



Cover Page



## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAHJAR LITERATURE: A STUDY

Iliasur Rahman Siddique

Research Scholar

Department of Arabic, Gauhati University

Assam, India

### Abstract

The Arab emigrants established of the Arabic Mahjar literature at the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the North and South America because of socio-political and economic condition in the Arab countries (Syria and Lebanon). Without any doubts, Mahjar writers' works have special place in the world literature. These works are surrounded by real life, sublime love, the images of beautiful nature and sincere human feelings. The Arabic literature has passed the different period prosperity and expensive works to the exchequer of world literature. The Mahjar writers lost their original identity along with their Christendom because the Islamic victors imposed their language, culture and political influence on them. The Christians perceived themselves as Arab and the people of Gassan tribe in spite of false European propaganda. Here, they became proud of Arabic language and literature.

**Keywords:** Meaning of Mahjar, Mahjar Literature, Development of Mahjar Literature.

**Introduction:** In this article paper I would like to highlight the Arabic migration literature. This literature was begun in 19<sup>th</sup> century in New York. In the first part of 19<sup>th</sup> century the economic and political condition of the Lebanese became very much deplorable, the foreigners like European interfered in their internal affairs. They promulgated among the Lebanese the seeds of divine and dissension to create a different luxurious life style for the foreigners by the help of their administrative power. The migrants reflected their materialism, thought and ideology in their valuable writings, publishing, letters and magazines. They travelled to their motherland repeatedly bearing new creation and political theory like to become truthful speech, democratic administration, leading the independence.

Lebanon was influenced with the Western advancement of literary movement in the way of protestant missionaries - British and American. Especially Beirut, in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were nearly twelve classical missions in the last part of that century, organized in mountains of Lebanon, Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo and Egypt etc. The Arab writers from Syria, Lebanon and other Arab states moved to North and South Americas to get rid of many a trouble that they had been suffered. The North American emigrants settled in New York and washiton. They founded an association called Ar-Rabeta Al-Qalamiya (The bond of Pen). This association was run by the members like – Nasib Arida, Mikhail Nuaima, Rasheed Ayyub, Abdul Masih al-Haddad, Nadara Haddad, Ilya Abu Madi, M'asood Samaha, Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi, Nazmi Naseen etc. Gibran Khalil Gibran was the first president and Mikhail Nuaima became the secretary of association. The South America emigrants settled in Sao-Paulo, Brazil and Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 1933 Mishal Maluf founded a literary society "Al-Usba Al-Andalusia" (The Andalusian Group).

### Meaning of 'Al-Adab Al-Mahjar' (Mahjar literature)

**Al-Adab Al-Mahjar** was produced by the Arab immigrants in North and South America. It was a literary movement started by Arabic-speaking writes who had immigrated to America from ottoman-ruled Lebanon, Syria and Palestine at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Mahjar poets migrated to America in 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was not the migration of Fatah rather it was the emigration of powerless individuals. Arabic literature migrated during the Islamic conquest under the banner of Jihad for the sake of Allah. And the people of Persia approached the Arabic language to read and write. Arabic literature also migrated to Andalusia, from which the modern literature renaissance originated in Europe. The Mahjar Poets migrated to America for the financial, political, social, Cultural and religious conditions were too piteous, which compelled its poets and authors to undertake such adventures immigration in the strange land of America. Consequently, safety and peace were lost, anarchy and insecurity prevailed all over the country. Almaz Abinader, a Lebanese origin Arab- American female writer says, "..... Arab-American literature ..... has discovered America and America has discovered Arab-American writers....." Arabic literature was also developed like other literatures of the world. Many of the revolutionary writers have been forced to leave their own country and settle down in another country temporarily or permanently.

Wherever the Arabs/Arabian immigrants went produced wonderful poem, which came from their Predecessor. The Arab writers from Syria, Lebanon and other Arab states moved to North and south Americas to get rid of many a trouble that they had been



Cover Page



suffered. The North American emigrants settled in New York and Washington. They founded an association called Ar-Rabeta Al-Qalamiya (The Pen Association). This association was run by the members like – Nasib Arida, Mikhail Nuaima, Rasheed Ayyub, Abdul Masih al-Haddad, Nadara Haddad, Ilya Abu Madi, M’asood Samaha, Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi, Nazmi Naseen etc. Gibran Khalil Gibran was the first president and Mikhail Nuaima became the secretary of association.

Contrariwise, the south America emigrants settled in Sao-Paulo, Brazil and Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 1933 Mishal Maluf founded a literary society “Al-Usba Al-Andalusia”. It is run by the many members such as Nazir Zytun, Nas’ar Sama’n, Daud Shakur, Husni Gurab, Ilyas Farhat, Ilyas Qansul, Zaki Qansul, Eusuf Ibrahim Khuri and Musa Karim etc.

### Reasons for Migration

The Mahjar writers, those who lived in America, they attached with their literary activities. They published newspaper, Magazines and books. They had vigilance for protecting Arabic language because it was their mother tongue. Their mother tongue must not come under the impact of English in North and South America. One of the poets of Mahjar literature said about their language – “It is such a language that to behold the day of its destruction is more preferable than before seeing the day of its death.”

It is well known to all that the most of the writers were belong to Christianity and they had a positive attitude towards the creed and culture to humanity. They publicized the Christians of Lebanon and Syria that actually they were the people of Phoenicians and Syrians and hailed from Arab family. The Mahjar writers lost their original identity along with their Christendom because the Islamic victors imposed their language, culture and political influence on them. The Christians perceived themselves as Arab and the people of Gassan tribe in spite of false European propaganda. Here, they became proud of Arabic language and literature.

Masood Samaha was one of the Mahjar poets who migrated to America in 1913. He described the reasons for his migration. The reasons are -

1. Verily soon I would leave the land of my ancestors wherein there is life to the coward and death to brave men.
2. In it the freedom loving pens are to be banned and get it free into the hands of wealthy man.
3. Soon I would undertake a journey on earth without being afraid of vast land and huge waves of the sea.

The great poet **Shukrullah Jar** said at his departure to the land of South America. “Would that it had been known to me will the emigrant be fortunate at what he intends through migration?”

**A Syrian Mahjar poet** also said about his departure, “We arrived here to find out our asylums and livelihood.”

The Mahjar poet Shukrullah Jar migrated to America due to the bad condition of his motherland, financial straits and political crisis. That’s why Shukrullah Jar can be cited by the following verse.

1. O Lebanon, Allah will provide evidence that I have not left you due to my unhappy and displeasure.
2. (Reason is that) to live in the land of cedar for brave and liberal man has become a matter of defect and disgrace.

Ahmed Abu Zaki Shadi, an Egyptian Mahjar Poet, he did not find any associate whose ideologies and thoughts could able to satisfy him. That’s why he left his birth place and settled in America. He expressed about his motherland in this way.

“The thinking of wretchedness in the land of majesty, it is more disliked for a brave man than becoming blind.”

### Growth and Development of Al-Adab Al-Mahjar (Mahjar literature)

The Arab emigrants established of the Arabic Mahjar literature at the nineteenth century to the North and south America because of socio-political and economic condition in the Arab countries (Syria and Lebanon). Without any doubts, Mahjar writers’ works have special place in the world literature. These works are surrounded by real life, sublime love, the images of beautiful nature and sincere human feelings. The Arabic literature has passed the different periods prosperity and expensive works to the exchequer of world literature.

Howsoever the Mahjar writers perceived about the development of this literature. Thus, they assembled around several literary societies. The main objectives of these new societies were to perpetuate the Arabic language and literature in north and South America. The first Arabic literary society Ar-Rabeta Al-Qalamiya (The Pen Association) was formed by the great immigrant writers in 1920 in New York, which further their fame in the Arabic-Speaking world. The first members of this society were – Mikhail



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.07.176>

Nua'ma, Ilya Abu Madi, Nasib Arida, Rashid Ayyub, Abdul Masih Haddad and Nedrad Al-Haddad. Gibran Khali Gibran was elected President, and Nu'aima a secretary. Mikhail Nu'aima wrote some statements for supporting the main objectives of the "Pen League".

"Everything which is written in ink on paper can't be considered as a literary example. As well as not everyone who writes the articles and poems can be a writer. The real writer is one who is sensitive; attentive has a clear point of view to all the processes which occur in real life and the ability to express all these in the right way."

The members of "the pen league" did not write in classical Arabic language but in modern simplified one. Thus, they strived to cleanliness the Arabic Language from archaic words. Gibran's statements are very interesting due to this fact.

"You can take the Arabic language which Sibaveyi Al-Asvad speaks, but leave me the language that mother speaks with her child, the lover speaks with his beloved."

In 1912 Abdul Masih Al-Haddad published a newspaper named "As-Saih" (The traveler) The writers published their articles and odes in this newspaper. This newspaper delivered the important messages from American continent to the Arab world, and managed a lot of writers.

In 1932 Rashid Ayyub, Nasib Arida, Mikhail Nuayma return to Lebanon because of the death of Gibran Khalil Gibran. That's why "The Pen League" was disintegrated. Gibran Khalil Gibran is one of the famous writers and being playwright and artist, motivated other writers, artists and musicians etc. A Great Egyptian writer Zaki Abu Shadi established a literary society in New York in 1948. This literary society's name was Rabetat-ul-Minerva" (Minerva Society). Abdul Masiah Al-Haddad had a great role to establish this "Minerva Society". This Minerva society was similar to another literary society "Apollo" Which is created in Egypt and led by some distinguished writers as Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi, Mahmud Hasan Ismail, Abdullah Bakri and Abdul Qadir Ashur. The Minerva society functioned for a short period of time. After the death of Abu Shadi, the activity of this society was stopped. The people, those were living in North America developed the Mahjar literary activities. But those who were living in South America they did not developed more than North America. That's why at first those who came to South America were less educated. Their financial condition was more difficult and activities were non-organized. However, despite all these difficulties in 1900 South American established a literary society, named "Rivaq-ul- Maari" (Marri Society) led by Naum Labkin in the Brazilian city of San Paulo. Fariz Najm Vadi Farah Maaluf, Stefan Galburi and Gaysar Maaluf, were among the members of the society. The first selected poems "Tizkar-ul-Muhajir" (The emigrant's memories) were published by this society. After Naum Labki said Abu Jamara became the chairperson of the society and Doctor Fazl Haydar succeeded him.

The Great Orientalist Aida Imanguliyeva notes that "The foundation of Rivaq-ul-Maari" became a kind of national club of Arabs. Poetry, reading events and different meetings were held here frequently. The functioning of "Raviq-ul-Marri" continued till the returning of Naum Labki to Lebanon in 1908, i.e till the beginning of the First World War. Even though the literary society was operating for some time after this, it weakened gradually and stopped functioning at all then.

After "Rivaq-ul-Marri" Al-Rabita-us-Suriya" (The Surian society) literary society were founded by Shafiq Ahmed during first world war. Shafiq was the editor of cognominal newspaper. Even though this society had a great impact on the young Arabs living in brazil, but it operated for a short period of time.

In 1922 "Rivaq-ul-Adab" a great society was established by Naama Yafiti. All the societies including "Rivaq-ul-Adab" had important contribution in the development of Mahjar literature. This society functioned for a long period of time. A lot of poets wrote poems for participating on the annual "Mahjaran Sher Ukazi" (Ukaz poetry festival) which was held by the initiative of the society.

In 1949 George Saydah founded a literary society "Ar-Rabita-ul-Adabiya" in the capital of Argentina. It had an objective to develop the Arabic literature in "New world". The functioning of this society was lasted only for two years stopped by the returning of George Saydah to Lebanon. The Mahjar writers developed their creative activities by different societies in order to preserve native language customs, and national ideology. Despite the difficulties of living in alien lands, their main priorities were immortalizing their origins and not to fall apart from the Arab people. The Mahjar writers established the literary society for bringing their contribution.

It is true that the immigrants Arabs lived in South America and established many societies. A great society "Al Usbat-ul-Andalusiya" (The Andalusian Society) was created by famous writer Shukrullah Al-Jurr. Mishel Naama Maaluf was elected as the first chairman of this society. Shukrullah Al-Jurr described in his poem that Mustafa Kamal was a wise leader and the Turkish people were so intelligent, that's why they developed their nation with the policy of Mustafa kamal Ataturk.



Cover Page



Surely the one who is similar to Ataturk and follows his path.  
Will never mislead his people.  
If only Islam develops in East in the way that Ataturk has put.  
He is an innovator.  
He came and adjusted the mistakes of the nation.  
Acquired an important position for Turkey,  
Brought the glory to his country.  
Everyone looked with wonder.  
The whole world was in wonder.

The great society “Al-Usbat-ul-Andalusia” has the distinction of the literature of Andalusia. Thus, the Mahjar literature was developed in the history of Arabic literature.

### Conclusion

In Conclusion I would like to say through this brief study it is clear that the Mahjar literature to a great extend upon the beauty of the portrayal and the description in prose and poetry. The statement is worth thinking in Mahjar literary figure. The depiction in their poetry was expanded beyond natural scenes to include the description of modern inventions.

### References

1. Badawi, M.M., Ed., Modern Arabic Literature, Cambridge, 1992
2. Mahdi, Ismat, Modern Arabic Literature 1900-1967, Hyderabad, 1983
3. Haywood, John A., Modern Arabic Literature 1800-1970, London, 1971
4. Ayyub, Rashid, Aghani Al-Darwish, Beirut, 1959
5. Hasanuzzaman, Dr. Hazrat, Glimpses of Arabic Literature 81-7231-839-1, 2013