5.1 Selected Arabic Works

Ameen Rihani wrote 29 books in English and 26 books in Arabic. In his Arabic writings he warned his own people and his Arab brethren against the many dangers threatening them and the ambition of other nations with regard to their own integrity. He appealed to them to be wary of the wealth that was about to descend on them. He warned them against disunity and encouraged them to consolidate and develop their spiritual and moral values as well as their human and material resources, and he bitterly attacked religious prejudice, political extremism and divisive tribal loyalties. He urged them to unite together and promote a philanthropic spirit in reforming and modernizing their societies so that the Arab people would be able to play an important role in the modern world without sacrificing the moral and spiritual heritage which has been their mainstay ever since the dawn of history. He also tried to acquaint the Arab with the best in Western society, especially the tradition of personal freedom and intellectual liberty, cultural achievements, and the application of modern techniques to social and economic functions. Such a versatile man inevitably addressed himself to a wide variety of topics when he took up his pen. His writings were all the more substantial because, even in their diversity, they were firmly rooted in his breadth of knowledge. Thus he could write convincingly, oratory, music and painting, and his literary ventures covered the
novel, the short story, the essay, poetry, biography, and personal reminiscences, travel books and translations. His most successful Arabic works in the various literary genres are as follows:-

1. **Al-Rihaniyat (The Rihani Essays)**

   Al-Rihaniyat was the glorious product of migrant literature by Ameen Rihani. Though this attractive contribution is a new era in literature “Mahjar” came to light and that the same time Rihani, the prominent Essayist came to vision as a Venus in literary sky who was attributed as the father of migrant literature. Al-Rihaniyat though was the cradling step of its kind, “Mahjar” yet reached its zenith with all round literary ornaments.

   However “Al-Nazrat” of Manfaluti in Egypt and “Al-Rihaniyat” of Ameen Rihani in Lebanon came to light at the dawns social, literary and political awakening to enlight and remove unawareness of the East. These two books were written on an exhale fragrant that breathed the breeze of freedom among the people of both Egypt and Lebanon at the dawn of the folk against tyranny was exhaled and the people were adorned mentally with the green flag freedom. Rihaniyat was a collection of lecture, essays and prose poetry written on different subject matters of reformatory, natural and everyday life. Originally it was written in four volumes. Afterwards

   Ameen’s brother Albert Rihani separated national lectures in the name of “Al-Qawmiyat” in to two parts. His prose poetry section
was collected in a book named “Hutuf Al- Awdiya” and his critical section was in “Adab was Fann”. Chapters were written on the prominent personality of Ameen published as “Wajuh Sharqia Wa Gharbiah” and his different philosophical verses were collected in “Bujur Li Al. Zaraeen”. Ameen expressed the experience of his practical life, the result of age personal information mentioning the ignorance of society, the extremism on tradition and religion in the eve of French revolution and progressive America. He started his book with romantic secret conversation for the natural mother, Freaike valley or Brokling Bridge in this way criticized in jesting manners like that he indicated with the Eastern city, the electric and steam city, self love, presumptuousness which result renunciation and suicide, all these were depicted in Jahizian style and joking mode of Voltaire original reform, it was the teaching of French revolution and political freedom was product of pure knowledge and culture. Rihani said about revolution.

The writing style of Rihani was tenacious and personal in the sight of philosophical gaining homogenous things. It called to
peacemaking a bridge between East and West by associated in thinking and culture, forgetting in the differentiate of place and languages caste and creed to create a new nation of global world.

2. Muluk Al-Arab (kings of Arab)

Rihani’s travelling around Arab peninsula was though based on political but ultimately it plucked on a sweetfruit in the field of literature. He visited all the Muluk and Sultans of Arab countries and threw a philosophical watch into them. Rihani gathered vast knowledge about their physique as well as their deeds and wrote beautifying all these with liberty adornments excellently with the title “Muluk Al-Arab” on the story style. Rihani praised in his book all the kings, sultans, Amirs and famous dignity and high dwellings.  

However, Rihani composed his book “Muluk Al-Arab” in two volumes. The first volumes comprised of Hijaz and Hussain, Yaman and Yahya, Asir and Idrisi, pilgrimage and sultan and the second volumes written about Najd and Bin said Bahrain and relative of Caliphs, Iraq and Faisal. In both the volumes Rihani described all about the rulers and their deeds in details with depth and thinness. He drew the true picture about the cities and their important places and dwellings and plastered various claims with literary paints and picture that he heard and talked elaborately in pretty manner. That the book was well informed one especially it exalted the skillful lengthy
presentation of the writer without boredom in which described sensitively in the capacity of deduction and entertainment. Muluk Al-Arab was written in complete Rihani outstanding style having fluency is designing on jesting, multiplicity and clearness in that book Rihani interested the Arab and Islam generally and he gave importance the European generally and English specially. His literary skillfulness and the mode of description were very affective that attracted the reader to have a glance up to the end of any topic. As he for instance his description about Imam Yahya of Yaman.

Rihani included the photograph of Arab kings, Sultans and Amirs, it indicated the personality of Ameen Rihani that sometimes he changed into poet or orator, now and then because a writer narrates a political condition through the humanist vision. firstly Rihani confirmed in that book with Arab kings but during his events he showed the controversial matters of nation studied the region step by step and described the natural condition of the place to enlight all classes special class, villager, force, businessman, politicians well as
Serviceman Rihani indeed his book showing the dignity and subjects of the great four Arab Kings....

Indeed, Muluk Al-Arab was a treasury of geography, history, literary ornaments, the Arab kings and cultural mirror of Arab civilization of that period.

3. Al-Tataruf Wa Al-Islah (Extremism and Reform)

It was a book that criticises the typical Lebanese and oriental afflictions of the 19th and 20th centuries and called for change and reform using the method of explanation and persuasion. Indeed, this was Al-Rihani’s principle in life.
Tr. if I had in me something that inspires people towards the good and raises then one step on the ladder of mental and spiritual progress, I want to show it by example, indication and deduction.

Among the social evils that extremism and reform tackles are injustice, passivity, ignorance, fear, oppression and sectarianism. Rihani criticises injustice in the “Al-sullam” (the ladder) and calls for equality and solidarity as a means to change the people’s conditions. In addition, he discussed ignorance, fear and oppression in “Al Tatarruf” (Extremism) but this time his patience failed him and he raged against the people who glorify ignorance, build temples for fear, light candles for oppression and offer oblations to error. Finally in “Ila Talbati Al-Madariss” (to college students) the author fought against sectarianism and called it “our greater afflication” not because he was against religion in principle but because he sincerely believes that if the people did not forgot their sects in order to truly unite for the sake of the nation, then thanks to those sects, people were all a prey to the ambition of foreigners. Rather they all were marching towards political and economic slavery. However, Rihani had a noble purpose behind his call for reformation. He did not criticize for the sake of criticism but in order to offer the remedy for the evils of the East. This remedy was clearly indicated in “Ela Islah Al-Ummah” (Reforming the nation). According to him people cannot reach this goal except through reformer which incorporates, righteousness and progress; that is reform that couples natural evolution with social development and moral progress. Hence, he called not for a violent
political revolution rather for “an intellectual revolution that swept away the corruption absurdity, and error” and directed the peoples efforts forwards serving their nations interest rather than their own. In “reforming the Nation” Rihani also suggested the principles by which his nation can accomplish the above mentioned intellectual revolution --principles that were very close to moral ideas he lived by which were listed in “Mabdaee” (My principle).

In conclusion, the book “Extremism and Reform” depicts a true picture of Ameen Rihani the reformer a man who deeply loved the East and strove to save if from its evils by pointing the way towards progress and development.

4. Qalb Lubnan( The Heart of Lebanon)

The excellent artistic literary historical or travelling creation of the prominent writer Ameen Rihani was “Qalb-Lubnan” which was the last traveling book written at his last tour of different countries. It was composed at of the eleventh hour of his life. Yet Rihani wrote most of the events of his early life and the past time of his traveling. He spent a long time in Lebanon and the last part of his life was also spent in his native and its all side’s descriptions. Possessed a unique place in his book “Qalb-Lubnan”.

Rihani’s “Qalb-Lubnan” was part of his heart as he mounted the hills and stepped its chest with love and affection. So he described the hills of Lebanon and its low land and plains, posturing, horizon,
villages and wards, rocks and stones, plants and animals, its common inhabitants and prominent figures, forts and worshiping places and especially of the women folk in an admiring manner and noteworthy descriptive style that heartily invites the reader to gaps its substance. His particulars style of narration could bring the Lebanon to light and the person who glanced his book would be able to gather an exact knowledge of the country and of its habitants and nature or character. He even did not leave any corner of Lebanon’s history from its blind period to the present time. He approached his passion and strong belief about Lebanon.

Rihani’s wrote the book mostly in more ridiculous manner than total of his writing like Jahiz and Voltaire. His article “Al-Qasr Al-Munif” was a distinguished step of Arabic works. The jesting of his writing wipe away all the anxieties, pain, gloominess, sorrows and grief and all Kinds of worries and helplessness of the minds of readers and made their hearts joyful and pleasant. He writing style in “Qalb Lubnan” was changed sometimes from the literary direction to the historical point of view in sensitive style of poetry or the writer sank
into natural beauty of Lebanon. In short, Qalb Lubnan was a book of social and historical literature firmly described the habitual events and the age of Turkey administration and vehicle as the travelling media of Ameen Rihani.

5. Hutuf Al-Awdiva (Hymns of the Valleys)

It is the new production and presentation to Arabic literature by Ameen Rihani. It is the anthology of free verse, a poetry which is free from regular prosody though Shakespeare was the first to liberty English poetry from traditional rhyme and later on Walt Whitman hold the flag of free verse firmly. But in Arabic literature Rihani was the only introducer of that kind of poetry. He wrote his first free verse poem in 1907 under the remarkable influence of American poet Walt Whitman. According to Rihani words were endowed with more than reasons and tone. They had colour, odors, transparency, rhythm and fragrance in their meaning, all the reasons, his free verse carried more than deep emotions and thought. Images of the eastern deserts, mountains, seas, rivers, flora and fauna mixed and mingle and cities and civilization in some poems like “Al- Hayat Wa Al- Maut; Al-Kharif Wa Al-Giyab Al-Shamsh Fi Lubnan” (Life and Death: Fall and sunset in Lebanon), “Mabadi Fi Al- Wadi” (My temple in the Valley) “ Rih Samun (The Simon wind), Parallel images of western cities and societies in poems like “Ashiyate Raise Al-Sanah” (On New year’s Eve) and sometimes Eastern and Western images decorated the same poem like “The stones of Paris” In Rihani’s time
this mixture of Eastern and Western image was new and unfavorable, the reason why his poetry did not get the attention it deserved then.

In the poem, “The stories of Peris” Ameen Rihani wanted to educate his nation about revolting for the sake of justice and liberty. Addressing his people he said indirectly that the stones were raised as barracks to defend freedom and they were constructed as fences to protect freedom and they used to erect arches of victory for freedom. He alerted Lebanese that the stones of Lebanon revolted to support freedom and justice. He said that the people of same time in “Aamil” and “Alawayate” mountain Lebanese were living too. Like that in the cities “Kawkabah” “Rashaya” “Shuo’r” and “Mudn” were the natural habitation of human beings and other animals. So no enemy could ebit or destroys the peaceful cities and their dwellers. In fine, he inspired his people to strengthen their mind throwing away the ignorance with the light of knowledge to hold a revolutionary attempt to make their nation free from all kinds of horror and suppression.
In the poem “My Temple in the Valley” Rihani wished that mother Nature gave him the safety and sheltering place for helpless life where her creature of flower and pasture lands were available.

In the poem “New year’s Eve” Rihani awakened his people to free from prison cells and called for a liberal life. He said.

قم يا متى تلاحر بفرح الشعب البسيط
انْفِضوا كلكم واحرحو معَى الى أسواق المدينة هذه الليلة
انْفِضوا من رقاقكم اخرجوا من سجونكم اطلقوا النفس
من قلب دها

Tr. Rise up, you sarcastic of the people’s humble joy!

Wake up, all of you

Come with me the most beautiful street.

Wake up from your sleep!

Leave your prison cells!

Liberate your souls!
Indeed, Rihani sang painted and carved his poems using words and phrases constituting the most beautiful songs, paintings, and sculptors.

**Other Arabic works of Ameen Rihani.**

**Essays:**

6. توجه شرقية و غربية (Eastern and Western Figures) Beirut, 1957.

7. أدب وفن (Literature and Art) Beirut, 1957

8. شطرات من عهد الصبا (Writing of Early days): Beirut 1980

9. وصيته (My will) Beirut, 1982

**Literary Criticism:**

10. انيتم الشعراء (You the poets) Beirut, 1933

11. قصتي مع معى (My story with May) Beirut, 1980

**Novel, short stories and play’s**

12. المحالنة الثلاثية في مملكة الحيوانية (The trilateral treaty in the Animal kingdom) New York 1903


15. وفاء الزمن (Faithful time) Beirut, 1934.
16. سجل النوبة (The register of Report) Egypt, 1951

**Historical and political Analysis:**

17. موجز تاريخ الثورة الفرنسية (Treatise of French Revolution) New York, 1902
18. الكتب الأكاديمية (Disasters) Beirut, 1928
19. تاريخ نجد الحديث (The Modern History of Nazd) Beirut, 1928
20. قلب العراق (The Heart of Iraq), Beirut, 1956
21. القيم المدنية (Nationalisms) Beirut, 1934
22. فيصل الأول (Faysal the first) Beirut, 1934.

**Travel:**

23. المغرب الأقصى (The Far Morocco) Egypt, 1952
24. نور الأندلسية (The illumination of Andalusia) Cairo, 1952

**Sayings:**

بذور للزراعين (Seeds for planters) Beirut, 1961

**Letters:**

5.2 Selected English works of Ameen Rihani

1. The Book of Khalid: The influence of American transcendentalism is evident in the English writing of Ameen Rihani. The Book of Khalid in particular, reflected that influence through references to Emerson, Thoreau, and transcendentalism and through the similarly of its ideas. The Book of Khalid also reflected two prominent features of transcendentalism, idealism and social activism. Demonstrating the depth of the influence of transcendentalism on Rihani requires a discussion of some of the major ideas of transcendentalism as expressed by Emarson and Thoreau and the influence of these ideas on Rihani in the Book of Khalid. Chief among those ideas were the primacy of intuition, spirituality, the importance of the individual, the need for an individual to undergo a spiritual change before the attempts to change society, rejection of the social order, religious faith as opposed to creeds, nature, mixture of the mystical and the practical and the importance of doing a job that promotes spiritual development. Surface political changes are not enough Khalid maintains. With the committee for Union and progress, a constitution, and a parliament, the Arab are still not free; they only have a new owner. To reach the ideal the Arab must overhaul their present society, starting with Islam and later including the political system based on it. Khalid concludes that the present social order has to be rejected. 11
Ameen Rihani’s social activism found its expression in pan-Arabism, just as Thoreau’s social activism found its expression in abolitionism. According to several scholars, his major novel ‘The Book of Khalid’ is the foundation of a new trend which the Lebanese American literature at large. It is a trend forwards wisdom and prophecy that seeks to reconcile matter and soul, reason and faith, and the East and the West in an attempt to explicate the unity of religions and represent the unity of the universe.

(2) *Maker of Modern Arabia or Ibn Saoud of Arabia, His people and his land:* It is the first book in the trilogy, an impression, rather than a biography of the great Arab leader, Sultan king and Imam of Najd in the first few decades of this Century, published in 1928. It is an account of a journey made by the author through Najd, now Saudi Arabia, the first part of which was spent in the company of Ibn Saud. Ameen Rihani was there to act as mediator between Ibn Saud and the British on boundary dispute and negotiations for an oil concession. As the second part of the title implies, the book is not solely biographical, though it contains some illuminating sights into the large than life character of the eponymous king. It is more a study of Arab life, an account of sights and people encountered on the journey, including many characteristics pitty observations on the Arab adjusting to 20th century ways.

(3) *The Path of vision (Essay):* It is a collection of essay illustrating basic differences, especially in philosophy and way of life, between East and between Christianity and Islam. Its central message is a
heartfelt plea for each to be willing to learn from the other, and for a harmonious relationship between the two. The Book contains several references to Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, and much of it is imbued with their transcendentalist philosophy of the unity of existence.

(4) Around the coasts of Arabia: Rihani’s travel book “Around the coast of Arabia” describes a journey covering the coastal territories of Al-Hejaz, Asir, Kuwait Bahrain Aden and the protectorates. As in the previous book, the author visits these lands and records his adventures and his impression of each of which proves to have its own distinct religious, political and social set up.

(5) A chant of mystics and other poems: It is a collection of Rihani’s verse with an essentially spiritual, Sufi message of longing for mystical union.

Other English works

Essays

6. The white way and Desert. Washington; 2002


8. The Pan Arab Movement, Manuscript, 1930.

Literary Criticism

10. Critiques in Art, Beirut, 1999


Novels short stories and plays


15. The Green flag, Manuscript, 1911-1921


17. Doctor Della Valle, Ms 1918, ARMA and LOC

Poetry

18. The Quatrains of Abul Ala, New York, 1903.

19. Myrtle and Myrrh, Boston, 1905

20. The Luzumiyat of Abul Ala, New York, 1918

21. The third poetry collection, Ms 1897-1937 ARMA and LOC.
Historical and political analysis

22. Turkey and Islam in the war, Ms, 1915-1917, ARMA and LOC.

23. Iraq during the days of King Faisal the first Ms 1932, ARMA and LOC

Travel

24. In the land of the Mayas, Ms 1918-1919 ARMA and LOC.

25. Arabian Peak and Desert, Landon, 1931, Oxford University press, Bombay, India.

26. Kurdistan Ms 1932, ARMA and LOC.

Letters

28. The English Letters of Ameen Rihani, Ms-1897-1940, ARMA and LOC.
NOTES

12. Rihani, Ameen: Critiques in Art, P-199-200, Beirut, 1999