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A Glimpse Of Mahjar Poets In The Americas With Special Reterence To 'Al-Rabita Al- Qalamiyyah' (The Pen League)

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Abstract

Mahjar (Pl.Muhajir), an Arabic term means a place of emigration or a country or a territory settled by migrants from other countries. Arabian poets who migrated from the land of Syria, Labanon and other Arab countries to the North as well as to the South Americas in a large number during the late 9th century because of some social and economic considerations and they produced an excellent type of poetry literature thereon.

Mahjar literature is a new dimension or emergence of new look in modem Arabic poetry literature. America was its birth place to exercise and develop the Mahjar literature, Specially in poetry. Mahjar poets introduced psychological insight for the first time in Arabic poetry. Influence of West, American poets and Russian realism was revealed by them. Most of the Mahjar poets were Christian in religion hailed from Syria and Labanon and their mother tongue was Arabic. Some of the most important and influential poet like Mutran lived and worked in Egypt. As they were favoured by the British authorities in different places, they excelled in English, French as well as in Arabic.

The poets were accompanied with new ideas and attitude, and they had the general interest in literature and in poetry in particular and they produced work of a quality and originality which became a vital stage in the development of romantic poetry in Arabic. These writers were initially brought to either through the journalism or though one literary monthly magazine of the Arabic speaking community in New York, Al-Fanun and Al-Saih edited by Nasib Arida and Abd Al-Masih Haddad respectively. At last they formed "The Pen Association", In New York in 1920. Literary efforts received support and encouragements in the twenties from this Association.

Keywords: Emigration, Dimension, Psychological, Realism, Journalism, Magazine.

Objectives

1. To know about Mahjar Literatures, specially the Mahjar Poetry & their Poets.
2. To know about the social, economical as well as political condition of the land of Syria, Labanon and other Arab countries of the late 19th century.
3. To know about the influence of West, American Poets & Russian realism in modern Arabic Poetry.
4. To know that contribution of Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyyah (The Pen Association) of 1920 and other literary organizations.

Methodology

The descriptive research methodology has been used for the study of the paper. The proposed paper would be completely depended on secondary data. To evaluate **A GLIMPSE OF MAHJAR POETS IN THE AMERICAS WITH SPECIAL RETERENCE TO 'AL-RABITA AL-QALAMIYYAH' (THE PEN LEAGUE)** secondary data has been collected from various published sources like book, journals, news paper and websites of various agencies. The collected information would be processed and analyzed for the meaningful completion of the study.

Introduction

Mahjar (Pl. Muhajir) an Arabic term means a place of emigration or a country or a territory settled by migrants from other countries.

Arabian poets who migrated from the land of Syria Labanon & other Arab countries to the North as well as to the south Americas in a large number during the late nineteenth century because of some social & economic considerations and they produced an excellent type of poetry literature thereon.

Mahjar Literature

Mahjar literature is a new dimension or emergence of new look in modern Arabic poetry literature. America was its birth place to exercise and develop the Mahjar literature, specialty in poetry. Mahjar poets introduced psychological insight for the first time in Arabic poetry. Influence of West, American poets and Russian realism was revealed by them. Most of the Mahjar poets were Christian in religion hailed from Syria and Labanon and their mother tongue was Arabic. Some of the most important and influential poet like Mutran lived and worked in Egypt.

The population of the Labanon increased from 1.25 million in 1840 to four million in 1900. It's economy deteriorated as a result of maladministration and broke down in law & order. Egypt was the only country to which the Syro-Lebanese could emigrate under the official ottoman policy till 1890. Later the rule was modified and the Syro-Lebanese emigrated as far as to North & South America. Many of these emigrants came from the mission school of labanon and they were favored by the British authorities in Egypt and the Sudan for whom their knowledge of Arabic and English or French was of great benefit. A larger group went to North or South America or to Australia or West Africa, and they established thriving merchant communities in major cities such as New York, Riode Janeiro & San Paulo.

These migration had a great cultural affects and the emigrants were accompanied by new ideas and attitudes. During the first two decades of twenty century a group of these Syrian and Lebanese exiles got together in New York, who had a general interest in literature and in poetry in particular, they were co-operative and helpful to each other in their works and they exchanged their ideas to develop their talent and they formed a coherent group with common characteristics, and some of them produced the quality literature, that led to the extreme position of the development of romantic poetry in Arabic. These poets and writers for the first time came to light either through the journalism or through one literary monthly magazine of the Arabic speaking community in New York, al-Fanun & al-Saih, edited by Nasib Arida & Abd al-Masih Haddad respectively. After its 29th edition between 1911 & 1918, Al-Fanun disappeared. After the collapse of Al-Fanun, the poets & writers of this genre decided to organize themselves into a

group in order to preserve themselves as a literary movements and this led to the formation of 'The Pen Association' (Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyyah) in 1920. Their literary efforts received support and encouragements in the twenties from this association. It was called the first genuine school in modern Arabic literature, and a manifesto of Mahjar literature. Development of romantic poetry in Arabic would certainly be remained poorer without the works and ideas of the association, Jibran Khalil Jibran and Mikhail Nuama was the first president and secretary respectively of the association. Rabita al-Qalamiyyah (The Arab writers Union) played an important role in the lives of the poets in North America. It provided ideas, inspirations, encouragements and general education for those of its members who did not possess high range of knowledge and experience. Abdul Masih Haddad and Nasib Arida was closely related to it. The association was noted for its psychological studies, spiritual teachings, moving short stories and novels.

A similar association was formed in Latin America called al-Usba al-Andalusia (The Andalusian league). The émigrés of South America concentrated on the poetic genres and distinguished themselves in epics and mythological poems.

The eminent critic-Ismail Adham evaluates the contribution of the Pen Association in the field of prose "It created a strong movement in Arabic literature and was successful in presenting the best that has been written in the form of novels, short stories and plays".

Amin Rihani inspired a lot for the enlargement of its literary activities. The émigrés were more receptive to Western culture and literary trends than Arabs. They were inspired by Western literature, specially with the works of American poets-Emerson, Longfellow, Poe, Whitman and others, and efficiency in Western language enabled them to lead the revolt against the conventional style of Arabic prose and poetry, just as Shukry, al-Mazini and al-Aqqads was doing from the beginning of twenty century in Egypt.

Reflecting the past happy life was the revolt of European romanticist against the classical school and the was also against the Arabs traditional trends in prose and poetry. Mahjar poets, through the Pan Association wanted to express life as it is reflecting human emotion, happiness, worryness, cares, elegy, eulogy, satire and self praise.

Mikhail Nuama and Ilia Abu Mad (1889- 1957) contributed to the revolt by attacking the conservative trend of the Arabs and calls for a new evaluation of literature. He preferred to the spirit, psychological influences which affect human behavior. They extended the scope of poetry to soul of the poet, his imaginations, emotions and it did not revolve round history, society and personalities opposed to the Nahda poets.

Jibran in his "your language and Mine" defined poetry as the thing what his ear selects and his memory retains of the conversation familiar to men in his grief and happiness ... "you pick up the rags of the garments that is your language and I tear all the old and worn bits with my finger and throw away all that comes in my way to the mountain top.

Simple construction without Badi and with restricted Saj, rhyme and metre was the characteristic feature of Mahjar poetry. These could be varied within the same frame and short metres and stanzaic forms. A few Mahjar writers like Mikhail Nuaima wrote free verses with a light rhythm.

As early as 1905, Amin Rihani experimented with prosiled poetry imitating Walt Whitman and that was developed by Jibran and Yusuf Asad Ghanim of Brazil.

Simplicity and clarity is the another important characteristic feature of Mahjar poetry. It seeks to establish a direct contact avoiding the traditional presentation. A formal covering is regarded as an unnecessary barrier.

Nostalgia, remembrance of their happy life in their father land, memory of their lost loving one's, their frustrated dreams and hopes suffered them a lot in their alien surroundings and isolation, inspite of having much money they found an emptiness around them. They regarded their adopted place as a bitter exile. They were like prisoner in unknown surrounding with oceans separating them from their people. Rashid Ayyub (1972-1941) in Dhikra Lubnan, Qaiser Maluf in al-Hijra and Ilvis farhat in Hayatu Mushaqqat expressed their passed memory vividly.

Simplicity and spiritualism were the way of life in the works of Mahjar poets. They expressed their dis-satisfaction over the attraction to affluence, technology, scientific progress, high ambition, which minimize the value of life in their adopted land. The émigrés highlighted the simple life in the Lebanon, its smiling valleys and peaceful villages over the smoke of the mills.

In al-Mawakib (The procession) Jibran expressed the flaws of urban life and ends by migrating to the woo. Al-Gahab (The forest) that he dreams of is of course the Lebanon, Nasib Arida dwells at length over Homs which he almost worships. Expression of dawn, sun shine in Lebanon signify their passionate, love for their home land.

Conclusion

Mahjar poets were basically humane in their attitudes, reaction to the oppression, illegal, unjust, discrimination corruption and humiliating treatment, preferring social interest to the individual one's, advocacy for universal love, compassion and equality were the other characteristic features of Majhar poetry. Mahjar poetry is sensitive to sufferings. Most of the poets are resigned to a philosophic acceptance in the Eastern spirit and do not reject the omnipotence of God. Rashid Ayyub in. "Traveller" ask his soul to submit to the fate and be prepared for all happenings. Nasib Arida is full of sadness about himself, his life, and his prior homeland. In his poems he seems to weep over the lot of humanity and its woes. According to him-life is nothing but a sighs & tears.

Abu Madi's poem "I don't know" & Fawzi Mafuf's ala-Bisat al-Rih (on the carpet on the wind) are some beautiful examples of soul searching.

A sufistic trended is vividly seen among some of the Mahjar poets.

In spite of having many western ideas in Mahjar poetry, it remained Eastern in spirit.

Jibran Khalil Jibran inspired the whole generation of writers in developing Mahjar literature, fascinated to natural beauties . He was reacted by the unjust social system and its traditions. Jibran wrote eight books in English and Arabic each. His Arabic books include :- Araish al-Muruj (Brides of the valley), al-Arwah al Mutamarrida (Spirits rebellious), al-Ajnihat al-Mutakassira (Broken wings), Dam's wa ibtisama (A tear and a smile), al-Mawakib (Procession), al-Awasif (Tempest) which contains his reactions to the first world war. His exposure to the culture of Europe was only for the influence of great Balzac, Rodin & Blake. His poems were associated with high imagination and philosophic resignation. It was Jibran's credit that he linked literature to life. His book in English "The prophet", made him most popular Arab writer in the West.

Thus the Mahjar poets played an important role in the development of romantic poetry in modern Arabic literature with the help of the association (Rabita al-Qalamiyyan) in the Americas from late 19th to 20th Century.

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