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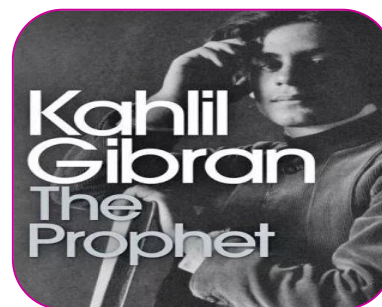


KAHLIL GIBRAN'S *THE PROPHET*: A SACRED GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Shri. Chanabasappa Sidramappa Mulage
Head, Department of English,
Santosh Bhimrao Patil College,
A/P: Mandrup, Tal: South Solapur, Dist: Solapur.

ABSTRACT :

The Prophet is the masterpiece of Gibran Khalil Gibran well-known as Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) an artist, poet and philosopher. It sums up Gibran's philosophy of life. It is widely believed that it was written when Gibran received divine inspiration. It speaks of the eternal truths expressed in the book. Almustafa is the prophet in the book who speaks of love, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, work, joy and sorrow, houses, clothes, buying and selling, crime and punishment, laws, freedom, reason and passion, pain, self-knowledge, teaching, friendship, talking, time, good and evil, prayer, pleasure, beauty, religion, and death at the request of the citizens of Orphalese, the city where he stayed for twelve years. However, the present paper limits its scope to the discussion of his speech on the topic of marriage. The paper aims to bring out the perennial truths in Almustafa's speech on marriage. It attempts to highlight the relevance of the message in the present, in fact in all times. It is a divine guide to make marriage not only work, but to make it blissful and meaningful. It also underlies the importance and necessity of this social institution called marriage in human life for it plays an instrumental role making human life meaningful and worthwhile. Marriage helps, and never hinders, the growth of an individual; nay it helps the married couple to achieve self-realization, completeness, even salvation.



KEYWORDS : Marriage, together, love, heart, spaces, apart.

INTRODUCTION

Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* provides invaluable guidance to the reader on various aspects of life, including marriage. Gibran's guidance on marriage and the related topics through his mouthpiece the prophet Almustafa in this heavenly book has more relevance in these troubled and trying times than it ever had before. Upon the request of Almitra, a seer herself, on behalf the citizens of Orphalese, Almustafa, a 'Prophet of God, in quest of the uttermost' speaks solemnly about love, marriage, children, besides other topics related to human life. He views on these and related topics give us precious guidance on how to make marital life successful and happy. Now let's see his views on these important topics:

Almustafa's Views on Marriage in *The Prophet*: The institution of marriage is considered to be a sacred thing in many a community. Hence, the world famous dictum: "Marriages are made in heaven". However, it is up to us to make marriage work. Almustafa in *The Prophet* gives us invaluable advice about

making marriage work. It can be described as heavenly message for the people living on the earth as Almustafa is a Prophet of God. About marriage he says:

You were brought into the world together, and together you will be for evermore. You will be as one when the white wings of death dissipate your days.

Yes, you will be as one even in the quiet memory of God.
 Yet, let there be spaces in your fellowship.
 Also, let the breezes of the sky move between you. (7)

Almustafa implies that marriages are made in the heaven; husband and wife are born for each other. Thus they are 'born together'. Therefore, they are expected to be together eternally. Even death cannot separate them; God has created them for each other; he has created them to be together forever – before and after birth and death. They should mingle into each other; they should be like one soul in two bodies. Still they should value each other's individuality and ensure space for each other. There should be 'spaces' in their 'togetherness'. If love is true, each is given freedom by the other. Love is not binding each other, but to free each other; each should be given freedom to grow independently. This individual growth is beneficial to love and eventual to marital life, and not hindrance. The above lines imply that marriage is the fusion of these seemingly contradictory things – retaining individuality and at the same time mingling into each other eternally so that nothing can separate them; they 'shall be together even in the silent memory of God'. How precious these views on marriage are in this age of exponentially increasing cases of divorce. In the modern materialistic world, life partner is no more than a materialistic object. In this consumerist and pleasure seeking world life partner is a means of fulfilling lust or/and other worldly pleasures. Today is love is at physical level rather than at mental or spiritual level. Though it is wrong to make generalization of this kind, one cannot deny the fact that it applies to most married people. One cannot also refute the truth that the number of such people is increasing day by day, hence growing number of divorce. Almustafa further advises married people in these words:

Adore each other, however make not a power of profound devotion:
 Let it rather be a moving ocean between the shores of your spirits.
 Fill each other's glass however drink not from one container.
 Give each other of your bread however eat not from a similar portion.

Sing and move together and be euphoric, however given every last one of you a chance to be separated from everyone else. Indeed, even as the strings of a lute are distant from everyone else however they tremble with a similar music..

Love is one of the most essential ingredients for successful marriage; therefore the Prophet advises married people to love one another. However, he cautions them about not making it 'a bond'; if love becomes a bond, they will feel suffocated in the married life. Instead, it should be like 'a moving sea between the shores' of their souls. How appropriate metaphors are used by the writer here! The shores are apart, still together; they are joined by the sea 'moving' between them. It is the sea that brings them together; similarly it is the love between them that joins them. The prophet further advises the wedded people to 'fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup'. It implies that they should try to fill each other's cup of life with love and happiness, but still maintain their individuality. They should strive for the happiness of each other; they should not be selfish. Their love for each other should be selfless. They should think of each other, not of the self. They should 'give one another' of their bread, but should not eat from the same loaf. They should take care of each other, fulfill each other's needs, but still maintain individual freedom. They need not give up individual freedom and growth for each other. Sacrifice of individuality does not necessarily nurture the relationship between them, in fact proves to be a hindrance in the path of meaningful marital life. They should grow together, not at the cost of each other. Therefore, the Prophet

says: "Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone". The married couple should spend quality time with each other and try to make those moments of togetherness special, but at the same time they should spare some time for self too. That is the need of every individual; man is made that way only by nature. Each of us needs space. This space is necessary in any kind of relationship. It is necessary for the growth and success of any relationship. We can make each other happy only when we ourselves are happy. Therefore, nurturing of the self is essential for nurturing of the matrimonial life. Therefore, the Prophet says: "Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music." The strings are different and 'alone'; they need to be so to produce different notes. The same sound will be produced by them, if they are the same resulting in the music which is not that melodious. Therefore, husband and wife need to be 'alone' to bring in that sweet music in their marital life. The prophet further continues to give precious advice on marital life in the following words:

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

The prophet advises the married couple to love each other wholeheartedly, to give their hearts to each other, 'but not into each other's keeping'. There should be companionship between them; no one should be slave or master of the other. For the marriage to work, to bloom they need to be equal, they should be companions, friends and not a slave and a master. In fact, no one can possess the other's heart for heart is not a bird. The prophet asks them to be together, to stand by each other whatever the situation. However, He cautions them not to stand 'too near together' because of many reasons. One of the reasons is – proximity breeds contempt. And another is – it hinders each other's growth as 'the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow'. They should be as close to each other as the pillars of a temple are – neither too close nor too afar. Here comparing the married couple to the pillars of a temple, the writer suggests the holiness of marriage. Marriage is truly holy, divine thing if its sanctity is maintained. Many saints have talked about the sacredness of marriage institution. According to many of them those who remain unmarried hardly get salvation. Basavanna and his contemporary *sharanas* (saints of Lingayat religion) who lived in 12th century in South India opined that husband and wife should try to achieve salvation together by living a righteous life. Some of the *vachanas* (religious lyrics) by them on marriage given below will prove the point.

- 1) If man and wife reflect each other
that is the perfect doing,
that is the way to become one with
Koodalasangamadeva. - Guru Basava
- 2) As two eyes have single vision,
if the married couple can be with one feeling
it is an offering to Guheshwara linga,
Sanganabasavanna. - Allama Prabhu
- 3) The united devotion of husband and wife pleases Shiva.
The un-united bhakti of husband and wife
is like mixing poison with nectar,
Raamanaatha. - Jedera Dasimayya

As they say, great minds think alike, we find great many similarities in Almustafa's views on marriage and that of Lingayat saints. To be brief, marriage, according to the Prophet, is a holy institution that unites

two souls. However, it is up to the married couple to maintain its sanctity. It brings bliss to the married couple if they lose themselves in each other and still remain distinct individuals. This is a time-tested advice that can make marriage work. Never had it more relevance than in this modern world wherein marriages are falling apart like anything for many people take marriage as a way of satiating their lust. Therefore, we need follow the invaluable advice on marriage by the Prophet and live a meaningful life and make the most of this precious life.

CONCLUSION:

Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* is a divine treatise on human life. Besides many other significant aspects of life, it provides precious advice on making marriage successful and meaningful. According to the author, marriage is a perennial spiritual union of two souls. It transforms the lives of the married couple for once and all. It plays an instrumental role in helping them achieve self-realization, completeness, bliss, even salvation. Like many other great thinkers, philosophers, seers, sages, and saints, Khalil Gibran, through the mouth of the Prophet Almustafa, underlies the importance of the institution of marriage in human life.

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