for the poor. Sympathy is very intense, but it fades very soon. Empathy, on the other hand, is more effective in understanding the plights of the others. When the trader himself suffered the loss of wealth, he realized that he is also dependent on someone. He realized that it is terrible to be denied something that one hopes for. Thus his eyes see the greater truth that nobody gives or nobody takes, everybody is means for someone else.

HUMANISM

SANCTITY OF LIFE IN 'REPENTANCE'

"One should not injure, subjugate, enslave, torture, or kill any living being. This doctrine of nonviolence is immaculate, immutable, and eternal. Just as suffering is painful to you, in the same way it is painful, disquieting, and terrifying to all animals, living beings, organisms, and sentient beings.¹"

Repentance by Mikahil Nuaymah contains the above universal thought in a beautiful narrative style. The above dialogue on the sanctity of life was documented in an ancient Indian text. Nuaymah's story seems to be repeating the same idea, which indicates that his thoughts transcend the barriers of time and space and carry a sense of universality. Here is the translated version of the story.

"Say blessed is life."

"Blessed is life. What next?"

"Do you remember how many times you have dissuaded me from hunting?"

"I do. Hopefully you have finally listened to me."

Abu Marwan has a reputation as a swift hunter. He is past forty, with a cheerful face, sleepy eyes, and a fine smile. A witty and lively man, he is moreover famed for being honest, generous, soft-spoken, and kind-hearted. People tell amusing tales about his compassion for animals: when his cat broke her leg, he nearly disowned his family because they suggested that he throw her in the river. Instead, he devoted much time tending to her needs until her foot healed. When one of his hens became blind, he built her a special coop, fed her with his own

¹ Acharangasutra 4.25-26

hands, brought her the fresh grass she liked, and cleaned her nest. He would not eat her meat and when she died, he buried her with reverence and dignity. Rumor suggested that he cried over her grave.

He refrains from eating the meat of his prey. When asked about it he replies, "Glory to God! My mouth refuses to eat what my arm is willing to kill. Suffice for me to kill and for others to eat."

Because I knew Abu Marwan and his agreeable disposition well, whenever I listened to his fascinating tales about his hunting tricks, I expressed my surprise at this strange contradiction in his nature. He sympathized with blind hens and lame cats, yet took great pleasure in destroying a partridge, a rabbit, or a deer. I tried my best to dissuade him from hunting, but I failed. I attempted to deter him by warning that the life returns pain for pain and pleasure for pleasure. I reminded him of the old saying, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Unconcerned, he scratched his head slowly. "Hunting is halal [permitted by Islamic law]," he said, "and I have no joy greater than that sport."

More than once I asked him to explain why he found such pleasure in hunting. Did it lie in searching for the elusive, or in trapping and subduing the rebellious, or capturing that which was distant? Is it in the physical exercise of the hunter? He assured me that the joy of hunting included those feelings and more - it was about the hunter's wish to escape the anxieties of living, the desire to run wild in nature and smell the scent of the rocks and the soil, the wind and the clouds. "For a hunter," he declared, "the hunting game is like getting drunk on the songs of dawns and dusks, like bathing in his sweat and listening to his heart-beat as he pursued his prey." He concluded his speech with a shrug of the shoulders and a murmur: "um... um... um! Hunting is a joy that none other than a hunter can truly

experience. It is an enormous celebration of one's body and soul. God help me when this body of mine is confined within four walls."

These conversations flashed through my mind when Abu Marwan asked me to bless life and reminded me of what had come to pass between us about hunting. I sensed a change in his attitude and said to him: "Your eyes bear news, Abu Marwan. Let us hear it." He held his chin and paused for a moment, then he took my hand and bid me sit on the rock beside him. He cleared his throat and spoke: "Listen. Yesterday I woke up from an alarming dream in which I killed a partridge. When I picked it up, it was still breathing, so I took my knife and slit its throat. Suddenly, it became a child with its throat cut and that child was my four-year-old sib Fouad. You know and love him, but you must understand that, besides God, he is what I adore. The dream almost kept me from hunting that morning, but I was ashamed of myself for acting weak like a woman. I took my lunch and gear and set out.

"Before I stepped outside, Fouad called out to me: Papa! Papa! I held him in my arms and kissed his eyes, his brow, and his cheeks. I asked him what goodies he wanted me to bring him back. Opening his arm wide, he pleaded: A real big partridge - that big! Would you believe it, my friend, if I told you that I spent the whole day climbing mountains and descending into valleys to no avail?" I spotted many partridges and shot at about 10 of them but did not hit any. Had someone else told you this, you would not have believed it because you know that there is nothing that I can do better than hunting. I do not know why, but my eye and my hand were at odds that day. The dream controlled my thoughts and nerves and I became angry with myself. I had refused to acknowledge your advice that life's measures are different from ours, that involuntary inner forces can either drive us to, or restrain us from, some actions, and that it is wiser to understand and obey the dictates of life.

The sun began to set and I had no bird in my sack. It pained me to face Fouad without the partridge he expected. I would rather lose one year of my life ... ten years .. than face my young son with empty hands. I wished I had the strength of Joshua in the Old Testament so I could stop the sun from setting and extend the daytime. Perhaps then I would succeed in killing a partridge or some other bird that would be a substitute for it.

"Finally I gave up and headed back home with defeat gnawing at my heart and the cursed dream invading my head and flashing in front of my eyes. How and why I did not know, but I was certain that the dream was the reason for my failure. As I emptied my rifle, and swung it onto my shoulder, intent on returning home before dark, a fox darted out of the thistles around a curve in my path. Instantly, I shot it dead. I was not interested in its fur because, as you know, fox furs are worthless at this time of the year. I killed it in retaliation against myself and against nature - a release of the feelings that had antagonized me all day long. I wanted to regain confidence in the balance between my eye and my hand and to relive my mind from the nightmarish dream.

"As I approached the place where the fox fell, three baby cubs leaped out of the thistles and scattered through the nearby rocks. I immediately realized that I had just killed a mother of three. Truthfully, I had killed a mother and her offspring because the cubs were too young to survive on their own. I felt as if spears were piercing my heart and sticks were falling on my head, but the pain transformed into amazement and then into joy when in the mother fox's mouth I saw a big partridge hanging onto life.

"You cannot imagine the thoughts and feelings that flooded me at that moment. I had committed a terrible crime, no doubt. The mother fox took care of her three cubs and they were as dear to her as my children are to me. Perhaps, as she left her

hole that morning, one of her young ones wanted the same thing that my youngest son asked for - a big partridge.

"Perhaps she wandered all day, as I did, but could not find her prey until reached that spot at that moment. What is it that led me to the same spot at that exact moment to snatch away this poor mother's life and rob her and her cubs of their dinner so I can offer it to my children? Could she have known that the prey she caught was not meant for her and her young ones but for mine? Answer me if you can."

I did not reply. He smacked his lips like he was eating something tasty and continued: "The incident is beyond my understanding. There is more. When I put the knife on the partridge's throat and slit it, the dream recurred. In a flash that seemed like ages, the slain partridge appeared before my eyes as my youngest son. I thought that I would lose my mind and spirit; it took a few seconds for me to regain my senses. Forgive me, but my body shudders as I speak! It was my son's innocent desire for me to return with the bird that had brought this delusion upon me, I thought. I convinced myself that I had committed no crime and that there was no need to blame myself. As for the dream, I decided that it was a mere fantasy. Thanking the Lord for a successful close to my day I forgot, or tried to forget, that the prize I carried in my sack was not my kill by that of an ill-fated mother fox. She, I felt, deserved the credit for the joy that my son displayed when I handed him the bird."

"My wife roasted the partridge and gave Fouad a leg and some breast meat. In the merry atmosphere around the dinner table Fouad suddenly let out a terrible cry. He was overcome by a fit of coughing and began to gasp for breath. His hands shook as he tossed and turned. We thought a small bone could be choking him and that we would surely lose him if we did not act immediately. Luckily, our

next-door neighbor, who is a doctor, came to our aid. In short, my friend, the boy was saved by a miracle. My heart trembles and I feel sick when I recall what he went through that night."

Abu Marwan fell silent for a long time. He rose sluggishly, put his hand on mine and said, "Say with me 'Blessed is life!' Unbeknownst to us, it continues to enlighten us." "Blessed is life," I repeated. "Does that mean that you have abandoned hunting?" He replied resentfully: "After what I just told you, how can you doubt that?"¹

In this story we find that how Abu Marwan, who was a noble and softhearted person realized that killing is bad. The author's arguments could not convince him, but he experienced such mysterious things that he became averse to the idea of hunting. His visions were nothing but a synthesized version of the thoughts in his subconscious, which was there intrinsically. Abu Marwan used to think that if he stops hunting it would be a blemish on his manliness. When he himself experienced the pain, though virtual, in the form of a vision of slaughtering his own son, he realized that killing is really very painful.

REALITY OF EXISTENCE IN ASFAR-UL-NAAB

In another story "Asfar-ul-Naab", Nuaymah has portrayed a person who throughout his life was stigmatized as a beggar. That man was known to have been died long time back, but he presents to the narrator, who is probably Nuaymah, in his dream. The narrator, who was very fond of going to the graves and ruminating there, finds a very old man accompanied with a fifteen year old

¹ Translated by Nada Najjar

boy in the graveyard. As he entered the graveyard, he saw that the boy was pointing towards him and guiding the old man to him.

The old man came to him and stretched his hands. The narrator asked him to come to his house since he did not have any money on him. The old man looked into his eyes and said that he did not have that much time.

The narrator was startled by his mannerism and tone. He asked him to accompany him right now. But the old man said that it is he who will give something to him and he has traveled from very far to give it to him.

The narrator now completely confused asked him, "Aren't you a beg... I mean a poor person.

He had not even uttered the word beggar completely, but the old man caught on to him and said, "yes, yes, call me beggar..do not shy away, say it...BEG-GER, BEGGAR." He said that ultimately the narrator also called him by this name. He said that he had heard this word for the ninety years of his life. Everyone called him by this name. He said that nobody treated him like a human being, but he was treated worse than a dog. Mothers scared their children by taking his name.

When the narrator saw that the old man was getting carried away, he asked him that from which distant place was he coming. The old man said that the boy knows it, and it is the boy who told him that the narrator was the person who treats beggars like any other human being. He said he was disappointed that he too was calling him beggar only.

Then he asked whether he knows Asfar-ul-Naab. Narrator said that he died many years ago. The old man said that he did not die, because he himself was *Asfar-ul-*

Naab. He told him that he spent nine years with vision with his father, and ninety years without vision. He spent his life asking people to give him from the wealth of the God. His soul became wounded and mauled and he felt like a foot cleaner on the threshold of the house. He said that he was Asfar-ul-Naab and not a beggar, but everybody called him a beggar.

He said that today everyone is a beggar except Asfar-ul-Naab because he does not want anything from anyone today. He told he was very happy today, because he was going to die after some time. For the first time in his life, he was not carrying his Kashkool¹ and he was not worrying about what he will do.

Then the old man said it is time for him to go. He requested the narrator to taste the intoxication he was having and take his begging bag. He spread his hand with pride then, because a man should not beg from another human. He said that everybody carries a Kashkool in this world and sometime or other, everyone stretches hands in front of someone.

The old man and the boy departed without saying anything then. Then the narrator gets up from his dream. It was his imagination only.

Nuaymah picked the character of Asfar-ul-Naab to narrate his feelings and philosophy. His idea of oneness of human being and God and all other creatures is reflected in this story. The person who is destitute is no different from the one who has everything and he should also get all the honors and dignity that any human being deserves.

¹ Conventional alms pot made of the hard outer shell of certain fruits

In the heart-rending appeals of Asfar-ul-Naab, we can hear Nuaymah lamenting for those who never get any humane treatment throughout their lives and are treated very badly.

HADYAT-UL-HAYZABOON

Hadyat-ul-Hayzaboon is the story that tells the tale of greed and its consequences. Greed devastates a person's life and deprives him of peace of soul. There were people sitting and sharing the strangest and most unbelievable incidents of their lives. An old lady, who was seventy years old said that she will tell a true incident, but only if nobody will take it for an exaggeration or lie. All agreed and the lady started her tale.

She said that when she was young there was an old lady called Haizaboon living in her neighborhood. She was a widow and her house was the dirtiest house anyone could have, and it had such a foul smell that everyone dreaded going there. People believed that it was an abode of devils.

Haizaboon had an interesting story. As a young maiden, she had married according to her taste and against her parents wish. Even the man she married could not convince his parents. So, they were living separately together, of course without the blessings of their respective parents. With the passage of time they had a son.

Once Haizaboon's husband came with a sorcerer from the west. The sorcerer said that there is immense treasure in a corner in their house, but it can be retrieved only when they sacrifice their son.

Next morning the sorcerer and child both were not found. Haizaboon and her husband said that the child was kidnapped by the sorcerer. After some time, the husband also expired. People said that he died by eating green cheese. Thus Haizaboon was alone now. She lived for ninety years with her last five years spent in the bed.

The narrator was twenty years old then. She remembered one day before her marriage, somebody came and told her that Haizaboon is calling her. She got scared but she thought Haizaboon is about to die, so why should she invite God's wrath by not listening to the plea of a dying person. She went to her house.

Haizaboon called her affectionately. The narrator asked Haizaboon if she was hungry. Haizaboon replied that she is hungry only for death. Haizaboon knew that she was going to get married next day. She said that since she cannot give any gift to her, she wants that the narrator give her some gift. Then Haizaboon asked her to do two things to her when she dies. One was to close her eyes with her hands and the second to seal her mouth with a gold coin.

Haizaboon revealed to her that she was hungry for gold only and gold was her God. She said, "Ibrahim sacrificed his son for God and I slaughtered my son for gold, because gold is my God."

Then she told her that her son was slaughtered in the same room by the sorcerer. She told that they mired in greed and their souls were so maligned that they agreed. The child was slaughtered. After that the sorcerer dug a corner of the house and a heavy pot was found in that corner. Upon opening the pot, the shine of the gold inside startled their eyes. Sorcerer had a deal with the parents that he will take one-third of the treasure. Now Haizaboon and her husband were having a different thought. They killed the sorcerer also so that they could own the whole

treasure. After that as they opened the pot, there was nothing inside but ash. They were mad from fury. The hurt and pain was more than the slaughtering of their only son. Later, Haizaboon poisoned her husband also, because he was the one who brought the sorcerer to the house.

Then Haizaboon pointed to one corner and asked her to dig there and bring the pot from there. The narrator did as she was told. When she brought the pot, it was found to be full of gold. Haizaboon's joy knew no bound. But she knew she was going to die. So, she told her not to forget what she had asked her to do when she dies. She also told narrator that she can keep the gold pot as a gift from her. Then Haizaboon died. The narrator closed her eyes with her hand and sealed her mouth with the gold coin. After a moment she found that the pot was full of ash again and there was ash on Haizaboon's mouth also.

This appears to be a highly metaphorical story. Nuaymah has made use of symbolism to emphasize that materialism is on rise and people are going berserk behind money. He wants to say that the lust for money is never ending and happiness can never be attained with the mere acquisitions of wealth and gold. Haizaboon and her husband lacked the humanity. They were so brutal that they killed their own child. There can be no more heinous crime committed by a person. Their hearts were not hearts but an abode of devil and they were worse than a devil. Even a devil would not harm its own child.

JAHANNAM

Nuaymah wrote many stories in which the character resembles him in one way or the other. *Jahannam* is a story of an old artist Adnan, who has been living in a rented house for fifty-five years. He is in the ripe age of eighty now. The owner

of the house wanted his house back and since Adnan did not agree to leave, he took him to the court. The court ordered Adnan to vacate the house within three months.

Tomorrow was the last day of the deadline to vacate the house. All along the three months Adnan did not look for any alternative arrangement for himself. He never wanted to leave the house where he spent his entire life.

He was in deep thoughts thinking about the years he had spent there. He decided that he will burn all his belongings, so that he has no attachment with the house. As an artist, he had won many awards and certificates of appreciation. He started burning everything one by one. Suddenly he saw a photograph of a maiden. It was surrounded by the fire from all four sides. Adnan put his hand in the fire and saved the photo from burning further. It was his first love. This was an illegitimate love since the girl was the wife of his best friend. She was cheating on her husband and he was deceiving his friend. Still they justified their love by saying that the fire of love will purify their every sin.

Adnan had been burning in the fire of repentance for the past forty years. Just as Adnan saved the burning photograph, his phone rang. Adnan lifted the receiver. There was a female voice on the other side, it addressed him in a quivering tone saying that she was in a hell of suffering and she wanted to see him, even if for two minutes.

Adnan replied with extreme awe that he had just come out of hellfire and does not want to go back again, even for two minutes.

It was his first love's call.

Nuaymah seems to have been inspired for this story from a very close life experience. There is a great amount of straightforwardness in this story, and there is a fair amount of ambiguity also. At a ripe age of eighty, why would one receive a call from her old girlfriend? Perhaps Nuaymah wanted to convey that it is never late to realize one's folly. Perhaps the telephone call indicated that the temptations never end, and like a vicious circle they keep visiting the man. Only you have to be determined enough and strong enough to fight them away. Adnan is appreciable even when he acknowledged his mistake after a long time and refused to commit further sin.

ABU BATTAH

In his story *Abu Battah*, Nuaymah talks about his friend called Abu Battah, who was a porter in Lebanon. He was the leader of the porters. His right leg had swelling due to scorpion bite when he was a child, so he was called Abu Battah.

He was the mightiest porter in the town. He had the power to lift anything. When the writer came across Abu Battah for the first time, Abu Battah asked him what does he do for living. Writer told him that he writes.

Abu Battah said:

“You write what you do and you live on what you write.”

Abu Battah was married thrice with many children. His third wife was twenty years old and he had married her at the age of sixty-five.

Abu Battah never took anyone's help in lifting the heaviest luggage. He was very proud of his power.

Nuaymah visited him once when he was eighty-five years old. When he reached there some porters came to him and said that Abu Battah was insisting on lifting a heavy barrel that no one could lift. He was getting it loaded on his back with the help of three people. His son Hussain said that his father could not lift it even when he was his age. Abu Battah rebuked him severely.

As Abu Battah lifted the barrel and move ahead, after a few steps he bled from the mouth and dropped dead. The barrel went down and rolled away from him.

Thus we see how he had to pay for his unnecessary stubbornness and pride. One should never ignore one's reality and condition. He was in such a ripe age and he should have refrained from doing any excessive thing. It also points out toward the misery of the menial workers. They cannot even afford to rest when they are old. Albeit Abu Battah's character is such that even if he could rest he would not have rested, because he always wanted to prove that he is almighty. He ignored the fact that only Allah is Almighty.

WOMANHOOD

UMM WA LAISAT BI UMM

Mikhail Nuaymah's short stories are thought provoking and carry a deep sense of belonging to his people and society. *Umm wa Laisat bi Ummin* is a story which alludes to a social setup that attaches certain tags to individuals. This is the story of an old woman called Khala Mirsha, who could not bear a child. She is very bitter about it and hides her bitterness by saying that she hates children. She thanks God for saving her from something that has no good attached to it. In her words only:

"الأولاد كالعلق يمتصون دماء والديهم ، فلا هم يشبعون ولا الوالدون يسمنون."

"Children are like parasite sucking their parents' blood. Neither their thirst is quenched nor the parents prosper.¹"

With these notions in her mind, anybody could guess what would have happened to her when her neighbor, a lady who was friendly to her and to whom she was indebted in more than one way, asked her to take care of her small baby while she was going outside. Khala Mirsha shuddered at her proposal, but she could not refuse her the favor. The mother handed a quietly sleeping baby to her and left thereof.

In a short while after the mother left, the baby moved and got up. Khala Mirsha believed in her heart that something is going to happen. A child with her and without any problems! How would that be!!

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Al Majmooat-al-Kamila-Volume Two, page 414

She tried to pacify the baby by patting and thumping him. It appeared that the baby was all set to launch his tantrums. His restlessness grew as the time passed. His crying compounded with additional shrill and raised pitch. For Khala Mirsha it was nightmare come true. When things became out of control, she lifted the baby in her arms and started marching in the room and tossing the baby, Zaghlool, in the air.

All her efforts were going in vain but.

Something occurred to Khala Mirsha then, she lifted her top and exposed her limp breast to Zaghlool. The baby quietly caught up with the offer and fell silent, quenching his thirst with her offering. Khala Mirsha felt something that she had never experienced in her life. It was like salvation to her. For the first time in her life her maternal self was awakened. She was enthralled in an ocean of bliss as the baby was filling himself. It was as if all her bitterness for the children was stored there and Zaghlool sucked it all out from her existence.

"واحست بان ذلك اللبن كان يتقطر من كل خلية في جسدها ويجري كلوريد من اوردتها"

"She felt as if that milk was trickling from each cell of her body and running through the each vein."²

After a while the mother came and Khala was relieved of the duty. But everything changed for her now. She could feel the affection and longing for Zaghlool deeply rooted inside her existence. Now, she always waited for the opportunity when Zaghlool was given under her care. This happened quite often as the mother regularly used to go out. Khala Mirsha's affection grew intense and she became

² Mikhail Nuaymah, Al Majmooat-al-Kamila-Volume Two, page 417

very attached with the child. Zaghlool also became more attached to Khala than his own mother!

One night, Khala Mirsha heard the child crying excessively. She could hear the mother's all attempts to quite him going in vein. She could not hold herself for long and ran to her neighbor's house dashing inside her room. She asked the mother to give Zaghlool to her because she knew how to quiet him. The neighbor became angry with that, and why not, it was an insult to her motherhood. She bluntly told Khala Mirsha to mind her own business and closed the door on her face. Khala, now hapless, returned to her house where she could listen to the Zaghlool's crying throughout the night. At some point in the night Zaghlool became quiet forever.

Since that time, Khala lost her mental equilibrium. She never steps out of her room. Her food is supplied to her there only. One can hear her marching in the room and producing voices as if she is consoling and pacifying a baby.

Nuaimah has dealt with the issue of barren woman in the story *Aaqir* also. Here he presents a psychoanalytical aspect of the barren woman. The stigma attached to such women in the Eastern societies is well known to us. Khala Mirsha and her bitterness is a consequence of such attitude of the society towards those women who cannot bear a child.

UNITY OF EXISTENCE

MEELAD JADEED

In the story *Meelad Jadeed*, Nuaymah reemphasizes his idea of Unity of Existence, which is the hallmark of his philosophy. This is a story about a ten-year-old boy called Meelad (because he was born on Jesus Christ's birthday). This child is physically challenged with his lower extremities paralyzed. He is full of grief and resentment for not being able to do what normal children of his age do. He misses playing with his friends, roaming in the fields, and enjoying his life as all others do in front of his melancholic eyes.

It was Christmas Eve and everyone was full of joy and enthusiasm in Meelad's house. Meelad cut off from everyone and went and slept in his room alone. His parents had gone to the Bait Lahm to celebrate the occasion. Meelad was particularly upset about his inability that evening. He had heard that Jesus grants the wishes on this day, and was told by everyone, including his doctor, that only Jesus can help him retrieve the lost sensation in his legs. He lay in his bed remembering Jesus and praying to him to cure him.

On the other hand, there was a maid in the house, who loved someone. They were planning to get married and were looking for some financial break to carry out their plans of marriage. This was a golden opportunity for them with only disabled Meelad in the house. The maid conspired with him to attack the house, tie her with ropes so that no one doubts her, and rob the house of its valuables and scoot away before the occupants arrive.

The plan was executed with utmost precision. The lover turned thief wore a long robe and entered the room where Meelad was praying for Jesus to come and cure him. Seeing this mysterious guest, Meelad asked him who is he. The thief said he was Jesus so that the innocent boy would not create any fuss. Meelad asked why had he come. He told he had come to take some money from his parents' wealth to distribute it among the poor. Meelad told him where is the money and gave the key too. He was about to go when Meelad intercepted him and expressed his disappointment that he, Jesus, just came for others and not for him. The thief asked him why was he waiting for him. Meelad told because he loved him and wanted to be with him on this special day, and also because he can cure his paralysis. Then the thief touched the boy's feet in order to avoid any further mess with the boy. He then hurried toward the window to flee. Meelad kept calling him to meet his parents and bless them also. But he never had to stop for that.

Meelad found himself jumping to his feet promptly. So, he ran and welcomed his parents, who were astonished to see this miracle. Later, the boy told them how Jesus heard his prayer and appeared before him thus curing him of his paralysis!!

Thus we see how Meelad's belief in Jesus Christ cured him even when he perceived the image of Jesus Christ in a thief. Nuaymah's continuous reiteration of the fact that God's origin is within the human being and He is someone or something intrinsic to us is evident in this story.

TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS

LIQA

Liqa is probably the only novella or long short story that Nuaymah has authored. *Liqa* was first published in 1946. Nuaymah presents to us a story woven in the unique fabric of legendary fantasy and social reality. Where the social reality maintains the sensibility of the story and the objective of the writer, the fantasy makes sure that the story remains gripping and does not become a mere documentation of the society. The mythical fantasy dominates the story throughout sustaining the interest and providing vent to that faculty of human mind that remains largely dormant.

This mythical fantasy is based on the idea of transmigration of souls.

Transmigration of souls is a fundamental believe in Hinduism, and ancient Indian literary tradition is based on the idea of transmigration. In the great Indian epics like Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Bhagavada Gita the idea of transmigration is found to be the essence. Among those who were the pioneers in the adaptation of the philosophy of the transmigration of souls, Khalil Gibran's name comes in the foremost. This philosophy finds profuse mention in his writings. Nuaymah also was deeply influenced by this philosophy. In the writings of both the friends, we find a deep-rooted belief in transmigration along with the unity of existence. These two ideas have been the hallmark of Nuaymah's and Gibran's philosophy and literature.¹

¹ Adab-ul-Mahjar, Isa-al-Nauri, Dar-ul-Maarif bi Misr, 1967, Page 156

The story revolves around a captivating artist called Leonardo. He was called to perform at the inauguration ceremony of a hotel, where daughter of the owner of the hotel got enchanted by his performance and he got enchanted by her beauty. They did not reveal their love to each other; though they could feel that they were not complete without each other.

In fact, this was not their first birth in this world, but was preceded by another birth thousands of years back. Baha, the daughter of the hotel's owner was a princess then. The artist Leonardo was a shepherd serving her father. He used to play his flute. Both of them were in love with each other since that time. However, in that birth they could not realize their dreams. That is why they returned in this birth to fulfill their desires. Although, in this birth also they could not attain their love and died before they could meet.

In his autobiography Sabaoon, Nuaymah has shed light on how he got inspiration for his writings and how did they come into existence. Nuaymah undertook the writing of Liqa with just a faint idea of the storyline in his mind. He wanted to depict a person who was obsessively perfectionist and was endeavoring to cleanse his soul from the contamination of all kinds through the medium of music.

The character of Leonardo appeared to him after some pondering and he attained full-fledged prolificacy in writing the story. He did not have any prior conceptualization of the storyline other than a very hazy idea of the theme. Thereafter, as he gained more ground with the characters, he became faster and faster in terms of writing and formulating a better script. It appeared as if he has got the key to some secret treasure of thoughts lying inside his heart.

It was only at the end of the last chapter where he was stuck again. It was as if someone who was running on well-laid, express road suddenly comes in front of a mountain. Nuaymah had no inkling as to what to do with Leonardo.

Nuaymah kept thinking over and over for a suitable turning point. Suddenly he had this idea of introducing the legend of the Valley of the Virgins. He thought he would make the love between Leonardo and Baha an affair of bygone era, where centuries back, in some other birth, they were deeply in love with each other. He depicted that in that age, Leonardo was a recluse in one of the caves of the valley. He was there to cleanse himself from his carnal desires, which aroused his lust at sighting Baha once when he was playing the lovely melody Liqa.

Nuaymah makes it appear as if both of them knew each other for centuries. Leonardo felt strongly that his lust spoilt the magic of the melody. He avowed to get rid of that lust so that he could again play that melody for Baha with a pure heart. This shall wake Baha and the Liqa will take place.

This is how he was able to finish the last chapter of the story.

We can see in the light of the above stories, which represent different shades of themes, how Nuaymah always maintains a humanistic tone in his work irrespective of the main theme. His meditative mood also gets reflected in all of the above stories, which have been selected from his different collections of stories. It was possible to present *Kana ma Kana* with all its stories because it contains just six stories, whereas rest of the stories represent his other collections as well.

The following chapter undertakes the poetic achievements of Mikhail Nuaymah. Nuaymah's contribution to the poetic heritage of the Arab culture and society is

not quantitatively significant. His small volume of poetry entitled *Hams-ul-Jufoon* is all that he has in terms of poetry writing. He was an excellent poet both with regards to the selection of themes and poetic style, but he deliberately chose prose due to his interest in criticism initially, and later, to express his mystical and philosophical thoughts. *Hams-ul-Jufoon* is a unique collection in the sense that despite being so brief, it contains odes on varying themes. It is a fulfilling and interesting reading both in terms of ideas and the technique employed.

CHAPTER THREE

POETRY

INTRODUCTION

STYLISTICS

THEMES

INTRODUCTION

Neither the meters nor the rhymes are necessary elements of poetry, just as temples and rites are not strictly necessary to prayers and worship. There is many a piece of prose which is beautifully composed and musical to the ear which contains more elements of poetry than a qasidah of a hundred rhyming lines.¹

The above quotation speaks volumes about Nuaymah's views on poetry. He believes that if a poet concentrates too much on the mechanics and intricacies of the prosody, he would be distracted from the more important issues. The exploration of thoughts and emotions is as important as the concern for rhymes and meters in the poetry. The poet derives the content of his message directly from his heart, so the first consideration should be heeding to the voice of soul that emanates from a true poet's imagination. Nuaymah believes that rest of the elements of the poetry, like rhyme and rhythm, meters and measurements, though important, cannot be as mandatory as a sense of meaningful synchrony of imagination.

Nuaymah has written poetry very conservatively as compared to prose. He has a small collection of his poetry called Hams-ul-Jufoon to his credit. It contains only thirty originally written Arabic poems. Rest of the poems present in the collection were translated from English. Yet, despite being a stingy poet, Nuaymah's collection is remarkable in more than one ways. Hams-ul-Jufoon is remarkable for the lack of complexity in the language, Nuaymah uses a poetic language of artful simplicity and directness. The collection has a quiet contemplative tone

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, al-Ghirbal

which, is able to achieve great intensity of feeling without loud rhetoric effects. Muhammad Mandur, the famous Egyptian critic called it al-adab-ul-mahmoos.²

At the onset of this century, there was a rise in inquisitiveness regarding the internal conflicts of the human being in the literary circles. Many a shades of poetry sprouted from this new fancy. The poets concerned themselves with the analysis of the human self, his sentiments, conflicts, and inclinations. Many schools of poets were carrying out this task as a mission. There was hardly any poet who did not deliver some bouts of spiritual boluses in his poetry. This was especially true for the modernists. Among all of them, Mikhail Nuaymah stands as the most outstanding poet to have emphasized holistically on the internal world and picturing of his emotion vis-à-vis the existence and its predicaments.

In his collection of poems *Hams-al-Jufoon* he remains preoccupied with his present actualities and his personal spiritual reflections, until his thoughts ramble toward the individual spiritual meditations to be exact.

While going through his collection, we find the sentiments expressed there akin to the name 'a whisper', revealing his spiritual bent and feelings; a soft whisper without any clamor or lamentations, which is felt in his words and their melody. He uses soft words having a melody that is gentle in tone like breeze. The poems many a times are carried from one melody to another and one rhyme to another, but with calm and poise. There is no vehemence in the character of his poetry, because his self does not contain vehemence. In this sense he differs from Ilya Abu Madi, who is a rebel in most of his poetry, so he differs from rebel Gibran, leader of Al-Rabita, in all his poems and prose.

² R.C.Ostle, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press 1992, page 100

STYLE

Nuaymah, like most of the *Mahjar* writers, including Jibran, did not make much distinction between the language of poetry and prose. This was due to the fact that the words were very meticulously and thoughtfully picked. The rhythm of syntax that he followed in poetry influenced his prose writing as well. Some kind of melody pervades in his prose writings. It is as if he never tries to fetter the flow of emotions into the poetic of prose model. The thoughts are conveyed as and how they manifest in a particular state of mind. This differentiates his writing among others.¹

He laid more importance on content and not the form. For him meanings were more important than the words. Therefore, he did not care much for the style, be it prose or poetry, and wrote in more or less uniform pattern, only being a little more rhythmic and rhyming in his odes and a little more relaxed while writing prose.

Consider this passage from the ode 'Akhi':

أخي، إن ضج بعد الحرب غربي بأعماله
وقدس ذكر من ماتوا، وعظم بطش أبطاله
فلا تهزج لمن سادوا، ولا تشمت بمن دانا
بل أركع صامتا مثلي، بقلب خاشع دام
لنبيكي حظ موتان² ١

And this one from his prose:

¹Isa al-Nauri, *Adab-ul-Mahjar*, Dar-ul-Maarif bi Misr, 1967, page 78

²Mikhail Nuaymah, *Hams-ul-Jufoon*

" ها أنتم تنتقون من بينكم أفرادا، فتخلعون على البعض جبهه الفخامة، وعلى الآخر العطوفة، وعلى الثالث السعادة، فكان من بقي منكم ليسوا إلا خسارة الحياة. وهكذا تسكنون الذل في قلوبكم ، وشفاهكم تطلب الرفعة، وتبنون أعشاشا للعبودية في أرواحكم، وألسنتكم تنادي باسم الحرية. أما كفى الإنسان مجدا أنه إنسان؟"

There does not appear to be much of a difference between the two. He seems to be substantiating his own view that a well-disposed prose is not less enjoyable than an ode of several verses.¹ Thus, there is not much variation to be found in Nuaymah's prose and poetry. What he says comes from within the soul, and he does not modify the outpourings of the soul and translates them as they occur to him.

As a critic, Nuaymah attacked those who stuck to the traditional rhythmic and ornamented version of the literature. He was distressed by the undue emphasis laid on the form and style without any concern for the meaning.² Nuaymah believed that literature should enlighten and liberate. No literature is without any end or purpose. As a critic, his mission was to cleanse the Arabic literature from the redundant ornamentation and meaningless verbosity. He was avowed to endow it with a new, dynamic vision and a creative, soulful agenda. He believed that it was more important to perceive before conceiving. Only if the perception is sound will the conception be flawless. His definition of creativity is not mere entertainment, but he was more concerned about the meaning and objective.

Nuaymah has insisted upon the importance of music and rhythm in poetry. Though these are quite obviously present in the poetry, there are several examples in his works where rhythm and movement of the poem became integral part of its

¹ Mikhail Nuaymay, al-Ghirbal, Beirut, 1964, page 116

² R.C.Ostle, Modern Arabic Literature [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press 1992, page 99

overall unity, essential elements which blend with different moods and varying levels of intensity. *Sada-ul-Ajras, Awraq-al-Kharif, and Tarneemat-ul-Riyah* all illustrate these particular skills at work.¹

Nuaymah the poet practices the standards for poetry set by Nuaymah the critic. Though he was not a prolific poet, having written only thirty odd odes in Arabic and an equal number in other languages, his only collection of poem is an exemplary work on poetry.² He did not follow the themes that were favorite among the contemporaries, i.e., felicitation, commemoration, and nationalism, etc. He chose to talk about his self, soul, and meditation. Nuaymah wrote in exact words without ornamentation following a coherent style.

The biggest flaw in Nuaymah's poetry is that he does not care about the importance of omission. He forgets that he is writing an ode and he does not show any reservations in going into the minutest details. Literature, particularly poetry, is known to be an art of omission. In Robert Louis Stevenson's own words, "*There is one art, to omit! Oh if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knows how to omit would make an 'Iliad' of a daily paper.*" Even in prose the omission plays an important role, but in poetry it is an essentiality.

Perhaps Nuaymah believed in resolving fully the issues he undertook. That is why, be it prose or poetry, he is always detailed and descriptive.

¹ R.C.Ostle, *Modern Arabic Literature* [edited by M.M.Badawi], Cambridge University Press 1992, page 101

² *ibid*, page 100

MAJOR THEMES

MEDITATIVE TONE

HUMANISM

LOVE OF NATURE

PATRIOTISM

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

SOME OTHER ODES

MEDITATIVE TONE

Nuaymah's poetry had novelty both in the content and in the technique. His thematic variations are mostly of the meditative kinds. Most of his poems are of the directly subjective type expressing the poet's inner personal experience, spiritual and emotional. His spiritual themes steadily increased in their meditative attitude and gave mystical expression to his beliefs. Nuaymah is seen to have arrived at a high degree of fluency and charm when dealing with the poetry of contemplation which mirrors the moods and the inner state of mind.

He expresses his contentment with all that is bestowed upon him by the destiny and time in this poem:

ذمك الأيام لا ينفكك فهي لا أذن لها تسمعك
لا ولا عين ترى عقربا في دياجير الأسي تلتسعك
لا ولا قلب يرق وإن جف من طول البكاء مدمعك

Here we can see Nuaymah as a model of contentment. He accepts all the pain and suffering inflicted on him by the destiny and he does not crib about what his luck has in store for him.

His self is calm and so is whatever that comes from it, without any vehemence or anger. He dwells contently and peacefully with all that was bestowed upon him by destiny and time.

So he does not lament or pant with pain from the suffering inflicted on him by time and destiny. He is content with his share of luck as if he believes that this is

the way of life and he must comply with this arrangement. So he does not rebel and does not give in to carnal temptations, rather he obeys and turns repentantly to God. Never did he think that the evil could disappear from the world and its traces could be effaced, rather he saw the world made of both virtue and vice. So, he presents his poem “Al-Khair wa al-Shar” in the following way:

سمعت شيطاناً يناجي ملك	سمعت في حلمي ويا للعجب!
لولا جحيمي أين كانت سماك؟	يقول: "إي بل ألف إي يا أخي
سر البقا فينا وسر الهلاك؟	أليس أنا توأمان استوي
إن ينسني الناس أتسى أخاك؟"	ألم نصغ من جوهر واحد؟
في نفسه ذكرى زمان قديم	فأطرق ابن النور مسترجعا
مستغفرا وعائق ابن الجحيم	واغرورقت عيناه لما انحنى
من نارك الحرى أيامي النعيم	وقال: إي بل ألف إي يا أخي
جنب وضاعا بين وشي السديم	وحلق الاثنان جنباً إلى

He considers virtue and vice to be the two sides of the same coin. They are coexistent. Their source is same one and same, though they exist in dichotomies of devil and angel, darkness and light, and hell and heaven. Truly, if there were no fire of evil there could not be any meaning to virtue and human being would not appreciate the virtue. The man values the virtue only when the fire of his pangs exceeds. If there were only goodness in the world not only would we not know the value of goodness, but the whole arrangement of world will become futile and the existence will become meaningless. Because existence is nothing but coexistence of benefit and harm, hate and love, delight and pain, and familiar and strange. This unique law of nature where everything has its opposite sustains the universe of existence and balances the nature and enables us to weigh and compare and adopt what is good for us and reject what is pernicious.

Virtues and vice are brothers existing since the beginning of the world and they would remain so till the end of the world. They shake hands at the end of the poem and they hover in the haze and existence, for they are its essence and existence. He repeats the same thoughts in the poem “Al Irak”:

دخّل الشيطان قلبي	فرأى فيه ملاك
وبلمح الطرف ما بينهما	اشتد العراك
ذا يقول: "البيت بيتي!	فيعيد القول ذاك
وأنا أشهد ما يجري	ولا أبدي حراك
والى اليوم أراني	في شكوك وارتباك
والى اليوم أراني	في شكوك وارتباب
لست أدري أرجيم	في فؤادي أم ملاك
لست أدري أرجيم	في فؤادي أم ملاك

Here virtue and vice are not in the world around him but they are in his heart and he finds torment of the vice in a while and warmth of virtue in another. He is merely a channel between them, they being the order of his existence entirely. At times he surrenders to vice and its devils and at another time to virtue and its angels but they are always battling inside him for control over him. When he lives his life, which is built on the fringes of virtue's and vice's existence and is set up on their images, moments of doubt do prevail upon the belief on the course of life and its secret. But these moments are ephemeral their sparkle dying quickly and with that they leave behind a picture of his self when they gripped him like what the readers elicit in his poem “Unshuda” in which his soul complains of injuries from the life and people and its wounds:

ألقيت دلوي	بين الدلاء
وقلت عليّ	أحظى بماء

فعاد دلوي مع الدلاء
وليس فيه إلا رجائي

أرسلت طرفي بين النجوم
وقلت علي أنسي همومي
فطاف طرفي بين النجوم
ولم يشاهد سوى غمومي

قدمت حبي لمبغضيات
لقاء ما قد جنوا عليا
فكان حظي من مبغضيا
أن عاد حبي بغضا إليا

He complains of his faded hopes and of the hurts and suffering from the people, as he tenders his love to them and gets hatred and animosity in return. But he keeps appealing to his spirit, lamenting over these feelings, to sing and not to bemoan, because all these pains are colors of life rather they are the melody of a lifetime and its songs. If we revolt against them that amounts to our revolting against the order of life laid down for us.

We are not created only to enjoy the sweet bearing of virtue rather we have been created to have the taste of bitter, hateful vice as well. With that our life gets consummated but it is not finished except when we are content with the pains of the living and its burdens. The life presents to him in “Sada-al-Ajras”, its misgivings vehemently as if it wants to change the memories of the bygone youth of which he talks with tears. It is his soul that exhorts him in the poem “Tarnimat-ul-Riyah”

وأداوي الأسي بالظنون

كل قلب سهاد

كل عيشي كفاح

أتردى رداء المنون

كل فكري سواد

كل دربي قتاد

It appears as if the evil of his heart or mind is causing this complaints and lament on his tongue. He sighs the angel of virtue spreading the wings and appealing to him, letting him elaborate on his complaints and pains, and the angel also cries with him as if he has lost his way. No sooner he repents on the grief revealed to him than he wishes the sleep to banish this grief which causes him insomnia and which is intrinsic and not external. He always believes that whatever sorrow and happiness we feel in the life is an expression of our inner self. Thus, whoever is content within will be content in external disposition also, as for the one who is extremely content with the two faces of his life: the black and the white, the saddening and the delightful, and he presents that in his verses in the poem Al-Tamaneena:

سقف بيتي حديد ركن بيتي حجر
فأعصفي يا رياح وانتحب يا شجر
واسبحي يا غيوم واهطلي بالمطر
واقصفي يا رعود لست أخشى خطر

باب قلبي حصين من صنوف الكدر
فأهجمي يا هموم في المسا والسحر
وازحفي يا نحوس بالشقا والضجر
وانزلي بالألوف يا خطوب البشر

وحليني القضاء ورفيقي القدر
فأقدحي يا شرور حول قلبي الشرر
واحفري يا منون حول بيتي الحفر
لست أخشى العذاب لست أخشى الضرر

His soul is content and its repose is unperturbed and nothing soils it, howsoever strong the wind around him becomes, tree laments, clouds float, the sky thunders, grieves strikes, misfortune creeps, mishaps and ill-fate descend. Even the death

and its trappings around him fail to catch him and he is not scared of them, he even is not scared of the impending chastisement, and he is content with the death and destiny and all that is preordained for him.

In expressing his innermost self and existing darkness of vice and lights of virtue, Nuaymah is deeply conscientious and sincere. He is not materialistic like Abu-Aradi, rather his stance is completely divorced from the materialism. He does not lay an iota of his faith in the matter. Rather he attributes higher values and meanings to all the material expressions in the life. The secret and essence of all these lies in his Self. Thus, he believes that whatever exists in the nature as a form of matter has actually higher meaning and worth.

As a poet, he has dreams of a mystic. So, he is very content with the hardships of life, so much so that he considers them to be an essential ingredient of existence, which adorn each one like joys of virtues. He seem to express that there is no vice or no virtue, but it is life which creates them for us to bear, and we must accept its bestowal and intention, as we are a part of its course. The life is not complete and human being's sense of completion and satiety is never achieved unless it shifts between vice and virtue and harmful and joyful.

This thought and all that it includes in terms of chatter of the self relates to the man and what descends to him in terms of sorrows and pains, and other thought and other chatters also dominate his poetry as pouring of his heart toward the sky.

He always feels the earth to be heavy on him and he cannot fly in the spiritual atmosphere unless his soul is clean, rather unless the soul is devoted to its dreams and visions, perhaps. That is why he acclaims in his poem “:Afaq-al-Qalb”, his contempt of the intellect and he is content with it and thought that it will ascertain his spiritual wishes, he says:

ورحت أجوب ما استترا من الدنيا وما ظهرا
وابحث في غبار العيش عن خزف وعن صدف
أراه بفكرتي دررا

ورحت أقيس أيامي وأعمالي وأحلامي
وما حولي ومن حولي وما تحتي و ما فوقي
بأفكاري وأوهامي

But as soon as he learns its folly, he resorts to his soul to carry him to the spiritual world. That is the world which does not follow the parameters of intellect and does not follow its rulings and notions. It is a world where the only guide is the soul, which does not acknowledge the thinking and feeling, but only comprehends the insight. Thus, Nuaima gets rid of intellect, but in many instances he felt that he cannot achieve his aim, although all its means are dominions of his soul and dominion of every soul, and as if the people do not know, so they argue about it everywhere. Ignorant that they are within their souls and concealment of their hearts, he expresses that in his poem: “Fi Ttareeq” clearly.

وسنبقى نفحص الآثار من هذا وذاك
ريثما ندرك أن الدرب فينا لا هناك

One of the marvelous poems in which he expresses his anxiety of himself for what he wants from the scrutiny of this peaceful spiritual path in his heart is “Al-Taih”, where he presumes with ease that he has strayed from his remote mission, burning in it with the fire of his life are hopes and aspirations, and the sky has created a rift between him and them, and he does not know whether that is because of monopoly of carnal needs, or because of domination of thoughts and doubts of intellect or because of palaces of his heart and emotions of his soul. So, he begs from his lord:

أ خالقي رحماكا بما برت يداكا
وان لم أكن صداكا فصوت من أنا؟
ربي ! ألا تراني أساق كالحملان
ربي ! أما كفتي عماي والوني؟

أبدل لظي نيرانني بحمرة الإيمان
وأجعل من الحنان للقلب مرهما
إذ ذاك بالتهليل أسير في سبيلي

وخالقي دليلي ووجهتي السم

He calls on his lord to get him rid of the bondage of his desires which drive him like a lamb and which blind his insight and soul. These are not bondage, they are fire jostling in his heart and requests from God to disperse from it the portion of believe whose fire is that of peace, and to treat with his medicine these chronic wounds inflicting his soul. At that time, he applauds his lord, because he sees his path in the light of his guidance, then he rises on the higher pedestals.

We can see him as a devout believer in eternity of the soul after its liberation from the body and its burden of bondage or its imprisonment. He even believes that the birth and death are two phases in the unending chain of life. His poem "Auraq-ul-Khareef" elucidates these thoughts minutely, and he simplifies them by saying:

تثاري تثاري يا بهجة النظر
يا مرقص الشمس ويا أرجوحة القمر
يا أرغن الليل ويا قيثارة الشجر
يا رمز فكر حائر ورسم روح ثائر
يا ذكر مجد غابر قد عافك الشجر
تثاري تثاري

These autumn leaves in their state of dispersion recall all those beautiful stages of their existence which can never be retrieved back because the tree has gotten away from them, and they have no choice but to fall in the dust. They are depicted as a metaphor for human being, and the states of their life, during which he keeps changing day and night till the time of death arrives from which there is no escapade and excuse, and he must welcome it contently as he is graduating from one cycle to another and to his eternal life. Therefore Nuaymah at the end of the poem turns his attention toward the autumn leaves in these words:

عودي إلى حضن الثرى وجددي العهود
وانسي جمالا قد ذوى ما كان لن يعود
كم أزهرت من قبلك وكم ذوت ورود
فلا تخافي ما جرى ولا تلومي القدرا
من قد أضاع جوهرها يلقاه في اللحد

Those are the years of life that we live and the graves are not annihilation or a metaphor for it, rather they are a new cycle of life that is eternal. He awaits this cycle with delight and does not possess any fear from it. Rather he becomes hopeful that he is getting rid of the costume of his life and its agonies and aspirations, and welcomes a new life. His poem Al-Aan depicts his joy on this preordained shift and he begins it with the intention that he will return to the people their gifts and all that he owes to them in terms of thoughts and feelings. He grieves for what he got from them when they setup their idols in the holiest of his holy. They he explains his happiness over his detachment form the bonds of their world saying:

غدا أعيد بقايا الطين للطين
وأترك الموت للموتى ومن ولدوا
وأطلق الروح من سجن التخامين
والخير والشر للدنيا وللدين
غدا أجوز حدود السمع والبصر
فلا كواكب إلا كان لي سبل
فأدرك المبتدأ المكنون في خيري
فيها، ولا تربة إلا بها أثري

He awaits death as if it were the time of liberation and salvation for his soul from the prison of clay or the prison of body. He is happy with that and not because he is thinking of heaven or hell, and rather because he wants to commence the eternal life which is never-ending and which transcends the hearing, viewing, time, and space. He is extremely covetous for the new life and it is his wish, a wish in which his present disappears, or his life disappears. As for before his life and his birth and what was his real past, he does not know anything about it. As for tomorrow, he feels a compelling desire in his heart to get it and feels as if something is driving him from inside to reach this stage which liberates it from the body and thought and all that is related to our worldly life.

Nuaymah gets that from his mystique realization which is not scared of the afterlife, rather it seeks the exit to the world of skies and world of spirit. This longing for reaching to the spiritual world and ascent to it is all that we find in Hams-al-Jufoon as the total awareness to the unity of existence is delivered to us. He expresses in his poem "Ila Dooda" people belittle its value:

مراتب قدر أو تفاوت أثمان	لعمرك يا أختاه ما في حياتنا
كثيرة أشكال عديدة ألوان	مظاهرها في الكون تبدو لناظر
تجلت بشهب أم تجلت بديدان	وأفتومها باق من البدء واحد

We see him settling down before that the awareness of this unity of existence for which the man and worm are equal comes from the soul and not from the intellect. The intellect cannot understand the secrets of the existence. It is the soul only that can do that and it is the only one who can elicit that the phenomena of existence, although look so varied externally and under the eye, in actuality a worm or a man or ocean or sun or moon, these are all one that manifest the God in them.

Let go what your eyes show to you and what your intellect guides you to, because heart only knows the truth and all that is so varied in form and character and color, all big striking and mild colors, worm or butterfly each of them is same in its essence and in its core and bottom.

He explains this thought in the poem: “Man anti ya nafsi”, and we see him feeling the deep link between his self and waves of ocean, to the extent as if he is an inseparable part of it. The same feeling prevails toward the thunder, lightening, and the clouds, they all thunder on the mountains and hills, and toward the dawn that breaks out from the costume of the night replete with the stars, and the sun which hatches the abundant water glancing to the earth with its enchanting eye, and the nightingale that sings among Jasmine pouring out its captivating melody. He has a feeling of being in unity with all these natural phenomena completely. This is a unity in which manifested is the light of God scattering the light of its beauty. He concludes his poem on that:

إيه نفسي أنت لحن في قد رن صداه
وقعتك يد فنا ن خفي لا أراه
أنت ريح ونسيم أنت موج أنت بحر
أنت برق أنت رعد أنت ليل أنت فجر
أنت فيض من إله

HUMANISTIC TREND

Mikhail Nuaymah, in his ode 'Akhi', presents to us his profound humanistic ideals. In fact, most of his writings reflect the same humanistic ideals. These writings include Zaad-ul-Maad, Al-Bayadir, Al-Marahil, Hams-ul-Jufoon, Al-Noor wa-al-Dujoor, Saut-ul-Aalam, and Mirdad, and anyone can feed his senses and soul with this great treasure of humanism. This loftiness was all pervasive among the Mahjar writers including Gibran, Abu Mazi, and Nasib Arida. Nuaymah makes it very evident in these verses:

كحل اللهم عيني بشعاع من ضياك — كي ت. راك .

And also:

واجعل اللهم قلبي واحة تسقى القريب — والغريب

Jibran in Ramal and Zabd says:

" ما أنبل القلب الحزين الذي لا يمنعه حزنه عن أن ينشد أغنية مع القلوب الفرحة "

In damaa wa Ibtisama he says:

أنت أخي ، وكلانا ابن روح واحد قدوس كلي .. وأنت رفيقي على طريق الحياة ، ومسعفي في إدراك
كأنه الحقيقة المستترة وراء الغيوم .. أنت إنسان ، وقد أحببتك ، وأحبك يا أخي .. خذ مني ما شئت
فلست بسالب غير مال لك الحق بقسم منه ، وعقار استأثرت به لمطامعي ، وأنت خليق ببعضه إن
كان يرضيك بعضه . أنت أخي وأنا أحبك ، ساجدا في "جامعك" ، وراكعا في "هيكلك" ، ومصليا في
"كنيستك" ..

We observe that the Mahjar literature is replete with such rich humanistic thoughts and lofty ideas. Nuaymah in his book *Al-Ghirbal* appreciates the collection of Naseeb Areeda widening the horizon of their humanity including the existence of his families, people, animals, and nonliving being. They find beauty in everything around. Even in the worm, Nuaymah found that it was neither less valuable than hawks and vultures, nor is it a blemish on the existence, which does not differentiate between its creations. It does not deem metal costlier than the dust, nor diamond more valuable than the stone, nor the crow inferior to nightingale, nor the deer better than the worm. It does not destroy weed to be replaced by flowers. The existence shows equality for all life, which Nuaymah calls unity of existence with one essence that is unchanging in all living being.

LOVE OF NATURE

Love for nature is seen among all of the Mahjar writers. Nuaymah's initial conditioning took place in the lap of nature. His childhood was spent in the lush, picturesque valleys of Sunain mountain. Here Nuaymah himself expresses his views about the extent of impact of nature on the Mahjar writers in the following manner:

"سيان عند الشجرة ، أكل ثمرتها إنسان أم ثعبان ، أو تفيا ظلها قنفذ أم غزال ، أو تدفأ بحطبها
ملاك أم شيطان : فالإنسان والثعبان ، والقنفذ والغزال ، والملاك والشيطان ، أبناء الغاب الواحد ،
وللغاب منهم غاية واحدة ، وله فيهم مشية واحدة ، من عرفها لم يعاندها ، بل استسلم لها ،
وباستسلامه لها جعلها مشية له ، ومن جهلها فعاندها ، سحقته فأشقته "

Nuaymah deems all creation to be one single existence just as Gibran perceived it to be. Both of them saw the existence to be in varied manifestation but essentially being one.

In the first chapter of Al-Bayadir, Nuaymah calls upon God:

يا الله أمس جاعني رسولك نيسان ، وعلى حقويه منطقة من شقائق النعمان والأقحوان ، وعلى
رأسه إكليل من النسرين والوزال . وقد لف ذراعيه بالورود والياسمين والريحان ، ساقيه بالأرز
والسرو والسنديان .. فما إن وطئ عتبة داري حتى أعشبت عرصاتها واخضلت ، وكانت قبلا جرداء
يابسة ..

In his ode *Al-Nahr-al-Mutajammid*, his sorrows are explained in detail, but in the end he returns to his optimism, and the peace of his soul is attained as he says in another ode:

سقف بيتي حديد ركن بيتي حجر
فاعصفي يا رياح وانتحب يا شجر
واقصفي يا رعود لست أخشى خطر

Nuaymah recreates his own metaphors. He tends to define the nature and laws of nature in his own way. He does not go by conventional symbols and modifies, changes, or creates symbols for his expression. In *Auraq-al-Kharif*, he changes the meaning of the autumn leaves, which symbolize death and loss of all hopes.

سيرى ولا تعاتبى لا ينفع العتاب
ولا تلومي الغصن والرياح والسحاب
فهي إذا خاطبتها لا تحسن الجواب
والدهر ذو العجائب وباعث النوب
وخالق الرغائب لا يفهم الخطاب
سيرى لا تعاتبى

According to him autumn leaves follow the larger course of life and indicate the presence of a cycle that is never ending. As the life and death, happiness and sorrow, laugh and cry, comfort and hardship are all stages of life that occur in succession in the story of life which is a handiwork of a Creative Genius. Thus autumn leaves make him happy, meditative, and inspire him to understand life.

In *Tarneemat-ul-Riyah*, he minutely listens to the melody of the wind which confides in him the secrets of its high spirit. He understands the language of bells and explains it to the people:

ها أنا يا ملاك النعيم يا رسول الإله الرحيم
ما عساك تشاء من تراب وماء
فيهما ألف داء ما لها من براح؟
صققي صققي يا رياح

The ocean confides in him and so does the worm. He does not get fed up with the nature and its creations and approaches them with his innermost sentiments because Nature for him is the complete existence and the perfect phenomenon of life.

PATRIOTISM

All *Mahjar* writers were patriots and nation lovers. Staying away from their countries further accentuated their feelings and strengthened their patriotism and they more often expressed these sentiments in their writings. We can see Gibran addressing Nuaymah about his patriotism and calling him to return to their native place:

"ميشا ، ميشا ، نجاتي الله وإياك من المدنية والمتمدنين ، ومن أمريكا والأمريكيين .
ونحن سننجدو بإذن الله وسنعود إلى قمم لبنان الطاهرة ، وأودته الهادئة ، وسنأكل من عنبه
وبقوله ونشرب من خمرة وزيته وسننام على بيادره ونسرح مع قطعانه
ونسهر على شابات رعائه وخرير غدراته "

When Nuaymah asked him to leave everything and return to their motherland, Gibran denies saying that there are things to be accomplished here. When Nuaymah said that his occupation there would keep him away from his motherland and deprive him of its warmth, he replied:

إذا كنت قد مللت هذا العالم فأنا قد مللته مثلك و أكثر .
وأنت وأنا لم نجد منه ملجأ أجمل وأهنا وأقدس من مار سركيس
وأنت ستحب تلك الصومعة مثلما أحبها

As Mikhail Nuaymah was always living the life of an emigrant and he always wanted to return to his motherland, he immediately responded saying,

" لقد جعلتني أحبها منذ الآن ، فتزورها أحلامي مرارا كثيرا قبل أن
تزورها عيناى ، وتطأ ترابها قدماى "

Soon after he realized that he cannot forestall the call of his soil, he set out for the journey back.

Perhaps Gibran would also have returned to Lebanon had he lived more. In fact, Gibran's book *Al-Nabi* itself is an expression of his love for the motherland. Al-Mustafa who spent twelve years in the city of Orphalese awaits a ship to return to his native island. Gibran also living in New York with the longing for his village Bushri awaits the means to reach his land.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Nuaymah was a firm believer in the fact that faith is a matter of personal choice. He was an upholder of freedom of faith. Each one has a right to select what path he wanted to walk on and this decision should not be influenced at all. He also believed and advocated that there should be a 'universal religion', the basis of which would be humanity. In compliance with his friend and associate's belief, he believed that one's ideas should never be restricted to or confined within a specific belief system. One should always be open for any idea irrespective of whether it belonged to his religion, because religion according to him was a matter of personal preference. Mahatma Gandhi also believed in this thought and he expresses this in his quote where he says that he would never close his window for another culture or religion, but what he accepts from those is entirely his own choice. Other religions and cultures are also for and by people and might have some ideas, which are not there in your own culture because you've never had to experience it. One should never constrict ones experiences to the narrowness of a well but should spread out the horizons of his experiences to the vastness of the sea.

The book "Al-Marahil" is the expression of his philosophy of freedom of religion and this belief is very much in concurrence with those of Buddha, Laotso, and Jesus Christ, the three faces who represent all the people of the world. Nuaymah argues that the gist of all wisdom lies in their teachings. And he draws a picture where he says that he finds them to be "three towers at the beginning of existence with the light from "one" extending unto them and the light stretching from them illuminating a single path to "one."

Unlike Gibran, Al-Raihani and other who attacked religious pundits and their faith, Nuaymah never clearly attacked them outrightly, though he would not pass up on any chance to pick on them, off and on when opportunity allowed him to do so. In his book 'Al-Marahil' and the essay 'Al-Jundi al-Majhool' he addresses the Unknown Soldier.

"وأولئك الأحرار الكبار الذين يرعون قطيع المسيح، ويكرزون بإنجيل المسيح، أولئك الخدام
الأمناء

الذين قال لهم سيدهم: "أحبوا مبغضكم، باركوا لأعدائكم أحسنوا إلى الذين يسيئون إليكم"

Thus, it is clear that he believed in God and called for faith in him and did not confine himself to the narrow outlines of a specific ideology, that prohibited the Catholic to associate with his fellow Orthodox - as Nuaymah mentions in his book about Gibran. Instead he saw everyone as sons of the same faith, who were equal whether they belonged to different faiths. There is no superiority attached to one faith over the other and no difference between them in his eyes.

SOME OTHER ODES

Nuaymah's style in poetry is referred to as Al-adab-ul-Mahmoos because its nothing more than the whispering of his soul. The language he uses is simple, rhythmic and extremely soft. It is the expression of his unblemished and beautiful feelings or emotions that flows out from the deepest recess of his heart that we identify as his poetry.

Nuaymah's ode to the frozen river Al-Nahr-ul-Mutajammed is a spirited song. The poet in this song expresses his sentiments to the frozen river. This pouring of emotions derives a simile between him and the river. The ode is a delicate and melodious expression of emotions. Nuaymah who rarely expresses his grief, sadness and melancholy, unusually expresses them in the following quote which touches some chords inside one's heart.

يا نهر هل نبضت ميا هك فاتقطعت عن الخير؟
أم قد هرمت وخار عز مك فاتثيت عن المسير؟
بالأمس كنت مرنا بين الحقائق والزهور
تتلو على الدنيا وما فيها أحاديث الدهور

بالأمس كنت إذا أتيت ك باكيا سلتيني
واليوم سرت إذا أتيت ك ضاحكا أبكيتني
بالأمس كنت إذا سمعت تنهدي وتوجعي
تبكي، وها أبكي أنا وحدي ولا تبكي معي

The sadness and pessimism that he expresses in this ode is very unlike Nuaymah. It forces one to consider and wonder what must have inspired him to write such a

sorrowful account. What had happened in his life to draw from his this ode. The wonder grows when we compare it with *Al- Tamaaneena*:

باب قلبي حصين	من صنوف الكدر
فاهجمي يا هموم	في المساء والسحر
وانزلي بالألوف	يا خطوب البشر

And elsewhere he reiterates in this fashion:

إذا سمائك يوما	تحجبت بالغيوم
أغمض جفونك تبصر	خلف الغيوم نجوم
والأرض حولك إما	توشحت بالثلوج
أغمض جفونك تبصر	تحت الثلوج مروج

Here he is overflowing with optimism, happiness and confidence.

The answer lies in the fact that there exists a time difference in the composition of these odes. *Al-Nahr-al-Mutajammid* was written in his initial years and is said to be his first ode. It probably reflects the time when he was undergoing disappointments in life, personal or otherwise. The ode might also be an expression of the frustration or emptiness that he felt within himself. And it was this discontent inside him that was the inspiration behind the composition of the ode.

The second ode was composed at a time when he was more content. It also represents that he had matured in his thought and had spent a considerable time in meditation. It probably was the phase during which he finally was hit with the realization that the elusive happiness that he searched outside was within him, just like the musk deer who keeps searching for the illusive sweet smell of musk that

makes it crazy. Throughout its life it searches for it but never finds it and dies. It is always sad and in quest to discover the origin of this sweet smell, but never realizing that the sweet smell emanates from inside its own body. Nuaymah, however, finds out that happiness is not external but an internal state of existence.

Whatever the difference in the way thoughts and emotions are expressed, the style used is extremely simple and expressive, because there has been a careful selection as to what words to be used, and in what order are these words to be put together to create a picture.

In his poem *Habl-ul-Tamanna*, he talks about the chain of desires and wishes that never seem to end:

فصغيرا قد كنت أطلب لو كنت
كبيرا ولي صفات الكبير

“As a child I wished to be a grown up person and I wished to possess all the characteristics of an adult.”

This is an innocent wish, which is very universal and very humane too. It expresses the eternal wish of every being to be something or someone that s/he is not.

وكبيرا، لو عدت طفلا صغيرا
واستردت نفسي نعيم الصغير

“As an adult how I wished to be a child and have my unblemished self back.”

What you wish and desire does not always satiate you after you attain it, rather it would be better if we say it rarely makes you content. You always nurse the wish to be someone you are not. Desires and wishes are never ending and ever increasing.

Nuaymah goes through various stages to explain that you are never satisfied with your present. He further goes on to say that:

وخليا، لو كنت بالحب مضني
وأسير الغرام، لو كنت حرا

وفصيحا ، لو كنت عيا سكوتا
وسكوتا، لو كنت أنطق درا

“When loveless you seek to commit in love, and when in love you wish to be free from all bondage.”

“You seek eloquence when dumb, and you wish to be quiet when at peak of eloquence.”

Almost all of us in our lives face similar situations sometimes or other, when we do not want any connections, while we always tend to desire company while being alone.

Like that Nuaymah goes on to explain the eloquent person will wish to be quiet and the person who is not a good speaker would wish that he were eloquent.

This only shows that the chain of desires is like a transmutation occurring every moment. The moment your one desire gets fulfilled it changes into something else. This illusive nature of desires makes them ever unattainable.

The desire of man of wisdom would be to be a layman and a simpleton wishes to be a man of wisdom.

وحكيما ، لو كنت غرا وغرا
لو عرفت المكنون سرا فسرا

This might sound strange, but it is true. But why would a knowledgeable man should wish to be ignorant? This is because with his wisdom are attached his liabilities, he starts getting choked with the burden and wishes that if he were just an ignorant man it would save him from all his hardships.

ووحيدا ، لو كان حولي ناس
ومحاطا بالناس، لو كنت وحدي

Similarly, people in company would like to be lonely and a lonely individual would love company of people.

For instance, once a very popular film artist was asked how does he feel to be so popular. He sighed and replied, “ I wish only one thing, I wish I were not a film star!”

We know how a common man wishes to be a celebrity and how much so people struggle to attain fame and name.

In his poem ‘Ibtihalat’ he enumerates the things in which he would like to see God and the things in which he would like to hear God.

He can see God in all the creation including the worms of the grave, hawks flying in the sky, and waves of the sea.

في جميع الخلق: في دود القبور،
في نسور الجو، في موج البحار

He also perceives God in the open water tanks, in flowers, in the pastures, in the precious metal, and in the desert sand.

في صحاري البراري، في الزهور،
في الكلا، في النبر، في رمل الفقار

For him God is not partial, he is there in greenery as well as deserts. He is present in the wounds of leprosy as well as a clean face. He is there in the killer's hand and the blood of the killed. He is present in the wedding bed and the deathbed also. He is seen in the hands of the generous and in the grip of the miserly.

في قروح البرص، في وجه السليم،
في يد القاتل، في نجع القتيل
في سرير العرس، في نعش الفطيم
في يد المحسن، في كف البخيل

God pervades each and every creature. Nuaymah's philosophy of Unity of Existence is reflected in this ode. His idea that all creation is from one source and has the same essence and God is nothing but the Ultimate Existence.

God lives in the hearts of the elderly, and the spirit of the young. He resides in the confidence of the confidence of the scholar and ignorance of the illiterate. He is

there with the penury of the penniless. He accompanies the prostitute its adultery and virgin in its purity.

في روح الصغير	في فؤاد الشيخ،
في جهل الجهول	في إدعا العالم،
وفي فقر الفقير	في غني المثري ،
في طهر البتول	وفي قذى العاهر،

He would also like to hear God in the following:

He loves to hear him in the bleating of the goat and in the roar of the lions.
He would have to hear God in the cracking of owl and waiting of the dove. He hears God in the flow of water and the thunder of the storm and also in the surge of sea and drifting of the clouds.

في زار الأسود	في نغاء الشاة،
في نوح الحمام	في نعليق البوم،
في قصف الرعود	في خير الماء،
في زحف الغمام	في هدير البحر،

CONCLUSION

Hams-ul-Jufoon is a quiet, introspective preoccupation with the conflicts of the spirit and emotions. The meditative personality of Nuaymah gets reflected in this small corpus of verse. He has expressed his thoughts in a deceptively simple language without any linguistic pretensions.

The basic theme of his poetry revolves around the conflicts within his troubled self. His work is by no means an average stuff but it ranks with the best efforts of romantic lyrical poetry in Arabic. His contribution is considered unique both in *Mahjar* and inside the Arab world, because of the fact that he was able to express precise idea on how such poetry should be written and was also able to demonstrate some of these in some of his own work.

Though Nuaymah does not believe in the poetry of rhymes and meters, his poetry is remarkably in accordance with those criteria. The following chapter deals, in two parts, with Nuaymah's most favorite pastime, his meditative and mystical writings. His book *Zaad-ul-Maad* is a comprehensive expression of his philosophies of Humanism, Unity of Existence, and Universal Love. The ideas expressed in the book are profoundly magical and compellingly inspirational. These ideas have been rendered into translation followed by brief explanatory efforts. This is the first part.

In the second part, a comparison between Nuaymah's *The Book of Mirdad* and Jibran's *The Prophet* has been attempted with a selection of wide-ranging themes from the two books.

CHAPTER FOUR

NUAYMAH THE MYSTIC

ZAAD-UL-MAAD

THE BOOK OF MIRDAD

ZAAD-UL-MA-AD

WHO IS A MYSTIC?

Oxford English Dictionary defines a mystic as *one who seeks by contemplation and self surrender to obtain union with or absorption into the Deity, or who believes in the spiritual apprehension of truths beyond the understanding.*

The mystic strives hard to penetrate behind the veil of appearance to some ultimate and abiding reality. In his quest for reality, he does not employ ordinary methods of acquiring knowledge. Rather he achieves his goal mainly through love and devotion. Coleridge in his *Religious Musings* says, *there is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind Omnific. His most holy name is love.*

Mikhail Nuaymah, in his writings and through his thoughts and ideas represents the above-described image, the image of a mystic. His voice is a different voice that seems to be emanating from some distant source of wisdom. His unworldly and transcendental ideas distinguish him from the others. He is a staunch monist by belief and a zealous advocate of Wahdat-ul-Wujood (*Unity of Existence*). According to him, God, Nature, and Man are synonymous and transcend the time and space barrier. Lord Krishna thousand of years back said the same thing:

There is a True knowledge;

Learn that it is this:

To see one changeless life in all the lives,

And in the separate, One Inseparable.”

Nuaymah believes that the crux of Jesus Christ's teaching is that Man is as infinite as God is.¹ He tells us that all men are in reality one eternal man; that I, thou, and he are merely illusions; that the man is not an entity distinct from other natural things and has no separate life other than the Live Universal.²

We can feel the same idea of oneness of God in Tagore's chant:

*"He it is the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep touches.
He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes,
And joyfully plays on the chords of my heart,
In varied cadence of pleasure and pain."³*

Nuaymah believes that the Nature is one body animated by single soul. It does not say that this is mine and that is his. It is for everything that it contains and whatever that it contains belongs to her and the notion of 'mine' and 'your' is quite unknown to it.

Nuaymah chose his prose works for a systematic and detailed elaboration of his pantheistic ideas. Although a gifted poet, he seems to have abandoned poetry in favor of prose. His small collection of poems called *Hams-ul-Jufoon* depicts the poet's essentially mystical nature. Many of the poems are written in a pantheistic mood and some have *Wahdat-ul-Wujood* as their theme⁴.

Nuaymah's insight into life was extremely profound. He had been a very receptive individual since his early years. Quiet but volatile inside, isolated but not

¹ Mikhail Naimy, Khalil Jibran, page 148

² Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-al-Maad, page 53

³ Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali

⁴ Dr. S.H.Nadeem, A Critical Appreciation of Arabic Mystical Poetry, Islamic Book Service, 1979, page 239

unconnected, peace loving but not a recluse, he seemed to be congenitally oriented towards higher objectives in life. Life's events that were commonplace for anyone meant much more for him. Like a bee he extracted every bit of flavor from life. He perceived life as a challenge and kept himself busy with all its hues and nuances. He did not differentiate between sorrow and joy, nor did he express his preference of one over the other. What he felt was both joy and sorrow exist together in the nature.

Nuaymah was an extremely meditative individual. Even among his own people, he used to be reflective rather than being interactive.¹ His introvert nature was just an outcome of his profound venture into the realm of infinite truth and the quest for the ultimate reality. The mysteries of life perplexed him and he spared no efforts in unraveling them. The nature and its elements astounded him. His mind was constantly occupied with these thoughts. Nuaymah had a great influence of the forces of nature on him and it was nature that inspired him the most. He wrote his first ever poem *al-Nahr-al-Mutajammid* in Russian where he made a comparison between the river and his heart.² He borrows generously from nature for his writings. Evidently, this trend is a consequence of his nativity. He was born and nourished in the picturesque valleys of the mountain Sinnain in Lebanon.³

The extreme beauty found in the nature and the harmony among its forces inspired Nuaymah to deliver excellence in his writings. Nature's sagacity, its generosity, and sense of justice overwhelmed Nuaymah. He was struck with awe by nature's uniqueness and its familiarity. He used to spend hours thinking about how nature streamlines all its contradictions to project harmony and compatibility. Its

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *Sabaoon Vol I*

² Surayya Malhath, *Mikhail Nuaymah, al-Adeeb as-Sufi, Beirut, 1964*

³ Mikhail Nuaymah, *Sabaoon Vol I*

profound enigma held him in a state of inspirational trance. His compassionate philosophy and humanistic outlook is a consequence of this candid intercourse with the nature.

Nuaymah combines joy of nature with his insight. He borrows the loftiness from the mountains and depth from the ocean and harmonizes them with his compassionate wisdom to enchant his readers. He requests the colors from the garden and flight from the birds and hoists the colorful rainbow of rich thoughts. Nuaymah's wisdom is essentially a lending of the nature, but he does not stop there and goes further ahead in the pursuit of the Ultimate Truth. The quest for the Ultimate Truth or Ultimate Reality is the fuel for his all efforts of investigation and inquiry into the life's vagaries.

Nuaymah's prolonged meditations guided him in attaining an insight into his self. He became aware of the superiority of the soul over the body and importance of everlasting virtues in the nature. He oriented his mind and soul to acknowledge and appreciate the eternal projections of the existence and ignore all that is of the ephemeral mass. He laid great importance in making a distinction between the two. His perseverance and patience in the process of learning and comprehending these enabled him to gain a mastery of the art of evaluating life per se.

Nuaymah was more concerned with the essence rather than the form. His area of interest was the essential qualities and not the physical feature of the objects around him. He gave all his attention to comprehend the immortal self of the human being in all his writings. His literature became the translation of his ideas about the human spirit and its great secrets.

Nature according to him is one body animated by a single soul. It does not make distinction and it cannot since it is one single reality, inseparable and

indistinguishable. Nature does not assert possessions and does not quite comprehend the notion of private possession. All change occurring in and around it is an illusion beyond any profit and loss.

In *Zaad-ul-Maad*, Nuaymah says:

Imaginative thinking reveals to us that the dead do not die and that the unborn ones are already with us moving among those who are born and bred. On who laments the dead laments Allah.

Nuaymah's book *Zaad-ul-Maad* is a detailed compendium of Nuaymah's humanistic philosophy. The rest of his books are more or less like satellites reflecting the same ideas and thoughts. Nevertheless, at the same time his varied works ooze creativity and novelty that captivates anyone who goes through them.

Unity of Existence in Nuaymah's opinion means dissolving the self into the ultimate Reality, the Nature, the God, and losing the self into Man. What he means is annihilation of everything into everything. For Nuaymah losing oneself into the beloved constitutes the highest degree of love for anything or anyone. He deems God, Man, and Nature to be one single entity and that is the Ultimate Reality or Greatest Existence. From this main belief, Nuaymah's other ideas and philosophies, like transmigration of soul, humanism, and divination arise.

The existence is only one, and it is inseparable. There is no God and no Man. We are the God and God is We, because we are the body and He is the soul in us. When we worship our gods, we actually worship the good inside us and keep it there. Nuaymah states:

Just as the tiny seed of rice contains all the secrets of the rice plant that begets it, you also contain all the glories of the power that has raised you from nothing to your existence... you are also eternal like the power from whose mercy have you blossomed, and you contain all its secrets.¹

According to Nuaymah, there is no you, he, or I. I am every human being and every human being is I. If I love a man I love myself, if I detest a man I detest myself.

All the delusions of the man result from his belief that he is a unique self different from everyone, and his life is free from all other's life. If a man asks to himself: Who am I? Why there is boundary between him and something? We can just tell him this: If you happen to eat a fruit, you are administering the complete life in you as all life contributes in the constitution of that fruit... if you shake hands with a man, it is as if you are shaking hands with all since Adam to the last man on the earth, because every person carries in his self all persons.²

For Nuaymah there is no time and no space. There is no past and no future, rather every moment contains eternity in its folds. Each particle of the earth contains the whole earth, just as all water of the oceans is contained in a single drop of water.

The thought that all ages are there in "now" and all places are there in "here" does not make any differentiation. All tomorrows are actually "now" dozing off in the lap of today.³

Consider what William Blake says in this beautiful verse:

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-ul-Maad,, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 8

² ibid, page 53

³ ibid, page 15

*To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a Haven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.*

Jibran also seems to be alluding to the same when he says in Sand and Foam:

*“My house says to me, “Do not leave me, for here dwells your Past.”
And the road says to me, “Come and follow me, for I am your future.”
And I say to both my house and the road,
“I have no past nor have I a future.
If I stay here, there is a going in my staying; and if I go,
There is a staying in my going.
Only love and death change all things.”*

As is obvious in the above quote, Jibran’s idea of time and space is also same as Nuaymah’s. He appears to be looking at the happenings of life from a higher place of existence, and is able to see what are the ultimate harbingers of change, i.e., love and death. For love punctuates the unity of existence, oneness of the Universe, and inseparable nature of all human beings; and death confirms that by bringing about the unity of self with the Ultimate Reality.

Death and life are two sides of the same coin. Death begets life, but both death and life are everlasting. What we perceive as death is actually an extension of life that is eternally contributing to the creation of other lives. What we call life is actually death in its closest meaning. Because life is not as dynamic and as eternal as death is; it is restricted to just one stint of living in the physical reality. It is same as a seed remains a seed only during its existence. Once it is buried in the

earth it gives birth to the shoots, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits; which is a more dynamic disposition. As Nuaymah puts it:

Imaginative thinking reveals to us that the dead are never dead, but their passions, dreams, joys, sorrows, curses, and blessings all remain floating in the air that you breath and in the ocean of desires and thoughts from which you derive your desires and ideas. The imaginative thinking teaches you that those who are not born are with you among you.¹

The above saying illustrates the importance of the human characteristics, their dreams, aspirations, wishes, desires. They play the defining role in both life and death. They are the ingredients of a living person, a dead person, or a person who is not born. A living person is nothing but his aspirations and dreams, a dead person is the one whose dreams, aspirations, and passions are no more there with him. Even if he is physically alive, he is dead. Physical death is not a death if the person never forsook his dreams and aspirations. As for those who are not born, there dreams and aspirations are there waiting for them to personify them. Thus living, dying, and being born is all a transformation and not reality.

As for the reward and punishment, they are two streams dictated by the Eternal Power since he gave birth to the first ray of existence. This is what Nuaymah says on this:

I used to blow with the people the trumpet of a god who caused his creatures to die and raised the dead to life, a god who punished and rewarded. Today, I blow the trumpet of a god who is above life and death and punishment and reward. Everything exists in Him. If He causes

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-ul-Maad, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 13

anything to die it means that He causes Himself to die. How can God efface Himself? If He punishes anybody, He punishes Himself.¹

Everything proceeds from the all including self in which the one who smites and the one who is smitten are but one. Inspiration is the inflow of the all self into the individual self, the wider the inlet the greater the inflow, the broader the shores of the individual self and the keener its sense of unity with all things. The few who have come to see themselves in every self and whose lives were in keeping with their vision were rightfully called the teachers of mankind and its guide to truth. Little wonder, they are worshipped by many for they have uncovered God in Man.

Nuaymah does not believe in the concept of private or material possession. He does not even believe in the deprivation and loss. He perceives all the oceans and mountains, flora and fauna, the earth and the skies, sun and moon, and all that has strength to be for each of us. When everything in this world derives its character from the same essence all forms and colors are mere illusion, why should there be any Yours, His, or Mine.

Everything belongs to everyone because everyone is in everything and everything is in everyone.²

“The nature is one entity which has a single soul. Once I heard it saying. This is for use and this is not for me, but everything found in it belongs to it only, and it belongs to everything, and there is no master and no slave.³”

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-ul-Maad,, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 18

² ibid, page 92

³ ibid, page 72

We can hear Jibran saying:

Should you really open your eyes and see, you would behold your image in all images. And should you open your ears and listen, you would hear your own voice in all voices.

About the possessions and material things, Nuaima's views are radical. He believes that we have been bestowed by the nature with innumerable gifts. He feels that we do not value these priceless things. He cracks down rather radically on people for this as he says:

Did not the life give to you the sky with all its accessories, the land with all that is found on it, and the ocean with all they conceal in their depth? Or you do not consider something yours unless it is secured in your pocket, or within the four walls of your house, or locked in your iron vault, or unless it were in your hand as a cheque endorsed by authority? So, secure the ocean in your pocket, the sun and the moon and the stars in your house, and imprison the air in your iron vault, and obtain the cheque for the fragrance of flowers and the songs of birds. If you felt short of that, you cannot blame it on life that gave it all to you, but on your hand which is not able to hold the bounties and does not know how to receive it. However, if you receive it with your soul, there shall not be any need for the cheques and iron vaults.¹

In the same way there is neither strength nor weakness nor the man is stronger than the animal nor the mosquito weaker than the lion nor the hawk stronger than the goldfinch nor the flower more delicate than the plant.

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-ul-Maad,, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 72

The strong man who claims for himself the command and domination over all the creation, it does not take long for him to be consumed by the worms, crows, and the scavengers. It does not take long for the lion to become a victim of the fox, wolf, and the vulture. Thus, there is weakness in the strength of the strong and there is strength in the weakness of the weak, the power of which is realized by the one who uses his imaginative thinking to perceive the finer truths of the reality of existence. Both the weak and the strong are similarly strong and weak in front of the course of life and greater elements of the nature. Nuaymah puts it in the following manner:

The nature did not make the weak to be the meal of the strong unless it made the strong to be the meal of the weak. There is no weakness or strength in the nature and no partiality or distinction. It employs all its power in the creation of even a gnat and its sustenance and does not spend more power in the creation of the sparrow and its livelihood.¹

Nature is fair, because it has no reason to be biased to any of the creations. It sees all its progenies with the same eye. That is how even the tiniest of the life on earth gets its daily bread. The nature has arrangements to make sure that all its creations can sustain their existence. The Nature's essential ingredients are justice and fairness. There is nothing excessive and nothing deficient. Everything that exists is complete and perfect, because it has been created by the God who is perfect. Can God who is perfect ever create something deficient? Thus all the creation is perfect like the perfection of its creator and eternal like Him.

In this regard, Nuaymah says:

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-ul-Maad,, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 93

If you become a reformist for yourself you will witness the world which was created by the perfect God is perfect, and that if you find it deficient in any of its aspects and tortuous in any of its dispositions, there must be a deficiency in your awareness and you must have been shortsighted. But as soon as you make yourself guide for the world you will witness that the world is deficient and you are perfect. The meaning of that testimony is that the God, who is the source of the world and who is your creator, is deficient. But beware of the misconception that you will reform the creation or a part of it with your actions, because the creator is perfect for the perfect.¹

There is no master and no slave, no superior and no inferior. On the contrary, there is a harmonious and complimentary relation between things in the affairs of Highest Nature, which consists of everyone's contribution without any distinction or preference for anyone. Everybody has been created to serve everybody and all of them have to serve the objectives of life and complete the objectives of the creation.

There is no grace and no shame in anything, because God himself is present in everything he has created, and everything that he has created is present in Him. Is it possible for the source of all grace to be graceless? Is it possible that He creates something faulty and corrupt when He recreates Himself in everything?

In this regard Nuaymah says:

The smallest thing in the life compliments the largest and the largest serves the smallest. Neither the hill is heavier than the particle of sand nor the

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *Zaad-ul-Maad*, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 86

bull is mightier than the frog nor the fruit more valuable than the wood nor the flower holier and prettier than the thorn.¹

In this manner, we see that the existence for Nuaymah, as well as for Jibran, is an interlocked unity, which is interwoven without any gaps, divisions, and boundaries, a unity that begins and ends with God. Each part of the existence is complete and is extension of other parts, in order to constitute from the union of those parts, a Greater Reality that we call The Existence, or The Life, or The Nature; hence we call it "God" Everlasting, Eternal, and Infinite. The God only is existence and the existence is God, as for what all differences we perceive in the life of existence, they are the construct of our erroneous notion that is unable to capture the reality.

Briefly, these are the truths of life around which the philosophy of Nuaymah, namely, Unity of Existence or Unity of Humanity revolves, in which the man participates in the lordship of the Creator as He makes him participate in everything in existence and makes everything participate in its existence. This participation in whose existence Nuaymah believes exists between all components of the creation that is the one he rejoiced in his gospel and calls within its principles in all that he wrote and said.

This marks the beginning of his pure human literature acquainted with every heart for its exalted nature and beauty. We feel a strong sense of conformity between his self and ourselves when he says:

Whenever you weave a dress for a person, beware that you do not weave even a single thread of your contempt in it. Because if it is worn by

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *Zaad-ul-Maad*, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 22

anybody other than you, it will ruin your appearance. Whenever you bake a loaf of bread to be sold in the market, beware that you do not bake even a grain of your greed in it. Because if it will be chewed by someone other than you, it will become a bitter lump in your throat. Whenever you hold a thought valuable to yourself, beware that you do not include curse in it. Because if it enters any ear other than yours it will become a disease for your wisdom.¹

There is a great sense of awe and fear in what Nuaymah states:

If you wish the freedom from pain, you must love your selves. However, if you love everything in the creation except a single worm, you will still be in disgust with your selves to the extent of your disgust with that worm, and a stream of pain will remain in your disgust. This stream will never stop unless your disgust stops.²

He also says:

Do you not expand the gates of your soul so that none remain outside? If you saw a blind and you have vision, know that you are blind like him if you pity him ... and as long as his path is dark your path is also dark, because yours and his path are same. If you come across a leper and you are pure, know that you are a leper like him if you turned your face away from him, but if you cleansed him with your purity, it will be as if your cleansed yourself from your latent leprosy. Do not hate the evildoer. Hate

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *Zaad-ul-Maad*, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 14

² Mikhail Nuaymah, *Zaad-ul-Maad*, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 56

the evil. Because if you hate the evildoer your will become like him. But if you hate the evil you will destroy it and will be guided to the welfare.¹

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, Zaad-ul-Maad,, al-Majmooat-ul-Kamilah, Dar-ul-Ilm lil Malayeen, 1963, page 48

*THE BOOK OF MIRDAD: A COMPARISON WITH THE
PROPHET*

STORY OF MIRDAD

LOVE

WOMAN AND MAN

PRAYER

JOY AND SORROW

ABOUT THE TWO BOOKS

The philosopher in Nuaymah unveils his mind and soul in *The Book of Mirdad*. The book that gives you the feeling that you are flowing with the clouds to discover the mysteries behind them. Cloud after cloud you uncover the truths. *Mirdad* enlightens your mind and soul and makes you breath in the fresh air.

Khalil Jibran, who is one of the greatest literary figures of the world, was a close associate of Mikhail Nuaymah. Their influence on each other is great. Known to be great friends, Jibran and Nuaymah ceased to be in each other's company only when Jibran departed to the vicinity of God much prematurely. He was a great spiritual thinker and is well known for his profound philosophical writings. His masterpiece *The Prophet* represents the pinnacle of his glorious thoughts. It has been rendered into most of the languages of the world.

Nuaymah's *The Book of Mirdad* bears the mark of *The Prophet* in terms of the ideas expressed. It is a much lengthier book than *The Prophet*, given Nuaymah's love for elaboration and description. *The Prophet* is a book that not only may be found in all the libraries of the world and the languages of the world, but on all the thinking minds also. While going through *The Book of Mirdad*, one may wonder why there is so little awareness about the book. The repertoire of thoughts, the selection of words, the harmony of the sense and the form all indicate toward the greatness of the work.

A comparison of these two books shall be an interesting and fulfilling activity as well as a combined tribute to the friendship of Nuaymah and Jibran. It would also highlight Nuaymah's marvelous style of influencing the mind and soul.

STORY OF MIRDAD

There was a legend about the dilapidated monastery in the folds of the Milky Mountains at Altar Peak, the lofty summit. The monastery or The Ark, as it was called once, carries with it myriad legends...! One of those legends made this protagonist determined to reach to the monastery, which was dangerously located.

The legend had the post Great Deluge setting when Noah and his family along with their wealth drifted to the Milky Mountains and found it suitable for settlement. Before his departure from the earth Noah called his son Sam and instructed him to build an altar upon the highest peak of the Milky Mountains and make a house around the ark corresponding to the ark itself, though smaller in dimensions, and name it The Ark. Then he asked him to choose nine Ark Companions who will keep the fire of faith burning on The Ark and will seek The Highest for guidance to themselves and their fellow men. The reason for choosing nine men as told by Noah was that was the number of those who sailed the Ark. Though Sam could count only eight, Noah clarified that by saying that the ninth one was a stowaway, who was known and seen by him alone.

Sam did same as instructed by Noah. Later, Noah was buried under the altar in the Ark which remained the abode of the conqueror of the Flood.

Several centuries later, the wealth was so much that other virtues followed a natural decline. Once, upon the death of one of the Nine, the entry was not allowed to the first person who came at the gates on no grounds. The only ground that one could gather was the stranger's appearance; he was naked, famished, and covered with lacerations: thus the Senior told him that he was unworthy of admittance into the community. Lo! For the first time it was happening, as the

first person to knock after the demise of one of the Nine was taken in without any reservations.

The Senior waited for a long time for the ninth companion, but of no avail. The stranger proved to be an effective and persuasive fellow and he prevailed upon him. The Senior called Shamadan took him in only as a servant. The monastery grew very rich in the subsequent seven years. At the dawn of the eighth year, things began to change swiftly. The peace of the community was disturbed. It was because of the rising influence of the stranger. Senior was too late in realizing this. The monastery began to function under stranger's command. He gave away all the properties of the monastery. In three years he deserted the monastery and cursed the Senior whereby he is *bound* to the grounds of the monastery and made dumb until this day.

The protagonist became extremely anxious and he undertook the journey to the summit to see the monastery.

During his journey to the summit, the protagonist faces extreme difficulties and encounters mysterious people. It was an extremely dangerous climb, with the steepest flint slope reminding of nothing but death. The protagonist encounters a shepherd with his herd of goats, thereby he was forced to surrender all the loaves of bread he had with him. When he asked for some milk of goats from the shepherd he humiliated him by calling him fool and said, "Your flesh is food sufficient, and your blood is drink sufficient."

Again, after some more climb when he was asleep he was awakened to behold a young, naked maiden with an ugly, old woman pulling at his jacket sleeve. That woman took all his cloth thus rendering him naked. When protagonist told her

that he was even more ashamed before the maiden's innocence, he was told by the old woman, "As she wears your shame, so wear her innocence."

Later he was deprived of his staff also by an old couple. Anyhow he manages to get to his goal. He was awakened by a man who welcomed him on the Altar Peak. He was told by him by him that he had been waiting for his arrival for one hundred and fifty years.

Then the protagonist came to know that *The Book of Mirdad* was to be handed over to him. The person talking to him was Shamadan, the Senior of the Ark, who narrated the story, the same legend, to him again. *Mirdad* was that stranger stowaway who stayed as a servant on the Ark. He narrated the struggle between *Mirdad* and him and how *Mirdad* became influential over a period of time. Then, the Senior after he gave all his clothes to the protagonist, vanished in the Mountains.

The Book of Mirdad consisted of thirty-seven chapters. It starts with Mirdad unveiling himself and then he goes on to reveal the secrets of the worlds and heavens.

Jibran's book *The Prophet*, which is the summit of his thoughts and a masterpiece contains the ideas and thoughts that we find in *The Book of Mirdad*. Sometimes same ideas are expressed in a different way and sometimes the thoughts complement each other. The two books reveal the fact that Nuaymah and Jibran were very close ideologically and in their expressions.

They spoke on a variety of issues through their protagonist, the Prophet in Jibran's sketch and *Mirdad* in Nuaymah's discourse.

LOVE

*You live that you may learn to love.
And you love that you may learn to live.
No other lesson is required of man.¹*

We embody the human for to realize the love... life's main course... in the Human experience. Living and loving are true one in the same because you cannot have one without the other. When you live your life to its fullest, you are essentially loving all.

The Prophet spoke to the people of Orphalese:

*When Love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.²*

We can see that Nuaymah proclaims that there can be no life without love, or life cannot prosper without love. Jibran also states the importance of love, albeit he bewares us of the difficulties and hardships one encounters in the path of attaining love.

Quite obviously, when love can ensure a life full of prosperity and happiness, achieving it must be an arduous exercise.

Consider Nuaymah when he says:

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, The Book of Mirdad, Chapter 11, page 68

² Jibran Khalil Jibran, The Prophet, The Greatest works of Kahlil Gibran, Jaico Publishing House, page 10

And whom, or what, is one to love? Is one to choose a certain leaf upon the Tree of Life and pour upon it all one's heart? What of the branch that bears the leaf? What of the stem that holds the branches? What of the bark that shields the stem? What of the roots that feed the bark, the stems, the branches, and the leaves? What of the soil embosoming the roots? What of the sun, and sea, and air that fertilize the soil?

If one small leaf upon a tree be worthy of your love, how much more so the tree in its entirety? The love that singles out a fraction of the whole foredooms itself to grief.¹

Here we can observe Nuaymah stating directly what Jibran had alluded to when he said, *though his (love's) ways are hard and steep.*

If we are not impartial and unprejudiced in loving, that will not benefit us but would be a precursor of misery. How can we love just the beautiful flower and hate the thorn---both have come from the same seed and received the nourishment from the same soil!! And how can we deprive the root and the soil of our love? They are the source of the flower. You cannot just love the beauty of the flower, but you must embrace the thorn also!

We see Jibran further elaborating:

*But if you fear, you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure,
Then it is better for you that you cover your nakedness and pass out love's
threshing floor,
Into the seasonless world where you shall laugh, but not all your laughter,
And weep but not all your tears.²*

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *The Book of Mirdad*, Chapter 11, page 68

² Jibran Khalil Jibran, *The Prophet*, *The Greatest works of Kahlil Gibran*, Jaico Publishing House, page 12

Whenever you find yourself loving unconditionally, you will know that you are living life to its fullest. Likewise, whenever you find yourself living from your Unlimited Self, the answer to whether or not you are loving is not even thought of, because you simply know who you are.

Jibran prescribes the way to live life fully. The way is to love completely without seeking anything. This selfless love only will enable you to laugh heartily and weep contently.

Again Jibran declares that love is both means and end:

*Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For love is sufficient unto love.¹*

Nuaymah seems to be further complementing and clarifying it when he says:

No love is possible except the love of self. No self is real save the All-embracing self. Therefore is God all Love, because He loves Himself.²

The love that is sufficient unto itself is God's true image. It is the same notion with which Jibran sings that love does not possess or is not possessed. When you are in search of Love, you are searching your All-embracing Self.

So long as you are pained by Love, you have not found your real self, nor have you found the golden key of Love, because you love an ephemeral self, your love is ephemeral.³

¹ ibid

² Mikhail Nuaymah, The Book of Mirdad, page 69

³ Ibid.

Jibran also is putting the same idea in a different way. He says that love will expose you to all kinds of ordeals unless you do not discover the truth.

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart, and in that knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart.¹

See how Nuaymah emphasizes on the self-sufficiency Love enjoys:

Love is not a virtue.

Love is a necessity, more so than bread and water;

More so than light and air.

Let no one pride himself on loving.

But rather breathe in Love, and breathe it out

Just as unconsciously and freely as you breathe in the air and breath it out.

For love needs no one to exalt it.

Love will exalt the heart that it finds worthy of itself.

Seek no reward for Love.

Love is reward sufficient unto Love,

As Hate is punishment sufficient unto hate.

Nor keep an account with Love.

For Love accounts to no one but itself.²

¹ Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*, The Greatest works of Kahlil Gibran, 9Jaico Publishing House, page 11

² Mikhail Nuaymah, *The Book of Mirdad*, page 70

LOVE BETWEEN WOMAN AND MAN

*Man made a prisoner by the love of woman,
And woman made a prisoner by the love of man
Are equally unfit for Freedom's precious crown.
But man and woman made as one by Love,
Inseparable, indistinguishable, are verily entitled to the prize.*

*No love is Love that subjugates the lover.
No love is Love that feeds on flesh and blood.
No love is Love that draws a woman to a man only to breed
More women and more men and thus perpetuate
Their bondage to the flesh.¹*

Nuaymah deplors the love that makes slaves out of people. He says Love should liberate and not enslave. He resents the tendency of the human being to put their carnal needs in the forefront and ignore the essential bliss of spiritual bond existing between a man and a woman.

Jibran's ideas are astoundingly similar in this regard. If we consider the following string of thoughts by him, it will become clear as to how both Jibran and Nuaymah represent the same thoughts, though dabbled in their own individual hue:

*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.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.*

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *The Book of Mirdad*, page 73

*Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone.
Even as the strings of a lute are alone
Though they quiver with same music.*

*Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your heart.
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.¹*

¹ Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*, The Greatest works of Kahlil Gibran, Jaico Publishing House, page 19

PRAYER

Both Nuaymah and Jibran are staunch Monist and all their writings represent the idea of *Unity of Existence*.

Mirdad speaks about prayer:

You pray in vain when you address yourself to any other gods but your very selves.¹

Let us hear what we get from Jibran's treasure in regard to praying:

I cannot teach you how to pray in words. God listens not to your words save when He Himself utters them through your lips.²

Mirdad exhorts us further:

And where is God that you should shout into His ear your whims and vanities, your praises and your complaints? Is he not in you and all about you? Is not His ear much nearer to your mouth than is your tongue to your palate?³

According to the above views, one need not perceive the God as someone located in a distant space and sanctioning or refusing our demands. He is within us. When we are praying, our prayers are directed not outwardly but inwardly.

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, *The Book of Mirdad*, page 78

² Khalil Jibran, *The Prophet*, *The Greatest works of Kahlil Gibran*, Jaico Publishing House, page 87

³ Mikhail Nuaymah, *The Book of Mirdad*, page 78

See how *Mirdad* reaffirms it:

*You need no lip or tongue for praying.
Nor have any need of temples to pray in.
Whoever cannot find a temple in his heart,
The same can never find his heart in any temple.¹*

The Prophet here explains the mechanics of the act of praying:

*When you pray your rise to meet in the air
Those who are praying at that very hour, and whom save in prayers you
may not meet.
Therefore let your visit to that temple invisible be naught but ecstasy and
sweet communion.²*

¹ *ibid*, page 82

² Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*, page 78

JOY AND SORROW

We find that Nuaymah considers joy and sorrow both as an essential ingredient of life. For him sorrow is as essential as joy. He makes it clear in his expressions:

Nothing is worth a tear in Time.

Nothing is worth a smile.

A laughing face and a weeping face are equally unseemly and distorted.

Would you avoid the salt of tears?

Avoid then, the contortions of laughter.

A tear when volatilized becomes a giggle.

A giggle when condensed becomes a tear.

Be neither volatile to joy, nor condensable to sorrow.

But be serenely equable to both.¹

We find Nuaymah calling for middle path in the life. He prescribes avoiding excessive joy or sorrow. He also believes that there is not much essential difference between joy and sorrow. That is why there is no reason why we get perturbed by any of them.

For Jibran, joy and sorrow represent two faces of the same coin:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

¹ Mikhail Nuaymah, The Book of Mirdad, page 105

*The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.*¹

For Jibran your sorrow defines and dictates your joy. You should not expect to be overwhelmed with joy if you are not prepared to be overwhelmed by sorrow.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

*Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.*²

Thus we saw the striking similarity between the thought and contents of *The Prophet* and *The Book of Mirdad*. *The Prophet* is a very concise version of Jibran's philosophy, as compared to *The Book of Mirdad*. It must be emphasized here that Nuaymah lived much longer than Jibran and his thoughts gained further maturity when he wrote *The Book of Mirdad*. Some of the thoughts expressed in Nuaymah's book are simply marvelous. There are no two opinions about the fact that *The Prophet* is a book for all times and all ages. This is equally true for *The Book of Mirdad* as well. It also transcends the ever-perturbing barriers of time and space and satiates the human quest for soulful reading.

¹ Khalil Jibran, *The Prophet*, page 36

² *ibid*, page 37

CONCLUSION

Love is the law of God. You live that you may learn to love. You love that you may learn to live. No other lesson is required of Man.

These magical words explain the meaning and purpose of human existence. Nuaymah like a sorcerer enchants his readers with his soulful imagery of ideas. A poet, essayist, prose writer, critic, but not a mere practitioner of the art... his excellence in all the genres he worked in can only be explained by his deep sense of duty towards the literature of the age.

In his aphorisms and parables book *Vineyard by the Road*, Nuaymah says:

Don't blame if today I addressed my words to another and not to you. I will talk to you in the thirtieth or fortieth century.

Nuaymah has all time and great patience. In *The Book of Mirdad*, a clear warning is placed that the *Book* is not for everyone but *for those who yearn to overcome. Let all others Beware of it!* For the *Book* contains a heavy dose of spirituality, materialists may be allergic to such potent medicine. Seekers of the truth will find in the *Book* a treasure and a constant companion.

Mikhail Nuaymah had a very rich and interesting life. He had been a close friend and biographer of Khalil Jibran. He served as a soldier in the American Army during the First World War in Europe. He was a holder of law and arts degrees from the University of Washington in Seattle. Nuaymah mastered Arabic, Russian, Ukrainian, French, and English languages and wrote in Arabic more than twenty-nine original books. Most of his books are not yet published in other

languages, and all of them have a Universal appeal. They are of very high caliber and can be compared to Rumi, Hesse, and Tolstoy. *The Book of Mirdad* was written in English and is reprinted regularly in the West.

Nuaymah's has written poems, short stories, and philosophical books. Nuaymah's works contain the quest for higher knowledge in the perspective of his belief of Unity of Existence. Allama Iqbal, the great Indian poet and philosopher, is also a believer in the Unity of Existence like Nuaymah. His ideas of self-affirmation expressed in his works resemble with the importance Nuaymah gives to the Self. Alos, Nuaymah's spiritual writings reflect the ideas expounded by Tagore. The realistic sketch of social life by Nuaymah in his short stories is akin to the writings of Premchand, who is known as the father of Urdu short stories or *Afsanas*. Premchand also penned down his ideas in a very simple language and in a free-flowing manner, which is the basic feature of Nuaymah's writing. This is the proof that Nuaymah was a versatile practitioner of all the genres he chose to write.

For Nuaymah, the calling of literature was more than any other pursuit. He switched from one genre to another even if he could produce the best in any genre. For him, the foremost task was to serve the literature. He took upon himself the onus of making the meaning a more important consideration than the words.

In the preface of the *al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*, Nuaymah addressed the issue of form and meaning and resolved to take the onus of establishing the precedence of meaning over the form in Arabic literature. This remained the guiding principle of al-Rabitah as long as it lived. Nuaymah remained committed to his resolution throughout his life and his works are the evidence of his sincere fulfillment of the promise he had made.

Nuaymah had been consistently meditative all along his life. He had the ability to perceive things beyond their face value. The crux of all his thinking revolves around his philosophy of Unity of Existence. It is from there that Nuaymah derives his empathy and compassion for the human being and all the living creatures. Nuaymah is a link to the chain leading to thousands of years old mystic tradition. He is the modern ideologue of the philosophies of Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Kabir, and Chishti. He is a precious flower in the garland that consecrates the Existence.

My first encounter with Nuaymah's works is not too matured. I have grown too familiar with this splendid school of thought in a very short span of time. May God sustain my interest! Just as each beginning carries the seeds of the end in its womb, each conclusion ushers in a new beginning. I deem my work to be a preface for further quest and comprehension of his persona and his writings.

In view of Nuaymah's condemnation of the receding value system and rising materialism in the modern civilization, I feel that his ideas and his philosophies seem to be very relevant in today's world.

Love is not a virtue. Love is a necessity; more so than bread and water; more so than light and air.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Mikhail Nuaymah, Sabaoon Volumes I-III, Beirut, 1959-60
2. Mikhail Nuaymah, al-Ghirbal, Cairo, 1923
3. Mikhail Nuaymah Akabir, Beirut, 1956
4. Mikhail Nuaymah Abu-Battah, Beirut, 1959
5. Mikhail Nuaymah Kana ma Kana, Beirut, 1937
6. Mikhail Nuaymah Jibran Khalil Jibran, Beirut, 1960
7. Mikhail Nuaymah al-Bayadir, Dar-ul-Malaeen, Beirut, 1959
8. Mikhail Nuaymah Hams-ul-Jufoon, Dar-ul-Malaeen, Beirut, 1959
9. Mikhail Nuaymah Zaad-ul-Maad, Dar-ul-Malaeen, Beirut, 1959
10. Mikhail Nuaymah The Book of Mirdad, Dar-ul-Malaeen, 1959
11. Jibran Khalil Jibran The Prophet, The Greatest works of Kahlil Gibran, Jaico Publishing House
12. Rabindranath Tagore Gitanjali

SECONDARY SOURCES

ARABIC

1. Anees Khoori Maqdisi al-Ittijahat al-Adabiyah fil-Alam al-Arabi al-Hadith, Beirut, 1960.
2. Abd-Allah Mubarak zal-Adab al-Arabi al-Muasir fil-Jazirah al-Arabiyyah, Cairo, 1973
3. Jurj Sayday Adabuna wa Udabauna fil-Mahjar al-Amrikiyyah, Beirut, 1964.
4. Sayyib Hamid Nassaj al-Qissah fil-Adab al-Arabi al-Hadith, Beirut, 1961.
5. Umar Dasuqi Fil Adab al-Hadith, Vol 1&2, Cairo 1948-55

- Arabi, Beirut, 1960
27. Ismail Izz al-Din Al-Sher al-Arabi al-Muasir: Qadayahu wa zawahiruhu al-Fanniyyah wa al-Maanawiyah, Cairo, 1967
 28. Muhammad al-Nawayhi Qadiyyah al-Sher al-Jadid, Cairo, 1964
 29. Mustafa Abd al-Latif al-Saharti Al-Sher al-Muasir ala Daw al-Naqd al-Hadith, Cairo, 1948

ENGLISH

1. M.M. Badawi Modern Arabic Literature, Cambridge University Press, 1992
2. R.C. Ostle Studies in Modern Arabic Literature
3. Muhammad Abdul Hai Tradition and English and American Influence in Arabic Romantic Poetry, London, 1982
4. A.J. Arberry Modern Arabic Poetry (Anthology with Translations), Cambridge, 1967
5. M.M. Badawi An Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse, Oxford, 1970
6. M.M. Badawi A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge, 1975
7. N. Naimy Mikhail Naimy; An Introduction, Beirut, 1967
8. C. Nijland Mikhail Nuaymah: Promoter of Arabic Literary Revival, Istanbul, 1975
9. Muhammad Siddiq Mikhail Nuaymah as Novelist, Al-Arabiyyah Vol. 15 nos. 1&2, page 16-33.
10. Ismat Mahdi Modern Arabic Literature, Dairat-ul-Maarif Press, Hyderabad.
11. John A. Haywood Modern Arabic Literature.
12. George Santayana Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, New York
13. M.M. Badawi A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge, 1975

14. S. Moreh Modern Arabic Poetry (1800-1970), Leiden, 1976
15. R.C. Ostle Studies in Modern Arabic Literature, Middlesex, 1976
16. Robin Ostle Studies in Modern Arabic Literature, Warminster, 1975
17. Issa Boullata Critical Perspective on Modern Arabic Literature, Washington D.C., 1980
18. Dr. S.H. Nadeem A Critical Appreciation of Arabic Mystical Poetry, Islamic Book Service, 1979

ESSAYS & ARTICLES

1. Hadith ma Mikhail Nuaymah An Interview of the poet-critic by Abd al-Karim al-Ashtar, Al-Maarifa, Damascus, No.24, February 1964
2. Al-Tajdid fil-Sher Al-Hilal, November, 1933, Vol.42
3. Rayi fil-Sher al-Hadith Al-Muqtataf, May 1939, Vol. 94
4. Al-Sher wal-Thaqafa Al-Muqtataf, June & July, 1939, Vol. 95
5. Nazik Al-Malaika Qaday-al-Sher al-Muasir, Beirut, 1962
6. Yusuf al-Khal Al-Hadathah fil-Sher, Beirut, 1987

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

1. Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, Vol I&II Edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, Rutledge, 1998
2. Encyclopedia Britannica 1994-1999

