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## **MYSTICISM AND ROMANTICISM IN THE WORKS OF KAHLIL GIBRAN AND WILLIAM BLAKE**

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# Mysticism and Romanticism in the Works of Kahlil Gibran and William Blake

Shweta Singh

Assistant Professor United College of Engineering and Management

**Abstract – In this paper we present about Mysticism and Romanticism in the works of Kahlil Gibran and William Blake. Poetry and art are twins. Both are the offspring of suffering and joy. Gibran translated Blake's "Innocence and Experience" into a "Tear and a Smile." Nevertheless, the unending drama of human existence unfolds itself in the pages of both men. Only the elected and gifted soul is capable of creativity, of reading the world differently, and of rebelling against evil clothed in a lamb's garment.**

**Keywords: - Mysticism, Poet, Art, Job, Village, Romanticism**

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## INTRODUCTION

Mysticism is more or less a spiritual discipline which assists a human soul to make contact with the divine reality and a mystic is a person who has had a mystical experience on a very personal level. A mystic tries to make his vision comprehensible because he knows that it is only a chosen few who are granted divine consciousness and the perception to see beyond the material world.

## KAHLIL GIBRAN (1883–1931)

Khalil was born on 6 January 1883 to Kamila Jubran and her second husband, Khalil Sa'd Jubran, in the village of Bisharri in what is now northern Lebanon but was then Ottoman Syria. He had a half-brother, Butrus (also known as Peter) Rahma, and two younger sisters, Sultana and Marianna. The family was Maronite Christians, and Kamila Jubran was the daughter of a Maronite priest. The father seems to have been a violent drinker and a gambler; rather than tend the walnut grove he owned, he was a collector of taxes for the village headman, a job that was not considered reputable. In 1891 he was convicted of some irregularity, and his property was confiscated. Gibran later described his father to his women friends as a descendant of cavaliers, a romantic figure, who got into trouble with the law for refusing to compromise with corrupt village authorities.

Gibran's reputation in the English-speaking world, on the other hand, has been mixed. His works have been hugely popular, making him the best-selling American poet of the twentieth century, but that enthusiasm has not been shared by critics. His paintings and drawings of sinuous idealized nudes belong to symbolism and art nouveau and are, thus, a survival of a tradition

rejected both by American realists and European abstractionists. His English books—most notably, *The Prophet* (1923), with its earnest didactic romanticism—found no favor with critics whose models were the cool intellectualism of James Joyce and T. S. Eliot or the gritty realism of Ernest Hemingway. As a result, Gibran has been dismissed as a popular sentimentalist by American critics and historians of art and of literature. There are signs that this situation is changing, at least on the literary side, as critics become more sensitive to the characteristics of immigrant writing.

Gibran and Blake were poets and artists. Both rebelled against the decayed and rigid laws of church and society. Both rejected Reason in the name of Imagination and read the Bible in its "Diabolical form." Above all, the two poets shared a basic prophetic vision and apocalyptic view of the universe. Throughout their works, the messianic mission of the poet and the function of the artist are clear. Poetry is to lead the people back to Eden, and painting must be a step from nature toward the infinite. Ibrán was familiar with some of Blake's poetry and drawings during his early years in Boston. However, this knowledge of Blake was neither deep nor complete. Kahlil Gibran was reintroduced to William Blake's poetry and art in Paris, perhaps in Auguste Rodin's studio and by Rodin himself. It was then that Gibran read Blake's works more completely and studied his biography and also viewed many more reproductions of his drawings. In Paris, Gibran was called "the twentieth-century Blake," and from that time on, Blake played a special role in Gibran's life. Their reading of the Bible, their rebellion against church corruption, and their sociopolitical visions were very similar. This is not to say that Gibran was a mere copy of Blake but to affirm that in Blake he found the support and

confirmation for his early doctrines which he developed before or while reading Blake. It is my belief that Gibran's basic concepts and doctrines were already formed and developed by 1910, the year of his return from Paris at the age of twenty-seven. Furthermore, I agree with Professor Bushrui that Gibran's early works, which were all in Arabic, contained the basic themes of his later writings.

**William Blake (1757-1827)**

William Blake had the Sun in Sagittarius and was one of the greatest visionary artists and romantic poets that ever emerged from England, spanning the 18th and 19th centuries. Blake was so far ahead of his time that he was considered mad by some of his contemporaries.

There were many mystical influences in his life, from Swedenborg to Jacob Boehme. He was a devout Christian and scholar of the Bible but abhorred organized religion. His artistic renderings of the Bible were highly esoteric. Blake was inspired by the American and French revolutions that took place during his life, when Uranus, ruler of revolution and the seventh ray of magic, was discovered in 1781. Uranus dominates Blake's horoscope, sitting on the midheaven (career/dharma), giving him originality and innovation, and inspiring him to be a revolutionary in his field of art and poetry. He was born at the beginning of the cuspal period of Pisces and Uranus-ruled Aquarius. Uranus rules Blake's ninth house connected to the higher wisdom, philosophy, religion, arts and sciences.

Literary indebtedness has never given up its place as an important branch of literary research within particular literatures, and especially in comparative literature [1].” Though the genesis of works of Blake and Gibran are from different literary environments, the two poets, to a large extent, share spiritual and social insights of a same kind. According to George Nicolas EL-Hage, “I assert that Gibran owed more to Blake than any other poet or philosopher and that Blake's influence on him was the most enduring.[2]”

“The mystic is somewhat in the position of a man who, in a world of blind men, has suddenly been granted sight, and who gazing at the sunrise, and overwhelmed by the glory of it, tries, however falteringly to convey to his fellows what he sees.”[3]

The mystic believes it is possible to pass beyond the sphere of logical thought, that is, he believes it is possible not only to infer that God is, but, that it is possible to feel, to touch, to become actually one with God.”[4] Christian mysticism believes that the spark of divinity lies in man itself and he needs development from within. He needs to care for his fellowmen in order to reach the divinity. In the words of Northrop Frye: “The higher state of heaven is achieved by those who have developed the God within them instead of the devil. Those who have fed the hungry and clothed the naked are here, because they have realized the divine dignity of man.”5

Blake, a poet mystic, had a great influence on some major writers who came after him. W. B Yeats is a great example. The Lebanese American Kahlil Gibran would call him a ‘God Man’ and wrote almost everything under his impact and influence. In the words of Alexandre Najjar: “He was sensitive to the abundant symbolism of the works [ of Blake ] marked by spiritual dialectic between Good and Evil, between heaven and Hell, between Regeneration and Disintegration and the attempt ‘to open the immortal human eye inward.’[6] Gibran in the same way as Blake was a poet mystic and a visionary prophet. According to Joseph P. Ghougassian, “It is worthwhile to recall that the vision Gibran holds of the world. Man and God resemble very much Blake's apocalyptic vision. Blake outlined the Correspondence between the material and the spiritual; Gibran likewise describes the unity of existence, as a coming together of polarities.”[7]

## CONCLUSION:

In this paper we found that art knows no boundaries. It transcends all national limits and is only satisfied with the universal. There, time and place lose their ability to imprison the artist in a closed cell. Gibran's reputation in the English-speaking world, on the other hand, has been mixed. His works have been hugely popular, making him the best-selling American poet of the twentieth century, but that enthusiasm has not been shared by critics. The inspired poet becomes a winged soul floating over life, embracing the infinite. It is in the midst of this vast expanse where the responsibility of the artist becomes eternal and his mission turns holy that we can speak of Kahlil Gibran and William Blake together.

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