William Blake and Kahlil Gibran as Mystics

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. In the words of F. E. Supergeon: “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.”

Intuition, insight, instinct, visions, dreams, revelations and prophesies have a great role to play as a person goes through a mystic phase of his life. A mystic always seeks a communion with the ultimate reality. As he gains the conscious awareness of the presence of divinity, he identifies himself with the spiritual truth and finally with God. In the opinion of William Philip Downes, “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.” Mystics have a firm belief that there is a deep reality which lies beyond the physical and mundane day to day world of affairs. The physical reality in their view is a superficial phenomenon and one has to delve deep in order to reach the spiritual treasures that can lead a mortal to the fundamental truth. Mystical experience is generally understood as the communion of a spiritually awakened human being with God on an individual level rather than on a collective level. A mystic perceives an

ultimate unity, a definitive oneness in all things present as well as absent; but one cannot make sense of this unity and oneness using his or her physical senses and reason. A mystic sees this unity as the very heart of the creation and it becomes his life experience. F. E. Supergeon very aptly states: “The true mystic then, in the full sense of the term, is one who knows there is unity under diversity at the centre of all existence, and he knows it by the most perfect of all tests for the person concerned, because he has felt it. True mysticism – and this can not be over-emphasized – is an experience and a life.”\(^3\) After going through the mystical experience, a mystic always feels the sensation that some higher and greater truth or power has laid a hand on him. The mystical experiences which are a part of mystic’s life are marked by varied feelings and insights. A mystic feels a sense of timelessness as he sees a vision of infinity and eternity. He feels the sense of blessedness as he sees himself in the presence of eternal truth. He has a sense of unity and totality as he observes the things around him and feels that there is a common thread which goes through all the entities of the universe. Since mystical experience does not come within the ambit of rationality a mystic cannot describe the merits and meaning of his experiences sufficiently.

All the mystics do not follow the same path. In fact there are many ways to reach the ultimate reality. Some mystics look outward and with the help of their physical senses observe external world of nature. They with the help of their mystic fervor and commitment go beyond the surface reality of physical world and find divinity at the root of everything. Some mystics on the other hand look inward into their own selves and find the ultimate truth at the bottom of their self and personality. Though mystics have to work very hard at a spiritual level in order to discover the divinity in their

---

\(^3\) *Mysticism in English Literature*, p. 6.
own personality, still majority of them choose their own self as a field of exploration while they strive to reach the one whose essence pervades and permeates everything external as well as internal. The purpose and aim of almost every mystical path is to experience divine consciousness, enlightenment and oneness with the ‘One’ who contains all. But whichever the path a mystic chooses, it is always the soul which has a say over the ‘matter’. Reason and logic are discarded in favor of spiritual consciousness because the immediate as well as the final goal of a mystic lies in the realm of spirituality rather than in the world of substance. Supergeon says, “… the mystic believes that as the intellect is given us to apprehend material things, so the spirit is given us to apprehend spiritual things, and that to disregard the spirit in spiritual matters, and to trust reason is as foolish as if a carpenter, about to begin a piece of work, were deliberately to reject his keenest and sharpest tools.” 4 A mystic can undergo all his experiences within the framework of a particular religion but quite often mystics have gone beyond mainstream faith. The mystics generally seek out inner or esoteric meanings within conventional religious doctrines. In fact mystics are less concerned with religious differences as they care more about social and individual growth. There have been mystics for whom all religions are sacred and they believe that the essence of all religions is universal as all religions lead to the same goal. They care more about the growth of inner personality. Mysticism is dualistic if it maintains a distinction between the self and the divine and it is nondualistic when it maintains that there is an essential and close affinity between the self and the divine.

Christian mysticism, as it talks about the relationship between God and the soul has so many diverse views about this relationship, but the purification of self and the

4 Ibid., p. 3.
reunion with God is its ultimate goal. It believes that God and Man have got separated because of the fall of Man and man in this world has to strive hard to achieve his divine status again which will become possible once he reunites with God. Christian mysticism believes that the spark of divinity lies in man itself and he needs development form 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.”

Islamic mysticism is generally known as Sufism. Sufism is the spiritual Path of Islam. Sufism has been described in different way by scholars writing in English but they all consider it as an interior, esoteric aspect of Islam. The western scholars call it Islamic mysticism because it has some similarities with Christian mysticism and also with some other schools of mysticism. Its main aim is cleansing of the spirit and turning ones heart away from all else but God. It helps its adherents to know how to reach the Divine, how to purify the inner self and get rid of all that is dross. What differentiates Sufism from Christian mysticism is that Sufism is a continuous historical and even institutionalized movement in the Muslim world and it has millions of adherents even at present time. In fact in the vast Muslim world there is hardly any area that does not have a Sufi order or a Sufi tradition still at work and flourishing.

---

Kaballah is a kind of mysticism based on Judaism and it seeks out deeper interpretation of Torah and other Mystical works. The interpreters go beyond the surface meanings of these sacred scriptures.

In the Quaker view of Mysticism soul is an inner light which they see as a presence of God in a human body.

Gnosticism sees creation as a struggle between the opposite forces of the Evil and the Good, the forces of the light and the forces of the Dark. Gnostics see a sharp division between material realm and a spiritual realm. The material realm in their view is under the influence of dark and evil forces because of its division from a higher realm of spirituality.

The mystic experiences, whatever the nature of mysticism, are very difficult to explain and describe but mystics throughout the history of mankind have used different media in order to give a glimpse of a higher world to the common masses. Poetry and art have been a channel for mystical thought in western and eastern world alike. Poetry has been the main medium and has been used by so many mystics when they wish to describe the consciousness they have attained due to the result of their mystical experiences. It can be no accident that much of the mystical writing is in the form of poetry, and it springs from an inner concordance of art and religion. Most of classical Upanishads are in verse, and so are the Bhagvad Gita and countless later Hindu mystical works. The large part of holy Bible is in the form of poetry. The great Sufi mystics were often great poets, such as Rumi, Hallaj, Hafiz, Kabir, Basho and even Omar Khayyam. Not only Blake and Wordsworth but English metaphysical poets have been called mystical. American Emerson and Walt Whitman are very famous for their mystic thoughts. “Mystic poets” is the most widespread term and is
used to describe poets who have experienced heightened state of awareness. Mystic poetry has a very distinct place in the field of literature because it deals with the deeper truths, inner realities, the matters of spirit and all that which is beyond physical and material. Mystic poets give form to the formless. The different shades of mysticism can be found and seen here and there in the poetry of diverse poets belonging to almost all the ages of human history. The strands of mysticism can be seen in almost all the romantic poets of the world irrespective of the language they write in or the age they live in. In some romantic poets the mystic elements remain dormant as they care more about other phenomena which is of immediate concern to them. In English Romantic literature the shades of mysticism can be found in poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge. But William Blake by all critical standards can be taken as a mystic proper as well as a supreme creator who was always conscious about the art of poetry as it was a medium with the help of which he gave the glimpse of higher truths to the world. Blake’s life and work are a manifestation of the reality of a strong connection between intense perception achieved through a state of expanded consciousness, and the gift of imagination. Throughout his life Blake examined this relationship and seems to have lived for the purpose of translating this awareness into words. Blake seemed to have believed that there was little difference between his own action and God’s will. Blake was confident in declaring himself the instrument of the divine. His perception of his creativity as spirituality inspired has prompted many to consider whether or not he had hallucinations or mental problems. Some even considered him mad. One can possibly include Blake in the tradition of hallowed poets because his work is essentially part of the western biblical pedigree. It is written in the tradition of Milton. William Blake was a mystic and has similarities with the classical mystics like Plato, Jesus, Rumi, Bohme, Swedenborg and the others
like them but it has been always difficult to classify him. There are elements of Protestant mysticism, Kabbalism, Gnosticism and many other mystic orders in Blake but he was sharp enough to make all these part of himself. F. E. Supergeon says:

…he possessed in addition a philosophy, a system, and a profound scheme of the universe revealed to him in vision. But within what category could Blake be imprisoned? He outsoars them all and includes them all. We can only say that the dominant impression he leaves with us that is of his vivid, intimate consciousness of the Divine presence and his attitude of devotion.⁶

In his own view most of his writings were done under the guidance of spiritual powers. It appears that he pursued creativity not only for its own sake, but in order to follow a particular spiritual calling. Whatever he created, throughout his long span of life, was for the purpose of revealing higher truths. Blake was a passionate artist and poet, and yet his motivation was more related to his gnosis and spiritual motivation than to his expectations of success. To say that Blake was detached from his creative work, and not particularly interested in writing verse would be incorrect. Blake was resolute to persist with his beloved arts but he was quite relaxed about whether or not he achieved any recognition from his work. Blake’s priority was not literature alone but literature for a certain purpose. Blake’s spiritual life was far more important to him than his creative life, despite the fact that he constantly married the two elements and suggested that they had the same source. Blake’s larger poetic outlook, with its radical vigor and innate power was a product of the poet’s stern resolve to live a spiritual and at the same time an imaginative life. Like a true mystic Blake with the help of his art and writings took on the divine job of helping others peep within

⁶ Mysticism in English Literature, p. 41.
themselves and uncover what they have hidden from themselves in order to discover their higher true self. Blake believed in the eternal existence of all things. Max Plowman writes, “He believed that all things existed in Eternity – not that they were born in Time with a faint hope of extending Time to an everlasting futurity. All things had eternal existence, and their manifestation in time was a subjective sensory impression.”7 Exploring his artistic works and writings, we are able to cleanse the doors of our perception and see the essential unity with the eternal. In fact, Blake was a visionary mystic. He saw visions from his very childhood and reproduced them in various forms through his creation. He used to have visions and the essence of Blake’s mystic experiences cannot be examined in isolation from his reported visions. Blake’s visions certainly influenced and inspired his art and poetry throughout his life, but the poet appears to have experienced an inner revelation, which not only resulted in an immediate restoration of his confidence, but indirectly led to the creation of some of his profound work. Blake’s concern for the subject of perception moves beyond a concern for vision and the five senses towards a concept of what one might call extra-sensory perception. He was plagued and enthused by his own vivid visions of a broader reality and many people even today discuss them as hallucinations. He believed that the inner world of these visions was of a higher order than that of a physical reality and that ideals should be taken from that world of inner vision rather than from the world of matter. But for Blake commonplace things had their own value as they acted as signs referring to the higher truths. According to Maurice Bowra, “Blake was a visionary who believed that ordinary things are unsubstantial in themselves and yet rich as symbolic of greater realities.”8 Blake’s visions have a sacred quality which has characterized the religious thought of

mankind in all ages. But Blake abhorred orthodox religion and believed in the religion of imagination. He believed that God and imagination are one and God is the creative and spiritual force in man, and distinct from man God has no meaning. Maurice Bowra states, “For Blake, God and imagination are one; that is God is the creative and spiritual power in Man, and apart from man the idea of God has no meaning. When Blake speaks of the divine, it is with reference to this power and not to any external or independent godhead.” Blake, because of the divine quality of his vision would call himself a prophet and a solider of Christ. Blake, as we know, had a great faith in spirituality and believed that he himself was a highly spiritual being. He believed that the material world is shadowy and ephemeral. It was Jesus who symbolized for Blake the vital relationship between divinity and humanity. The universal soul of Man whose chief representative was Christ was the only reality for Blake. As Max Plowman writes, “Fortunately there is no doubt about what reality meant to Blake. It was for him the universal soul of Man. That was for him the only reality: all else was a product, or “emanation” of that soul. He conceived of reality as eternal form, contrasted with unreality which was temporal appearance.”

One of Blake’s main thoughts was that of duality of creation. In his view our life and this world works with the help of contraries and each is indispensable for subsistence. Blake sought man as the end of his search. According to Blake all of us reside in each other. He is of the view that after the fall Man lost his unity with God and in this world Man is craving for that lost unity all the time. Blake’s mysticism is deep rooted in the practical side of his nature and touches the problems of his life. Whatever he experienced, he experienced directly. Blake claimed that the spirit of his

9 Ibid., p. 34.
10 An Introduction to the Study of William Blake, p. 56.
dead brother used to come to him in visions and prompted his writings as well as his illustrations.

I know our deceased friends are more really with us than when they were apparent to our mortal part. Thirteen years ago I lost a brother and with his spirit I converse daily and hourly in the Spirit and See him in my remembrance in the regions of my imagination.11

He would all his life communicate with the great poets of past ages with the help of his perfect visions. As a poet he would call himself a mere secretary and believed that the real authors were in eternity and dictated to him. It is important to mention that Blake’s mysticism had a stamp of Swedenborg and Boheme on it. In the worlds of Mona Wilson:

Swedenborg’s account of his own visions, his belief in the spiritual symbolism of the material world and interpretation of the Bible in accordance with this belief, and his doctrine that Christ is the only God, had a lasting effect upon Blake’s thought.12

She further writes:

From Boehme Blake derived his belief that the creation of the material world was an act of mercy, because by its means complete destruction was intercepted and redemption became possible, that union with the Eternal can

be attained only by annihilation of the Selfhood, and that Man is himself infinite.13

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 Alexendre 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.”14 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.”15 Blake’s and Gibran’s intense opposition to organized religion, together with their passionate focus on inner spiritual life, are their first common characteristics. They both experienced a spiritual dissatisfaction in the world corrupted by material greed and hunger. They constantly focused on spirituality and moved towards mysticism. Their spirituality was independent from religious dogma and it is the priority they gave to spiritual life which governs their creativity. Blake and Gibran sought spiritual meaning beyond accepted traditions and as a result, moved towards mystical paths. As mystics however they defy categorization and move beyond the borders of religion and culture. Blake and Gibran had a great interest in the themes of waking, seeing, observing and perceiving and in the belief

13 Ibid., pp. 56-57.
that the uppermost stage of fourfold perception is beyond common sense perception. In both Blake and Gibran it is the experience of higher consciousness which leads to the creation of sound and beauty.

Though Gibran is not a mystic proper, there are moments when he seems to be a mystic of a higher order who appears to be under the guidance of Jesus, Socrates and Gautama Buddha. After reading Gibran one can feel that he never fears to spread his wings in the vast and open firmament in order to reach the boundless, infinite and limitless spiritual world. Gibran’s mysticism is not far removed from spiritualism. He is more of a prophet and a visionary. According to Najjar, “This inspired man was different from all the others; he was made of the stuff of prophets.”16 One can read a spiritual philosophy in most of his works. Gibran considered himself a soul serving heavenly messengers. He felt duly bound to show to the people the essence hidden behind the material and the visible. Najjar states:

According to Gibran, Man does not know how to strip himself down to his bare essence. He has to outdo himself, to forge ahead with an ardent desire (the shawq of the Sufis ) towards his divine self, and to aspire to universal unity where everything reintegrates in a unique and total hymn: the unity which is none other than God. Similarly, the Self, after having travelled the path leading to God, would merge with him.17

The struggle between body and soul was a major concern to Gibran but after reading Blake the tension got resolved. He came to believe with Blake that ‘Man has no body distinct from soul.’ Gibran’s purpose was to make all the people of the world realize

16 Kahlil Gibran: Author of the Prophet, p. 60.
17 Ibid., p. 151.
the divine and quite in line with Blake he believed in the supreme abilities and capacities of Man. He believed that we need to remove the thick dust of physical world from our eyes in order to have a glimpse of our true self and once we see our self, we see absolute reality. Like Blake Gibran also had a firm belief in the power of imagination. In his view imagination is the faculty shared by both God and man and it is only possible with the help of imagination to reach eternal truth or God who himself is a supreme originator and creator. Gibran had a faith in man as a divine being. He believed that man naturally grows to divine perfection because God lives permanently in everything visible or invisible. He had faith like Blake that every living thing is holy and sacred. Though Gibran believed in a transcendental God, he also believed that nature or the physical universe is the key to the reality of both God and Self. It was through visible things that both Blake and Gibran reached the invisible. They reached the transcendental state which they called eternity and being in this state helped them to create new and living worlds through their writings and art. Both the writers strongly emphasized that the spirit is immortal and that there is no conflict between body and soul. They believed that there is a complete harmony between body and soul. They believed that a person who sees the infinite in everything becomes like God and every sincere and honest person is essentially a prophet. Throughout their lives they grew in their understanding of the human soul and wished all the people would do the same. They thought that it was their responsibility to help people see within themselves so that they could get a vision of eternity in a split second. Blake and Gibran appear to have been under the direct inspiration of some divine force and their poetry is full of light and glory which transports one to supernatural regions and places which the senses cannot perceive. We realize that life is something more than what we see with the help of our senses.
Under the divine guidance they transmitted all their prophetic knowledge to the
people around them through the excellent medium of poetry and art. Both these
writers believed that poetry is an inspiration or gift which comes directly from the
transcendental realm of the Universe. They knew that art gives new shape and light to
objects and makes them new and bright. They used this gift to pass on their dreams
and visions to the generations which came after them. They had a power to visualize
their spiritual worlds which seemed to others as abnormal. They both felt strangers in
this world because both believed that they were in constant communication with
visions. In fact Blake’s life, more than Gibran’s, was a never-ending vision. The
greatest challenge to both these poet mystics was in sharing their unique prophetic
revelations and their apocalyptic view of the universe with the average mortals. The
essential unity which they saw between God and his whole creation was meant to be
communicated to people. And it is not an exaggeration that they succeeded in
conveying the complex truths in a lucid but symbolic language which people claimed
as their own. What intrigues the readers of Blake and Gibran the most is their
criticism of orthodox morality. They were not against religion but against the false use
of the institution of religion by vested interests. They both believed in the religion
which entertains the idea of God and Man being same in their essence. Harold Bloom
writes about Blake:

Blake thought himself a Christian, but was not a theist in any orthodox sense.
If the divine is the human released from every limitation that impedes desire,
then Blake is a believer in the divine reality. Yet this is not the divine if any
orthodox theology in the west, for Blake wishes to take away from our vision of divinity everything that would make God a ‘wholly other’… 18

Barbara Young writes about Gibran:

Like all great mystics Gibran was intensely religious. And it was because he was intensely religious that he rebelled against all bounds and limitations which would estrange the soul from its legitimate and free share of participation of the divine. 19

Born into a predominantly Christian culture Blake was preoccupied with evaluating the moral structures and traditions of his country. His spiritual discontent is especially evident in the poems contained within the Pickering Manuscript. Blake’s search for spiritual truth and his efforts to grasp it are reflected in “The Crystal Cabinet”. The poet writes:

I strove to seize the inmost form  
With ardor fierce and hands of flame,  
But burst the Crystal Cabinet,  
And like a weeping Babe became—

A weeping Babe upon the wild,  
And weeping Woman pale reclin'd,

---

19 Barbara Young, This Man from Lebanon: A Study of Kahlil Gibran (New York: Knopf, 1945) 40.
And in the outward air again,
I fill'd with woes the passing wind.  

The poet strives to seize the essence of deepest form of life, and also strives to communicate it with ‘hands of flame’ – usually representing Blake’s burning, creative forge. This poem and other poems of Pickering Manuscript are born out of Blake’s passionate preoccupation with inner spiritual life.

William Blake in the *Songs of Innocence* has many poems full of mysticism. “The Lamb” presents a vision where Blake sees Christ, God and Lamb as one. Seeing a little lamb a child starts asking questions related to the creation of little lamb. He answers himself that the power which made it is as innocent as a lamb itself. He is called by its name. The child then relates its innocence and meekness with that of the lamb and then with Christ. The question of a child is a simple one, and yet it is a timeless question asked in all ages by all human beings about their origins and the nature of creation. The conventional figure of Jesus as a lamb emphasizes the Christian morals like compassion, modesty, and peace. This poem has a mystical aura and a sacred tone.

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

.................

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee.

---

He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.21

“The Divine Image” gives us a mystical insight into the nature of the relationship between Man and God. Blake believes that God and human beings are one form. He says that mercy, Pity, Peace and Love and all the other virtues have a divine form as well as a human form. When we pray to God, we are actually addressing a human form as it shares the divinity with God. God dwells with these virtues when they are found in a human being. Blake through this poem conveys the message of love, brotherhood and fellow feeling. In his opinion it is humanity which is of essential importance and one needs to go beyond the boundaries of religion, nation, race and colour to grasp this truth.

… Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart;
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine:
And Peace the human dress.

…………………………..

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.

21 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.  

In “On Another’s Sorrow” the poet shows his complete belief in divine compassion. He believes that God is always present to protect human beings from the terrors which afflict human beings. God lives in and around us. Jesus, who for Blake is the incarnation of God, becomes one with God’s creation in order to help them hold successfully onto life. This poem touches the greatest spiritual heights while dealing with the love which God has for his creation.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by:
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

“The Little Boy Lost” is a symbolic poem where Father stands for God and the little boy represents a human being. The little boy has no clue where his father is going and he gets lost in the darkness. This has happened because the boy didn’t obey his father. Blake’s message is that the gap between man and God is widening because of man’s lust for power and his greed for material world. God can not live near such a man who sullies his body and soul by material greed and selfishness.

Father, father, where are you going?
Oh do not walk so fast!
Speak, father, speak to you little boy,
Or else I shall be lost."

---

22 Ibid., p. 30.
23 Ibid., p. 37.
The night was dark, no father was there,
The child was wet with dew;
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.24

In “The Little Boy Found” God takes pity and protects the child who symbolizes a human being shorn of spirituality. God is all compassion for the lost boy. He guides him to his mother so that he understands that power of love and affection is greater than the power of material. The mother symbolizes divine power.

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wandering light,
Began to cry, but God, ever nigh,
Appeared like his father, in white.

He kissed the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely dale,
The little boy weeping sought.25

The Songs of Experience too has many poems imbued with mystical thoughts and mystical passion. In “The Fly” Blake stresses the insignificance of a human being in the face of the supreme power. The ultimate power can any time wipe a human being out of its existence. For God the life of a fly is as good as that of a human being. For

24 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
25 Ibid., p. 27.
him the whole of creation is same. The poem is written in a mystical mood and man is seen as a mere speck on the face of the earth in contrast to the supreme reality which permeates the whole universe.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.\(^{26}\)

In “Infant Sorrow” Blake gives vent to his mystical vision. This poem conveys the yearnings for the lost spiritual world. Blake believes that man is divine in nature. Coming to the earth man for a time being leaves his true abode which is the realm of spirituality. Caught in the trap of the material world, man is filled with a longing to meet the divine reality. Human life is a struggle between the pressures of the material world and the yearning for the spiritual world. Man struggles throughout his life balanced between matter and spirit.

My mother groaned, my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt;
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 48.
Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.\textsuperscript{27}

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, contains Blake’s mysticism which approves of a God who is embodiment of both good and evil forces. This prose poem reads like a biblical book of prophecy. Blake in this poem presents a unified vision of cosmos in which both bodily desires and the yearnings of soul are part of a divine order and hence the marriage of Heaven and Hell. Blake believes that body and soul are not distinct.

Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.\textsuperscript{28}

In Blake’s opinion God is not an external reality but lives within Man. Man’s senses can perceive the infinite in everything because infinite lies within him. Man needs to purify his perception in order to see the infinite.

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For Man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.\textsuperscript{29}

In the first book of his prophetic work *Milton* Blake as is the case with Calvinism points out that humanity has three disvisions (i) Elect, (ii) Reprobate (iii) and the

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., pp.54-55.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 87.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 93.
Redeemed. Reversing Calvinistic values Blake voices his view that the ‘Reprobate’ are true believers, while the ‘Elect’ are egoist moralists. At this point Milton returns to earth in order to set right the errors he has committed as a puritan. He wants to purge himself and go to eternal death. In the second book of Milton Blake presents a vision of a final union of living and dead; internal and external reality, male and female and shows the transformation of all human perception. The mystical elements in Milton are subtle but evident. Blake wants to open the world of transcendental visionary experience and hopes that other people’s minds will be radically transformed as is the case with his own person.

Blake in Milton says:

Whatever can be created can be annihilated: Forms can not:
The oak is cut down by the Axe, the Lamb Falls by the knife,
But their Forms Eternal exist forever.30

He further states:

To bathe in the waters of life, to wash off the Not Human,
I come in Self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration.31

One can read Kahlil Gibran’s writings in line with Blake’s poetry. His Tears and Laughter is full of such instances. Gibran in the prose piece “The Creation” gives his readers many mystical insights. He believes that God has created humans in his own image.

The God separated a spirit from Himself and fashioned it into beauty.32

30 Blake Complete Writings, p. 522.
31 Ibid., p. 533.
Man consists of both good and evil elements. God and the devil live simultaneously in a human personality. However, God has kept man under his loving guidance and protection lest he be led astray by evil forces.

In the poem “Have Mercy On Me, My Soul!” Gibran deliberates on the metaphysics of duality related to body and soul. He laments that all his life he celebrated his soul and neglected his body. This seems to be the cause of his suffering according to him. Gibran opposes the doctrine according to which the soul is considered superior to the body. He stresses that body and soul are concomitant realities. For him the relationship between body and soul should not be like that of Master and Slave. One should try to respect and reach the demands of both soul as well as body. In other words both body and soul should be given their rightful importance.

You are hastening toward Eternity,
But this Body goes slowly toward
Perishment. You do not wait for him,
And he can not go quickly.
This, my soul, is sadness.33

“Songs of Wave” is a poem written in an Eastern mystical tradition. The beloved craves for her lover. She at times desires a union with him. Here, the symbol of ‘wave’ has been used for the eternal lover and the image of ‘shore’ for the beloved.

The strong shore is my beloved
And I am his sweetheart.

33 Ibid., p. 7.
We are at last united by love, and
Then the moon draws me from him.
I go to him in haste and depart
Reluctantly, with many
Little farewells.34

There is no rest for true lovers. This love can be found between God or gods and a devotee or between two human beings.

“Song of the Man” is a poem where man sings of his history. He is in this world from the beginning, yet he is imperfect. According to him the only perfection is in the complete union with the divine.”

I was here from the moment of the
Beginning, and here I am still. And
I shall remain here until the end
Of the world, for there is no
Ending to my grief-stricken being.35

In “A Poet’s voice” Gibran says that love for material things deadens a man and spiritual strivings keep him alive. The poet is a mystic and believes that humanity is the spirit of a great being. The poet sees himself one with all humanity.

“I came here to be for all and with all, and what I do today in my solitude will be echoed by tomorrow to the people. What I say now with one heart will be said tomorrow by many hearts.”36

34 Ibid., p. 17.
35 Ibid., p. 57.
For the poet all are a unity and all religions are one because we are part of greater soul. The poet hates authority of every sort because only God can do absolute justice. He believes that life emerges from the soul and not from the body.

“We and You” is a prose poem which reads like a romantic ode. In this poem Gibran contrasts the ‘Sons of Sorrow’ with the ‘Sons of Joy’. For him the sons of sorrow are the people who live a fruitful life. They are poets, prophets, and sensitive humans. Sons of Joy are the tyrants, despots and false leaders. For Gibran sorrow is the spirit of God in the heart of man. Here again Gibran polarizes the world into the spiritual and material realm. People who are more inclined towards spiritual pursuits are really alive and the people who are led by materialistic interests are the living dead. They live a life devoid of meaning and purpose.

“Ashes of Ages and Eternal Fire” is a story where the two true lovers meet again after many centuries. Nathan’s beloved dies and he is heart broken and filled with grief and sorrow. Decades and centuries later, Ali Hussaini who was actually Nathan in the preceding age is filled with love for a maiden and he remembers that they have met somewhere before and lived together in the past. Gibran believed in the doctrine of rebirth and transmigration of souls. Gibran also believes that it is love alone which leads to a complete union with the supreme reality. Gibran’s mysticism is rooted in the ideal of love seeking a union with divine reality.

*Thoughts and Meditations* is also full of mystical insights. In “My Soul Preached to Me” Gibran talks about the power of love which pervades all the objects of nature. Here Gibran has a mystic realization that all spaces, all places and all men are actually one reality. Gibran Writes:

---

36 Ibid., p. 86.
But now love has become a halo whose beginning is its end, and whose end is its beginning. It surrounds every being and extends slowly to embrace all that shall be.37

He further states:

Now I realize that whatever I am contains all places and the distance that I walked embraces all distances.38

In “Communion of Spirits” the lover calls his beloved to come and meet him. He laments that world is filled with people full of selfishness and material interests. The world is filled with cruel people making life miserable. The only refuge is love where man can attain spiritual bliss and peace.

Men are bent under the burden of gold, and the steep road of green weakens their knees.39

In “Among the Ruins” Gibran says that love and eternity are one and the same thing. Nothing remains except love. The material things decay and are destroyed with time.

I created a temple in Jerusalem and the priests sanctified it, but time has destroyed it. But in my heart the altar I built for love was consecrated by God and sustained against the powers of destruction.40

He further writes:

Eternity keeps naught but love, for love is like Eternity.41

37 The Greatest Works of Kahlil Gibran, p. 20.
38 Ibid., p. 23.
39 Ibid., p. 64.
40 Ibid., p. 86.
“Perfection” is a prose poem in which Gibran expresses his mystic fervor. According to him man approaches perfection when he truly realizes that he is boundless, infinite and everlasting and also realizes that he is a human being with all his shortcomings and frailties. All this helps him to become a shadow of God’s shadow.

Man approaches perfection when he feels that he is an infinite space and a sea without a shore, an everlasting fire, an unquenchable light, a calm wind or a raging tempest, a thundering sky or a rainy heaven, a singing brook or a wailing rivulet, a tree abloom in spring, or a naked sapling in Autumn, a rising mountain or a descending valley, a fertile plain or a desert.42

*Sand and Foam* is a book of spiritual sayings where Gibran at the very outset shows his interest in spirituality and his firm belief in Man’s immortality.

I am forever walking upon these shores, betwixt the sand and the Foam. The high tide will erase my foot-print, and the wind will blow away the foam. But the sea and the shore will remain for ever.43

He believes that Man Shares in God’s divinity and like God is eternal. The absolute is within man. Man is an infinite sea. He writes:

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.44

He further states:

---

41 Ibid., p. 87.
42 Ibid., p. 118.
43 Ibid., p. 1.
44 Ibid., p. 17.
I am the flame and I am the dry bush and one part of me consumes the other part.\textsuperscript{45}

In “The Forerunner” Gibran says that we are the only reality because God lives in us. All human beings are one with each other.

In “Out of My Deeper Heart” Gibran says that with the help of deeper knowledge and firm faith, a human being can soar in the limitless skies. But it is materialism which limits man’s flight.

\textit{The Prophet}, Gibran’s most popular work, presents him as a writer of prophetic vision who shares his spiritual sensitivities with his readers. \textit{The Prophet} is undoubtedly one of the greatest mystic books of the world. Kahlil Gibran had no purpose in writing \textit{The Prophet} other than to gratify the spiritual hunger of world plagued by the evils and the dark forces of materialism, commercialism and commodity fetishism. The people were in dire need to come out of the void which the loss of spirituality had cast them into. They had no hope but to yield once again to the dictates of inner consciousness on their way to redemption as the disease nourished by the world of substance was growing more and more menacing. They were waiting for a ray of hope, for a prophetic message which would carry them on its wings from the inferno of iron and gold to the paradise of peace and salvation. Even the religion which was once considered the fountainhead and the mainspring of spirituality had lost its redemptive force, because of its orthodoxy, dogmatic nature and institutionalization. \textit{The Prophet} came at the right time in the history of mankind and quite successfully acted as a balm in healing the scars which the loss of God consciousness had inflicted on the mind and heart of humanity. Gibran’s prophecy

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 57.
proved true in that the people who now read *The Prophet* consider it a spiritual and a mystic treatise holding a mirror to the veiled mysteries of the complex phenomenon called Life. They read their own lives and the lives of their fellow beings in the light of the book and try to overcome their spiritual shallowness by heeding to the timeless and universal truths which adorn its pages. This book presents Gibran as a writer of prophetic vision and spiritual insight who made his spiritual gifts available to the people, his contemporaries as well as future generations. As an astute Sufi and a man of grand vision, Almustafa (the prophet and the protagonist of the book and the mouthpiece of Gibran) teaches moral values, makes known the mysteries of life and shares his timeless knowledge about the human condition. He describes the longing of the soul for regeneration and self-fulfillment. He teaches that the man’s purpose on this planet is a mystic quest towards a ‘Greater Self’, towards ‘God hood’ and ‘the Infinite’. Gibran had a firm faith in the infinity of life. He believed that man needs to explore his inner being in order to meet his true self which is boundless and limitless. Man’s way to the union with God lies in his own heart but for that he needs to awaken spiritually. Gibran strongly believed in the power of the human soul. The book is a spiritual journey and an odyssey into the inner consciousness of human life and it particularly dwells on the common people’s thirst for life. Almustaffa with the help of his spiritual philosophy and intuitive wisdom goads readers towards our ultimate aim that is to search for the true significance of life. Reading the book one realizes that life apart from being a physical reality is a dwelling place for spirit and has innumerable treasures to offer but only to those who dare to delve deep and explore. Almustaffa in his words and deeds teaches truth, wisdom and knowledge with such prophetic authority and mystic fervor that one gets carried away at first, but after contemplating the words is rewarded with such a balance and equipoise that the life changes for ever
and at the same time one becomes conscious of the inner spiritual potential which is innate with every human being. He believes that truth opens the world of wisdom and wisdom teaches unwavering devotion and love for life and its varied gifts. The central mystic principle Gibran adheres to in *The Prophet* is that God is latent within every life form. He is a ‘Greater Self’ dwelling in every individual soul. Gibran sees a world as a perfect unity and life as a timeless harmony. Seemingly *The Prophet* speaks about the common ties binding people together, but he sees them in the light of the spirit rather than as mere material associations. The mysticism of this book appeals to our shared concepts and shared practices and reveals an intense preoccupation with the visionary and the spiritual. Its striking feature is its spiritual-moral approach. The mystical teachings contain so much that is analogous the teachings of the Christ. The readers who explore deep into the book get an insight into the higher meaning and purpose of human existence. We are encouraged to yield gladly to the embracing wings of love for our own spiritual growth and we are made competent to gauge the secrets of our own hearts. The book is infused with a mystic’s vision of the Divine and it is animated by the spirit and the vision. What makes Gibran’s *The Prophet* so singular is its sublimity and grandeur which gives it a fundamental elevating force. It derives its beauty out of a thought provoking spiritual range of life. This book is a longing for the unity of being. It brings harmony and peace for everyone seeking solace and wisdom in a world that has gone spiritually bankrupt. It speaks directly to the core of the human soul. In fact it presents human soul as essentially dignified and good.

Almustafa, the Chosen, who is the protagonist of the book, gives voice to the mystical tendencies of Gibran and seeks for the true union with God. He teaches moral values and talks about the mysteries of life. Almustafa strongly believes in the
power of human soul and spirituality. He uses the metaphor of ‘greater sea’ for the ultimate reality and says that every individual is a drop craving to merge with the sea. Speaking about Love, he says that love makes a person a real human being and makes him divine and one with the creator.

When you love you should not say, ‘God is in my heart,’ but rather, ‘I am in the heart of God.’ 46

He talks about ‘children’ and like a mystic says that children are sent by God and parents do nothing but protect them. They can not give them their thoughts and they know nothing of their souls.

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you they belong not to you.47

Speaking about the ‘House’, he says that Man’s house should be the whole natural world because his soul occupies every place in the Universe. Man like god is boundless because god lives in Man, in the form of his soul.

And though of magnificence and splendor, your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longing. For that which is boundless in you abides in the mansion of the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows are the songs and the silence of the night.48

46Ibid., p. 12.
47 Ibid., p. 20.
48 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
Talking about ‘Crime’ and ‘Punishment’, Gibran defines man as consisting of two selves; One, a ‘god-self’ and another ‘man’. So the evil which is ‘man’ is in every human being because good can not exist without evil. ‘Pain’ he says is essential as it helps a human being to develop fully both in body as well as in soul. Self knowledge, according to him is impossible because self or soul is a boundless sea. The soul has a depth measureless and limitless and it walks all the paths. According to the Prophet when man comes to this earth, he already knows everything because God has bestowed on him every gift and the teacher helps him to find the truth which already lies in his mind and soul.

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.\(^{49}\)

Almustafa like a true mystic believes that meditation, contemplation and silence are better than talking. He believes that life is timeless because God is timeless. He says that prayers are a means to attain a perfect communion with God. Talking about pleasure, Almustafa gives a lot of importance to body and its demands. Like Blake and Donne, he emphasizes that body like soul, is an important element to be satisfied. The soul works through the body and is not independent of it. Talking of religion he says that religion is what we do with our life. God lives in us, so the religion lives in us. Our daily life is our temple and we need to find our true religion in our day to day life. For him the death and the life are one reality. He believes that our life starts after death.

For life and death are one, even as the river and sea are one.\(^{50}\)

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 67.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 93.
He tells the people that we are all one reality. Towards the end of the book Almustafa assures the people that he will come back again. Here Gibran through his prophet voices his belief in the doctrine of ‘rebirth’ and ‘transmigration of souls.’

Forget not that I shall come back to you. A little while, and my longing shall gather dust and foam for another body. A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me.51

Reading The Prophet, it seems that it is inspired by Biblical Literature, Christian and Sufism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Romanticism and Transcendentalism. Through this book Gibran communicates a universal humanistic message and truths relevant to all cultures and times.

Each and every work of Gibran can be read and interpreted in the light of Blake’s mystic thought. Both these writes were selfless and their aim was to serve the higher powers through their works. The prophetic message of Blake and Gibran continues to inspire millions of readers who love to recite or listen to their poetry. Let me conclude this chapter with what Mona Wilson writes about Blake. This holds true about Gibran as well. She writes, “Blake had traversed the fourth stage of the way, the most terrible to him as to all mystics, and had entered on the last, the Unitive life.”52

51 Ibid., p. 113.
52 The Life of William Blake, p.207