

Chapter- I

Historical Background of Arabia

Arabia:

The word “ARABIA” means Arab countries. In Arabic the Arab country is named as “Biladul Arabi” (بلاد العرب) or “Jaziratul Arab” (جزيرة العرب).¹ According to the Dictionary of Islam the word “Arabi” signifies a barren place or desert.² Arabia (Arabic) “جزيرة العرب”, the Arabian Peninsula, or Island of the Arabs.

Arabia is a largest peninsula of the world which surrounded by the Red Sea in the West, the Indian Ocean in the South, the Persian Gulf in the East, and in the North the Syrian Desert, which extend to the Euphrates, stretch, in round numbers from the 12th to 34th degree of North Latitude, its length from the Mediterranean to the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, as about 1400 miles it breaths across the neck of the Peninsula is 800 miles, whilst its coastline on the Indian Ocean approaches 1200 miles, “Although Arabia is not possess a single navigable river”.³ Few of its stream reach ocean. Most of them exist only when swelled by the periodic rains and as a rule lose themselves in the sandy plains.

Arabia is one of the driest countries of the world. In its geographical setting, it is a unique land of many distinctive features peculiar to itself. It stands at the cross roads of three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa and has the distinction of being the centre of the old world. It is a part of Asia, but is separated from the main land of Asia and

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP- 23

² . Hughes T.P. – Dictionary of Islam, New Delhi, 1977, P- 16

³ . Stobort, J.W.H. – Islam and its Founder, New York, 1876, PP- 5-6

stands apart as a sub- continent by itself. Only the small arm of Red Sea separates it from Africa. It is separated from Europe by the Mediterranean Sea.¹

Provinces and Towns:

The vast region of Arabia is divided into five provinces on the basis of geographical features and climatic condition of which Hijaj, Najd, Yemen, Hadramawth and Uman are important in the history of the Muslim world. Mecca, Medina and Taif are the three chief towns of Hijaj. Northern Arabia is a large tract less desert land of Arabia. About one third of the country is covered by sandy deserts. The largest portion of this desert area is known as ad- Dahna, lying in the middle of the southern part of Arabia. The southern portion of Arabia which consists of Yemen, Hadramawth and Uman, is thickly populated and celebrated for its commerce and agriculture. This is the most fertile region of the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. The richness and variety of its products won in ancient times, the names of “Arabia Felix” an Arabia the Fortunate.²

Climate:

The climate of Arabia is extremely dry except in some coastal towns and watered valley. The people are generally hardy and they possess robust health due to influence of its typical climate.

¹ . Prof. Hasan Masudul- History of Islam, vol- 1, Srinagar, 1987, P- 19

² . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 14

The dry wastes of the deserts without shade or shelter are scorched by the direct and intense sun rays. The hot wind intensified heat that blew across the country. There are some rains in the coast lands, but the rainfall is scanty in the interior parts of country. There is no river but during the rains the torrents flow for short times and then become dry. No rain water reaches the sea. The same is absorbed in land, which makes oases where cultivation is undertaken. The oases are scattered and are separated from one another by deserts and high lands.

The channels of rivers which remain dry for a greater part of the year are known as “wadis” (channels that is dry except rainy season) and serve as caravan routes wadi al Hunnah which connects Arabia with Mesopotamia and wadi al sirhan which connects Syria with Arabia are the principal wadis.¹

Though Arabia is surrounded by water on all sides except the north, it has practically no river worthy of mention. If there is any it is not navigable. The small streams which exist here and there make the strands fertile, rainfall is scanty but where there is water the land is remarkably fertile for the production of coffee, indigo, dates, vegetables and fruits.²

¹ . Prof. Hasan Masudul- History of Islam, vol- 1, Srinagar, 1987, P- 20

² . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 15

Products:

The dates palm is the queen of the trees in Arabia. It is a friend of the poor and rich alike, without it the life in the desert would be unthinkable. The palm tree is the essential for man and its fruits are the principal food of the people, its stones are crushed to provide sustenance to the camel, its fermented milk is the luxury drink for the Bedouins, its wood is almost the only fuel otherwise treeless land, its branches provide material for mats and roofs, which the tough fibre of its bark can be used for ropes. The date is one of the cherished dreams of a Bedouin who always longs for "The two black ones" i.e. water and dates.¹ Najd and Hijaz is rich in the production of dates.

The bank of the sea that produces the fruits and vegetables in large quality, Yemen is the most fertile province in Arabia, where the wheat and coffee are found much. Millet and rice are produced in some parts of Uman; the frankincense plant is the most valuable product of Hadramawth and on the heights of hills in Mahra. It has occupied a special place in the main commercial products of Arabia.

The main fruits grown in the country including pomegranates, apples, apricots, almonds, oranges, lemons, grapes, sugarcane, watermelons and bananas. Taif is the main fruit producing area which is also well known for production of honey.

¹ . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 15

The main trees of the desert are “Talh” and “Ghada” which produces good char coal. The Arabian word “Talh” tree produces “Gum”.¹

Animal:

The animal, found in the country, include Leopards, Hyenas, Wolves, Foxes, and Lizards, Monkeys are found in Yemen. The principal domestic animals are the Camel, Horse, Sheep, and Goat. Among these the camel is the most useful in Arabia, without which desert life would have been impossible. It is the ship of deserts acting as a ship in the sandy desert and providing the Bedouin with his main vehicle of transport, and the camel is the main medium of exchange. The dowry of the bride, the price of the blood, the profit of the gambling, the wealth of a sheikh, are all computed in terms of camels. It is the Bedouin’s constant companion, his alter ego, his foster parent. He drinks its milk, instead of water, which he spares, for the cattle; he feasts on its flesh; he covers himself with his skin; he makes his tent of hair and its dung he uses as fuel. The camel is so necessary to the Arabs that Umar I once said “The Arab prospers only where the camel prospers”. It played an important role in the early conquests of the Muslims. The Arabian horses are finest in the world. In the 8th Century Arabia used to export horses to different parts of the world. Goats and sheep are the chief property of the Bedouins.²

¹ . Prof. Hasan Masudul- History of Islam, Vol- I, Srinagar, 1987, P- 21

² . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, PP- 15- 16

Minerals:

Petrol is the principal minerals of Arabia. Arabia is the largest producer of oil in the World and virtually floats on a sea of oil, the principal oilfields are at Abqaiq, Ain Dar and Dammam, the operating centre is at Dahran. Arabia has become one of the richest countries in the world. As a consequence of wealth brought by the production of oil, the very landscape of the country is fast changing. A network of mettle roads has been spread throughout length and breadth of the country. A railway line runs from Riyadh to Damman. Riyadh in Najd is the political capital of the country. Mecca, which houses the Ka'ba, is the capital. Medina is the sacred place because of being the city of the Holy Prophet, Jeddah is the international capital: where the most foreign embassies are located.¹

Geographical Boundaries:

The geographical boundaries of Arabia, it undoubtedly a vast oasis is a hot country, that lies between the longitude 35 degree and 60 degree East and the latitude 10 degree and 40 degree North. It is bordered by the Gulf of Aqaba and Red Sea on the West, on the South by the Gulf of Uman and Persian Gulf and on the North by the land frontiers of Iraq and Tran Jordan as far as Jabal Anaza. Another source suggests that Arabian is a vast peninsula in south west of Asra, which is bounded on the North by the great Syro- Babylonian plain, North- East by the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Uman, South or South- East by the Arabian Sea, West by the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez. Its length from north-west to South-West is

¹ . Prof. Hasan Masudul- History of Islam, vol- 1, Srinagar, 1987, P- 22

about 1,800 miles, its mean breadth about 600 miles and its area approximately 12,00,000 square miles, its population probably less than 5,00,000, roughly described, it exhibits a central table surrounded by a series of deserts with numerous scattered oasis, which around this is line of mountains parallel to and approaching the coasts and with a narrow rim of flow ground (Tihana) between them and the sea.¹

Other States:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia forms the core of the land of Arabia. Arabia however, comprises some other lands as well. A glance at the map gives the impression that the Arabian land mass extends to the very shores of the Mediterranean and as such the state of Syria, Jordan. Lebanon and Israel would be parts of Arabia.

According to orthodox geographers these states are however, excluded from Arabia proper, the states bordering on the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean are however regarded as parts of Arabia. These include Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Uman People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and Yemeni Arab Republic. Physically Uman consists of three divisions, the coastal plain, the mountainous region and the plateau. The coastal plain is not more than 10 miles in width. The mountain range reaches its greatest height of over 9,000 foot round Jebel Akhdar region. The plateau has an average height 1,000 foot. North- West

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP-23-24

of Muscat the coastal plain known as Batinah is fertile. The Batinah dates are famous for their flavor.

The people of Democratic Republic, Yemen borders the Indian Ocean, Aden is the main city, wheat barely, sorghum sesanic millet and cotton are main agricultural products. The Yemeni Arab Republic produces coffee, cotton, wheat and millet, fruit is plentiful sana is known for its pine grapes. Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have become prosperous because of oil.

The Bahraini oasis known as al Ain in the United Arab Emirates is known for its fertility. Bahrain enjoys a name for its pearl industry Kuwait produces skins and it is also known for pearl fishing.¹

Division of Human Race:

Human races have divided into three major classes-

1. Aryan races or Indo- European (Persians English and French)
2. Turanian or Mongolian (Chinese, Japanese, Mongolians etc.)
3. Semites (Arabs, Aranaeans, Hebrews, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Phoenicians etc.)

Human races have also divided into three classes in accordance with their colors i.e. (1) white people including the Semites and the Europeans (2) Black race or Red race including the natives of Africa and

¹ . Prof. Hasan Masudul- History of Islam, vol- 1, Srinagar, 1987, PP-22-23

(3) Yellow race which includes the Chinese, Japanese and Mongolians or Turanians.¹

After the deluge of Noah, the Prophet, another division of human race according to Old Testament which runs as: Japheth, Ham and Shem, the three sons of Noah and their descendants led to the three divisions of human race as:

1. Japheth has seven sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Mescheck and Tiras.
2. Hem has four sons: Cush, Mizrain, Cana'n and Phut.
3. Shem (Sam) has five sons: Elam, Assur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.²

European scholars hold the view that the Biblical division of the human race is not genealogical, physiological but Geographical and Political. They aim at reconciling between reason and tradition and maintain that Biblical account and the results of modern researches do not differ but only name and assert that the Old Historical names either of people or countries with some modifications necessitate by the laps of time and differences in language. If we carefully observe it appears that it only refers to the people and places of Palestine, Assyria, Syria, Babylonia, Chaldea, Media, Egypt, Damascus, Africa, Sinai and Arabia.³

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 1

² . Nadwi M.U.A. – Geographical History of the Quran, Delhi, 1985, P- 59

³ . Encyclopedia Britannica – Article on Semitic Language.

Inhabitants of Arabia:

The people of Arabia fall into two groups- viz “The dwellers of the cities” and “The dwellers of the deserts”-the Bedouins.¹ The dwellers of the cities settled permanently in one place and they know how to till land and grew corn. They have their business transactions within their country as well as other countries. The dwellers of the cities are more refined and civilized and educated as well as politically consciousness. The dwellers of other cities are settled people mainly live on cultivation and trade.

The Bedouins are nomads, who wander from one place to another with their families and belongings. In the midst of their journey they temporarily live in tents and graze sheep, goats, camels and horses. They consider their desert homes as paradise and sheep and camel rearing, hunting and raiding as the only professions of a man. Riding is an essential part of their life. An Arab poet said, “Our business it to make raids on our enemy, on our neighbor and on our own brother, in case we find none to raid but brother.”²

The Bedouins, who dislike the idea of a settled life, they have no charm for agriculture and all varieties of trade and craft. Attack, counter attack, loot and plunder are the evils inherent in the very system of Bedouin life. They do not like to sit quietly for a long time. If a Bedouin cannot find any enemy to deal with, he gives an outlet to his irises table urge for fighting by falling upon his own people. Bedouins have special

¹ . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 16

² . Dr. Rahman. A. Islamic History- 4th edition Delhi. 2003, P- 3

love for fellow tribe men, when a member of a tribe commits any wrong; the whole tribes not only endorse his action but also share responsibility with him, “We do not ask our brother”, says a poet for reasons and explanations for a crime when he appeals for help. The Bedouins patriotism is neither national nor territorial but strictly tribal. Tribalism constitutes the chief feature of the social life. No tribe can command the loyalty of a member if it fails to protect him, “Be loyal to the tribe” says a bard, “its claim upon a member is strong enough to make a husband give up his wife”.¹ The tribal system provided a constant source of fighting amongst the Arab of pre- Islamic days.

None can deny the fact that the physical feature of Arabic has an important influence upon the mind of its people. The desert land saved the Arabs from the invasion of the foreigners on the other. Arabia being a tactless desert could not attract the attention of the outsiders, “This is why”, says Prof. Hitti, “The Arabs have escaped from foreign domination for centuries”. As the Arabs are to struggle constantly with the desert, they become persevering and industrious. Their unrestricted life in the desert has also to steered in them the spirit of freedom has never made them accept the domination of others. The early European historians have great admiration for the love of the Arabs. Strabo says, the Arabians were the only people who did not send their ambassadors to Alexander, who

¹ . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, PP-16-17

had planned to make Arabia seat of his empire”, for these qualities, the Arabs after their conversion in the history of the world.¹

Arabia before Birth of Prophet:

Before the birth of Muhammad (PBUH) Arabia was a country of ‘Idolaters’. They were divided into tribes and used to live in a nomadic state of life and had no organized state and government amongst them. The only authority which they respected was that to tribal chief. They were addicted to drinking, gambling and practiced polygamy. The female infanticide was also prevalent. Women had no recognized place in Arab society. Among the tribes, there was the Quresh, who had the noble pedigree. The Prophet’s father Abdullah came from this stock. He married to a lady of Zuhara clan, belonging to the same tribe as himself. The offspring of this union was Muhammad (PBUH) at the stage of childhood he lost his parents and was brought up by his uncle Abu Talib.

In his early life Muhammad (PBUH) engaged in trade as an employee, but gradually his interest has been shifted to religion. He used to go to mount ‘Hera’ near the city of Mecca to pass his time in meditation and prayer, later he was successful in receiving the message of God (ALLAH) and to develop his mission (ISLAM). Gradually, he began to preach his religion publicly and devoted his life for the sake of Islam for emancipation of the distress. In doing this he faced serious opposition from his opponents. But he acquitted power of influence. He told the people to give up idol- worship and to accept his religious preaching. He

¹ . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 26

also suggested them to give up their evil social customs and to accept his faith of unity and equality. Through this way Islam started to spread among the masses of Arabia.¹

Pre-Islamic Arabia:

The period preceding the rise of Islam is commonly known as 'Ayyam-i- Jahiliyah' (أيام جاهلية) or "The days of ignorance". The period was called, because the political, religious and social conditions of Arabia were of the worst order. The Pre- Islamic Arabs had no inspired Prophet, no revealed book; no clear cut religious ideology and they had no idea of the system of government, no idea of moral and descent life. Their religious as well as political life was on a thoroughly primitive level.²

It was a time the Pre- Islamic period was the darkest age in human history. It was a time of ignorance and anarchy in the religious and social life in the world. The political, social and cultural life developed by the people of the ancient world was shattered by the Barbarians. The social and religious order organized is Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism had disintegrated. The people had for gotten the ideal of their religion. Morality had fallen at a low ebb, corruption, intolerance, persecution and wronging of creeds and sects prevailed everywhere, "Never in the history of the world", says Ameer Ali, "Was the need so great the time so ripe for the appearance of Deliverer".

¹ . Mondal Shekh Rahim- Educational status of Muslims Problems Prospects and Priorities, New Delhi,1997, P- 51

² . Ali K. – Studies in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P-18

The age of ignorance, when there was disintegration and anarchy in the religious, social and political life of the Arabs. This however should not mean that the Arabs were altogether devoid of any intellectual life. Even in the Dark Age, they should their intellectual attainments in Literature. In this connection the fairs at Mecca, Uqaz and Dhu'l Majas developed in to annual Literary and intellectual congresses of the Arabs, where the poets competed in verse making and obtained distinction and honour; the selected best verses were inscribed I golden letters and suspended on the walls of the Ka'ba. It was called Muallaqat, seven Muallaqats, discovered so far are considered to the master piece of Arabic Language.¹

The noted Pre- Islamic poets were Imraul Qys, Zuhair bin Abi Sulma, Tarafa bin Abd, Labid bin Rabia, Antarah bin Shadad, Amar bin Kulthum, Harith bin Hilliza, Al- Nabigha, Al- Asha, Hatim al- Tai, Abid bin al- Abras, Umaiyya bin Abi Salt etc.²

Imraul Qays was regarded as the Prince of the Arab poets as his Muallaqat was honoured as the best specimen of the Pre- Islamic Arabic poetry. This period also produced some wise man, such as Aktam. Hajib, Hindah, Loqman etc. the existence of these poets and wise man proves that the Pre- Islamic Arabia was not completely devoid of an intellectual life.³

¹ . Dr. Rahim A- Islamic History, 4th edn, Delhi, 2003, P- 5

² . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 36

³ . Ibid, P- 6

Pre- Islamic Arabian Life:

The Pre- Islamic Arabian life classified as follows:

- a) **Political Life:** during the age of ignorance, the whole of Arabia were under the subjugation of the Persian and Roman Empires enjoyed complete independence except certain portion of the north. Anarchy prevailed in Arab political life and the political life of Arabia, particularly the southerners, had disintegrated. The Arabs were divided in many tribes. Each tribe had of its own, generally known as Sheikh to whom they owed their allegiance. The relation between the members of different tribes was very hostile. The Arab did not hesitate to go any length; even they were ready to sacrifice their lives for the honour and prestige of the tribe. Tribal feuds, raiding and plundering of one tribe by the other were the common phenomenon of the Arab life at that time. This condition of Arabia has been termed as 'Ayyam al-Arab'. It is a record of blood feud, raids and irregular warfare among the Arabian tribes.¹

In absence of any centralized government these tribes were always in conflict with each other at the slights pretext and the war between the conflicting tribes sometimes continued for many years together. Banu Bakr and Banu Taghlib tribes fought for forty years on a small matter, the beating of a she

¹ . Ali K. –A Study in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P-18

camel. The war of Dahis and Ghabra (name of horses) fought between the Abes and its sister tribe Dhubyan over a horse race continued for several decades, the tribal raids and wars were thus a matter of everyday life. There was no systematic law in the country, "Might is right was the law in the land, as being no political unity and organized government in Arabia."¹

b) **Social Life:** Greatest anarchy prevailed in the social life of the Arabs. There was no ideal, morality or discipline in the society. Corruption, Vices, Superstition, Unrestrained freedom and unrestricted enjoyment ruled supreme in the Arab Society. "Plurality of wives and husbands was the order of the day. A man could have unlawful relation with a number of sweet hearts. Married women were allowed by their husbands to conjugate with others for the sake of offspring".² Girls of coquetting disposition often used to go to the outskirts of the city where they allowed to the men folk to take full liberty with them. Step sons could marry their step mothers and even the brothers sometimes married their own sisters. Men and women could have full liberty with their opposites. Women were not entitled to have the share of the property of their deceased husbands, fathers and other relations. In the advent of Muhammad (PBUH) who lifted

¹. Dr. Rahim A -Islamic History, 4th edn, Delhi, 2003, P- 7

². Ali K. -A Study in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 21

them up from the depth of lowliness to the position of respect and dignity.

The birth of a female child was considered as a great curse and she was often buried alive by the heartless father. In a word the women of the pre- Islamic days had no status in the society. A man could marry as many wives as he liked and could divorce as he wished.

Slavery, in its worst form, prevailed in the Arab society. The master had unlimited authority over the slaves. He could even put them to death. They were generally treated most inhumanly and often left on the heated sand of the desert bound hand and foot and with eyes towards the sun.¹

- c) **Economic Life:** The economic condition was not so good. The Pre- Islamic Arabian society was very much in the primitive stage. The land of Arabia was barren. There were no agricultural and mineral products. So the people of Arabia generally were economically depressed. The poor and middle class people earned their livelihood by tending cattle. But people of a higher status like Abu Bakr (R.A) and Uthman (R.A) carried on in land and foreign business. They were economically better off but their numbers were few and far between. The practice of money lending based on the system of 'usury' (interest) was in vogue among the Jews who

¹ . Dr. Rahim A -Islamic History, 4th edn, Delhi, 2003, P- 8

treated their debtor very severely. So the lives the Arabs is generally continued to be very miserable.¹

d) Religious Life: Prior to the rise of Islam, worst anarchy and confusion prevailed in the religious life of the Arabs. With the exception of the Jews and the Christians, the rest of the Arabs were idolatrous. But the religious of the Jews and the Christians were in a moribund condition. Their religions could not any way contribute to the material and spiritual well being of the Arabs whole.²

The idol-worshippers, adorning many Gods and Goddess, Ka'ba, the House of Allah (بيت الله) was adorned with 360 idols and converted into the most sacred sanctuary and centre of idolatry in Arabia.³ Besides idol worship, they also worshipped the Sun, the Moon, the Star, the Air, pieces of stone, tree and sand heaps. They did not believe in the oneness of God, the immortality of human soul and Day of Retribution. Only a section of the people of Medina believed in a vague monotheism. Every city had its own Gods and Goddesses, Hubal, Lat, Manah and Uzzah were the principal Gods and Goddesses of the Arabs. Every year men from different parts of the country used to come to Ka'ba where 360 idols were placed to pay homage to their Gods and

¹ . Ali K. – A Study in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 18

² . Dr. Rahim A -Islamic History, 4th edn, Delhi, 2003, P- 8

³ . Ibid, P-20

Goddesses. During this time a big fair was held in Arabia and the fair was called the “Fair of Ukaz”.¹

The condition of the ‘days of ignorance’ (أيام جاهلية) has been well expressed by Jafar the spokesman of the Muslim emigrant to Abyssinia, in reply to the query of their King, he said to Negs, “Jahiliyah people were we, worshipping idols, feeding on the dead animals practicing immortality, deserting our families and violating the covenant term of mutual protection, the strong among us devouring the weak, such was the state when Allah sent unto us a messenger”.²

e) Cultural Life: The educational system of the days of ignorance was not like that of the modern age. The Arabs of this period were not altogether devoid of culture, they were famous for their language and poetry. The language of the Pre- Islamic Arabs had been rich that it can be compared to the developed languages of modern Europe. The perfection of Arabic language was the greatest contribution of the age of Ignorance to emergence of Islam. The great historian P.K. Hitti says, “The triumph of Islam was a certain extent the triumph of a language, moer particularly of a book”. Another cultural achievement of the pagan Arabs was their poetry. The poetry of this period ‘was national influence but not in spirit’³ the theme of poetry was not the Arabs but the Arab

¹ . Ali K. – A Study in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P- 20

² . Dr. Rahim A -Islamic History, 4th edn, Delhi, 2003, P-10

³ . Ibid, P-19

tribe. The poems described about their tribes, of war, of the feats of courage of their tribal heroes and above all, of fair women and lovers, for which it was, said (الشعر ديوان العرب). In those days the poems were the Register of Arabs. "In those days poetry was no luxury for the cultured few, but the sole medium of literary expression".¹ Galam ibn Salmah of the tribe of Taqib is known to hold once a week a literary gathering where poems were recited and literary discussion and criticism took place. The famous poets were Imraul Qays, Tarafa bin Abd, Harith bin Hilliza, Antarah bin Shadad, Amar bin Kulthum etc.

Modern Arab Countries and its Language:

The ancient Arab 'جزيرة العرب', the Arabian Peninsula, or Island of the Arabs has been divided into so many small and big countries are called the modern Arabian countries, namely Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Yemen and United Arab Emirate.

Among the countries, completely Muslim populated countries are Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Yemen and United Arab Emirate. But Lebanon is populated by Jews, Christians, Muslims and Dous.

¹ . Ali K. – A Study in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P-19

The language of the inhabitants is mostly Arabic. But English and other Languages are also the sub language of the modern Arabian countries.

The Semitic Race:

The Semitic race was one of the important human races of the world, which contributed to the ancient civilization. The Semitic race occupied a special place in the history of mankind. Musa, the founder of Judaism, Isa, the founder of Christianity and Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam were the sons of this Semitic race and the East was their home land. Arabia, the birth place of Islam, was the original home of the Semitic race. In course of time the Semitic people migrated to different parts of Fertile Crescent and known as the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Phoenicians and the Hebrews in history. The ancestors of these people must have lived here for sometime as one people before, they became differentiated. About 3500 B.C. one of the branches of the Semitic race left their original home and settled permanently on the Tigris and Euphrates valley which had been populated by a highly civilized community, the Sumerians.¹ As a result of their close association with the Sumerians there, flourished a great civilization.

The valley of Nile and the Tigris- Euphrates there they co- operated with the Hamates and the Sumerians and developed the Egyptians and Assyria- Babylonian civilization.²

¹ . Ali K. – A Study in Islamic History. Delhi, 1950, P-1

² . Dr. Rahim A -Islamic History, 4th edn, Delhi, 2003, P- 2

Semitic Language:

The term 'Semitic' for these languages after, the son of Noah in the Bible, the Semitic family is a member of the larger Afro- Asiatic family, all of whose other five or more branches are based in Africa. Largely for this reasons, the ancestors of Proto- Semitic speakers are now widely believed to have first arrived in the Middle- East from Africa, possibly as part of the operation of the Saharan pump, around the late Neolithic.¹

The Semitic languages, so named in 1781A.L. Schlozer as most of the people who spoke them were the descendants of Shem or Sam the eldest son of Prophet Noah, were spoken in Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine, from which they spread, beginning with the first millennium B.C. into Ethiopia and later into Egypt and northern Africa. The Semitic languages go back to a 'proto- Semitic' language, the general structure of which can be derived from the historically attested features of the various Semitic languages. In all probability Proto- Semitic was at no time a unified language but had dialectal variants. No single Semitic language can be said to be the representative of the Proto- Semitic type. In Phonology one language may come to the closest to the Proto- Semitic type where as for certain morphological features other languages may be considered representatives of it.²

Since the Semitic language goes back to common origin the question of the location of the speakers of this Proto- Semitic language is

¹ . Wikipedia the free encyclopedia.

² . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 8

of importance. Various regions have been so considered as Kurdistan, Mesopotamia, Northern Syria, Arabia and Africa. No definite answer can be given to this question. The like list regions are those of Arabia and Mesopotamia.

The Semitic Family and its Position:

This is the best developed and the best known family of the languages after the Indo- European. Its monuments go back to a very remote antiquity and in the ancient days this family was the most important of the linguistic families of the world, because the people with the greatest political power in those days were the speakers of Semitic languages. Though not possessing any longer the predominant political importance of ancient days this family is even today second only to the Indo- European family of languages. The various Semitic languages have developed religious literature of profound significance in the history of the world. Another important respect of Semitic languages is given the alphabet and the art of writings to the people of the modern world.

Classification of Semitic Languages:

The Semitic languages are classified as North Semitic and South Semitic. North Semitic in turn, is divided into north- east Semitic with Akkadian as its only representative and north- east Semitic which includes Cana'anite. Cana'nite (Hebrew, Moabite, Phoenician), Ugaritic, Amorite and Aramaic and south Semitic is divided into south- east Semitic, including south Arabia and Ethiopic and south west Semitic with Arabia as its representative of these languages, Arabic, Modern South Arabic,

Hebrew, Ethiopic and Aramaic, to a limited extent are still spoken. It is interesting to note that nearly all the Semitic languages continued to be employed as literary languages long after they had ceased to be spoken.¹

The living Semitic languages by number of speakers as follows:

Language	speaker
Arabic	422000000
Amharic	27000000
Tigrinya	6700000
Hebrew	500000
Syriac Aramaic	2105000
Silte	830000
Tigre	800000
Sebat Bet Gurage	440000
Maltese	371900
Modern South Arabia	360000
Inon	280000
Soddo	250000
Harari	21283

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-9

The Semitic languages are a group of related languages, whose living representatives are spoken by more than 467 million people across much of the Middle East, North-Africa and the Horn of Africa. They constitute a branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family, the only branch of that family spoken in both Africa and Asia.

The most widely spoken Semitic language today is Arabic 322 million native speakers' approx 422 million total speakers. It is followed by Amharic 27 million, Tigrinya about 6.7 million and Hebrew about 5 million.

Semitic languages are attested in written form from a very early date, with texts in Eblaite and Akkadian appearing from around the middle of the third millennium BC written in script adapted from Sumerian cuneiform. The other scripts used to write Semitic languages are alphabetic. Among them are the Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, South Arabian and Giez alphabets, Maltese in the only Semitic language to be written in the Latin alphabet and is the only official Semitic language within the European Union.¹

¹ . Wikipedia the free encyclopedia.

Chief Characteristics of Semitic Languages:

Grammar: The Semitic languages share a number of grammatical features, although variation has naturally occurred even within the same language as it evolved through time, such as Arabic from the 6th Century A.D. to the present.

Cases in Nouns and Adjective: The Proto- Semitic three case system (nominative, accusative and genitive) with differing vowel ending (-u-a-i); fully preserved in Quranic Arabia (see 'i' rab), Akkadian and Ugaritic; has disappeared everywhere in many colloquial forms of Semitic languages, although Modern standard Arabic maintains such case ending in literary and broadcasting contexts, an accusative ending- n is preserved in Ethiopian Semitic additionally, Semitic nouns and adjectives had a category of state, the indefinite state being expressed by nunation.

Number in Nouns: Semitic languages originally had three grammatical numbers; singular, dual and plural. The dual continues to be used in contemporary dialects of Arabic as in the name for the nation of Bahrain (bahr 'sea' + ayn 'two') and sporadically in Hebrew (sana means 'one year' sanatayin means 'two years' and sanim means 'years' and sinin means 'years'). The curious phenomenon of broken plurals i.g. in Arabic, sadd 'one dam' vs sudud 'dams' found most profusely in the languages of Arabic and Ethiopia and still common in Maltese, may be partly of Proto-Semitic origins and partly elaborated from simpler origins.

Verb Aspect and Tense: the aspect systems of west and east-Semitic differ substantially. Akkadian preserves a number of features generally attributed to Afro-Asiatic, such as germination indicating the imperfect, while a stative form, still maintained in Akkadian, because a new perfect in west-Semitic. Proto-west-Semitic maintained two main verb aspects; perfect for completed action (with pronominal suffixes) and imperfect for uncompleted action (with pronominal prefix and suffixes). In the extreme case of Neo-Aramaic, however, even the verb conjugations have been entirely reworked under Iranian influence.

Morphology: trilateral roots: a Semitic languages exhibit a unique pattern of streams consisting typically of “trilateral”, or three consonant roots (2 and 4 consonant roots also exist), from which nouns, adjectives and verbs are formed in various ways; e.g. by inserting vowels, doubling consonants and adding prefixes, suffixes or infixes. For instance, the root, k-t-b (dealing with ‘writing’ generally) yields in Arabic.

Semitic and Hamitic: this family is most closely related to the Hamitic; so much so that some philologists are distinctly of opinion that these two families form “One linguistic unity”. It seems indeed, says O’Leary, “That the Semitic group is but one number of a much larger Hamitic family”. The most characteristic features of Semitic languages, viz. trilateral roots is undoubtedly absent in the Hamitic, but a long separation and the influence of foreign idiom might conceivably have broken down the structure of the Hamitic languages. But the points of resemblance are so close that even though few in number they are

“unusually significant”. These points of contact might be enumerated thus.¹

1. The tense system of both families is based upon the fundamental difference of completed and in complete action. The time idea is secondary.
2. The plural suffixes of nouns in both families are probably of common origin.
3. The ‘t’ used as a sign of the feminine, is also characteristic of both.
4. The possession of “grammatical gender” is common to both.
5. The pronouns in both the families are beyond all doubt identical in origin.

These points, though only five in number, are of great importance, the last point particularly might be considered almost conclusive. Pronoun form perhaps the most stable element in a language and they do not change appreciably even after a long interval, in spite of a great deal of foreign influence.

General Characteristics of Semitic Languages:

The modern Semitic languages are dialects have been greatly changed by the influences of other languages with which they have been brought intact. Therefore, these shall not receive any important place in the consideration of the general characters of Semitic languages although they may confirmatory testimony in some particulars. Some of these

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-9

general characteristics of the ancient Semitic languages may well be noted keeping in mind a comparison with other languages especially with the Aryan group, of course, it is not similarities elsewhere but rather that they may fairly be considered general characteristics of the Semitic group as they could not be of any other groups.¹

The Semitic languages divided the letter in two general classes; consonants and vowels, the consonant being the more important and roots are composed only of consonants, which the vowels are used along with consonantal changes to express modifications of the fundamental root idea. Although the vowels are thus important, it is in a domain entirely subordinate to the consonants, the result is that the all languages except the Assyrio- Babylonian and Ethiopic the consonants only were originally written and the vowels added by means of small marks. The most part above or below the consonant. In fact it was only in comparatively late times that the vowels were written at all. The inscription, such as Phoenicia and Senjiri, the Moabite stone and the Sibam inscription have no vowels. In the Assyrio- Babylonian the vowels are expressed but the characters are usually supposed to have been borrowed as already been noted. In the Ethiopic the vowels are expressed by slight change in the form of the consonant, a feature, however, which is probable to be regarded as a late development although going back to the earliest literature. The consonants alone were probably originally written.

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP-1-2

Originally the Semitic languages were characterized by the possession of a large number of gutturals, some of them very peculiar. In course of time, however, part of these was lost by most of the languages, the Arabic preserving them the most fully. The Semitic roots are almost entirely trilateral that is it consists of three consonants. An occasional root is found which contains four or more consonants but these are exceptional. On the other hand, the belief is growing that many of the trilateral roots especially some of the so called weak roots, were originally bilateral. But the tendency of the language, toward trilaterality is seen plainly from the fact that to a large extent these roots have assumed the appearance of trilaterality. The relation between nouns and verbs is very close. In fact most of the features of inflection are the same in both the nouns being the earlier.¹

A prominent characteristic of Semitic languages is the verbal inflection with many similarities in the nouns as well as in the development of many different stems or conjugations from the same root. These are formed partly internal change in consonants and vowels and internal additions and partly by external additions. Thus one stem has an intensive meaning another a causative, another, a reflex etc.

In the original Semitic there must have been many different stems. Some have been lost in such languages. The Ethiopic has preserved the largest number next to the Arabic, then the Assyrian. These stems afford a very concise way of expressing many different shades of meaning

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-20

connected with a single root idea of which would, in most languages require either a compound verb or the addition of separate words for its expression.

The Semitic languages used pronominal suffixes attached to nouns, verb and preposition. There are really shortened forms of the pronouns. With nouns they have force of a generative, with prepositions of a dative and with verbs ordinarily of an objective accusative, the personal stand point of the speaker or writer counts for little.

In the verb, the third person is the simple uninflected form, the starting point of the inflection it is the first person in the Aryan languages. The present time, the time of the speaker or writer is of little importance, is connection with the past and future. The use of the tenses is often based upon an assumption of the stand point other than that of the writer or speaker.

Certain phenomena may be classed together under the general statement that they show a lack of development in the languages. This is not however, due to lack of time or of favoring circumstances, because these features are ordinarily found to characterize in a similar way all the languages at all times and under all circumstances. These phenomena indicate rather psychological characteristics of the people, their natures are not complex, and they show limitation in some directions. Certain developments which are common in Aryan languages the Semitic did not feel to be necessary. Among these characteristics may be mentioned the following.

Most of the Semitic languages have only two tenses, usually called the perfect and the imperfect, where these differed in their fundamental meaning from some of the tense of the Aryan languages is a question on which there is difference of opinion. The later forms of several of the languages developed a present tense from a participle which is only suggested in the earlier usage.

The general, the Semitic tense usage is thus much less fully developed than the Aryan, Moods also are relatively undeveloped. They are found only in connection with the imperfect tense; even the imperative being derived from it and in most of the languages they are not widely used.

The nouns have only two genders masculine and feminine. There is an almost entire absence of compound words, both nouns and verbs, except in proper names.

The Syntax is in many particulars of a simple and undeveloped kind, there is a strong tendency to leave much in the relation of clauses and sentences to inference. This leads to the very frequent use of parataxis. There is but a small number of particles of every kind. In most of the languages the original case endings have been lost but there has been no great development of preposition to take their place. There is also a scarcity of adjectives in most of the languages so that nouns are often used in their stead.¹

¹ . Encyclopedia America, vol. 24, PP- 551-552

Arabic as one of the Semitic Languages:

Arabic is the youngest of the Semitic languages. But it is one of the most important branches of the Semitic family. Being near the centre of distribution of the Semitic languages and in all probability their area of specialization, Arabic is the richest in Semitic form and knowledge of this language is essential for Semitic philology, when the Arabs spread all over the whole of civilized world, Arabic necessarily came into close contact with other languages and thus split up into various modern dialects. Arabic itself had contact with other cultures of the Semitic family. Thus Greek culture came to the Arabs through Syria and Iranian through Mesopotamia and Yemen, in all of which Semitic languages dominated. Hence in spite of foreign cultural contacts the language of Arabia was enabled to preserve its essential Semitic purity and richness and was less affected by the influences than any other of the Semitic languages. The influence of the holy Quran has also been very great in preserving purity of the Arabic tongue.¹

The ancient Arabic divided into Northern and Southern often called classical Arabic and Himyarite respectively. In the Northern dialect the earliest remains consist of a number of inscriptions, the oldest of these is on a tomb of an early Arab chieftain found at En- Namara near Damascus dated A.D. 328. Another inscription has been discovered at Zabd near Apeppo, which has been assigned to A.D. 512.

¹. Nicholson R.A. -A Literary History of the Arabs, Chapter III

The speech of Mecca and other important cities was the Hijaz dialect. It had come under the influence of foreign traders who thronged in Mecca and the Prophet's day, it was not pure. The Najd dialect of the hunter land nomads of the desert had always been noted for its purity. It represented the older form and was almost entirely free from foreign admixture.

Muhammad (PBUH) had been sent amongst these desert nomads to be nursed while yet an infant and there he learns to speak pure desert dialect. The holy Quran emphatically the Prophet's own work when accepted as a standard for all time, set finest example for classical Arabic. This great book has tended more than anything else to preserve the essential fitness of Semitic speech.

As Islam spread, Arabic was carried into Iraq, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. In the Kufa, the early days the main centre of Islam in Iraq was at Kufa, the early Arabic grammarians were living near this centre and as examples of vulgar speech they have often quoted the speech of the lower classes at Kufa. Many of these peculiarities are found in the Arabic of Iraq even today, in the Iraq Arabic there has been a considerable admixture of Iranian Turkish and in recent years from France and Urdu.

In the larger cities of Syria, Damascus and Jerusalem might be distinguished several dialects specially. Borrowing from other languages like Turkish and Greek are found there also. Both in Iraq and Syria considerable literary activity has been going on recently.

Egyptian Arabic has been showing great literary activity during the last fifty years and the great university of Cairo has been the chief fostering centre of Arab tradition learning and research during many countries. Among the dialect that of Sinai marks a sort of transition stage between the Syrian and Hejaz dialects on the one hand and the Egyptian dialects on the other.

The Arabic dialects of North Africa have been such influenced by Hamitic Berbers or Libyan dialects hence there are markedly different from the Arabic of Syria and Egypt. An earlier stage in the development of North African Arabic one group passed into Andalusia in Spain where it gave rise to a very great literature. The Spanish Arabic was the earliest teacher of Europe in arts and sciences and philosophy.¹

Mallese is essentially North African Arabic. But it has been influenced by the Syrian Arabic through the Arab settlers in Sicily. The vocabulary is largely Italian. The dialects of Hadramawth and Uman through geographically in the South are essentially North Arabic in origin.

Arabic is the language of some 108,000,000 people inhabiting south west Asia. It is spoken in a number of dialects but the written language or modern literary Arabic is the same throughout this vast area. It is the language used in books, news papers, mass communication and broad casting.

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-19

These facts and figures about the population and the Arabic speaking world providing the background against which this book has been prepared from the Arabic press has been designed to serve two fields purpose; first as a reader for students of one type of modern Arabic newspaper and second as a working guide to the progress of the Arabs state in a number of field and human endeavor chiefly, social and economic, during the decade 1957-67. The book has been arranged so that the Arabic text and the English translation are on facing pages.

The pioneer of the modern Arabic press in the main Syro-Lebanese and Egyptian and the centres of Arab Journalism were and indeed, still are Cairo and Beirut, though today. One quality the Arabic press was of course helped by new techniques and methods imported from outside and the training of news personal in Europe and America. As popular education increased in the various Arab countries different level, the press expanded its activities.

Today no Arab country is without its daily press, however in adequate or insignificant it may be. And most towns of any size have local publication. Many of the journals are of a high standard and well written; others are little more than propaganda sheets, or merely reflect in one way or the other the views of those who at any given time happen to wield power. The degree of independence enjoyed by the Arabic press in the various countries that go to make up the Arab is too controversial a topic to find a place for discussion in the introduction to an Arabic language

reader. It will be observed by the readers of this book that items of a purely political nature have been deliberately excluded.¹

List of some Newspapers and Journals:

1. Al- Ahd al-Farid (الاحد الفريد) daily, Baghdad
2. Saut al Arab (صوب العرب) daily, Baghdad
3. Al- Al- Zaman, (الزمان) daily, Baghdad
4. Al-Arab (العرب) daily, Baghdad
5. Al-Hayat (الحياة) daily, Beirut
6. Al-Anwar (الأنوار) daily, Beirut
7. Al- Ahram (الأهرام) daily, Cairo
8. Al-Akbar (الأكبر) daily, Cairo
9. Al- Nadwa (الندوة) daily, Mecca
10. Al- Ba'th al- Islami (البعث الإسلامي) quarterly, Lucknow

Arabic Language and its Position (اللغة العربية):

Arabic is the first and foremost language of human being because it is the language of paradise. The following statement may be a proper example of it.

أحبوا العرب ثلاث، فإني عربي والقرآن عربي ولسان أهل الجنة عربي-
(رواه البيهقي)

¹ . H.M. Nahmad - A Language Reader in Economic and Social Affairs, London, PP- 9-10

(You should love Arabic for three reasons: 1. I belonged to Arabia
2. the Quran is in Arabic and 3. it is the language of the dwellers of
Paradise)

Dr. Shafiq Ahmad Khan Nadwi says on the position of Arabic
language as:

"اللغة العربية هي من أهم اللغات العالمية الحية وأعرقها منذ القدم، ولغة حياة
لأكثر من مئتي مليون من العرب في 21 دولة عربية، ولغة فكر وثقافة وروح وعبادة
لأكثر من مليار وربع من المسلمين يشكلون ربع البشرية تقريبا يستخدمونها في
صلواتهم ويرددونها بها خمس مرات على الأقل يوميا في كافة أنحاء المعمورة،
ويعتزون بها ويعتبرونها شرفا ومفتاحا لسعادة الدنيا والآخرة. إنها لغة من لغات عمل
مؤسسات جمعية الأمم المتحدة باعتبارها أعظم اللغات البشرية كفاءة، وأكثرها
مرونة، وأقدرها على التعبير عن مختلف فنون القول، وذلك بناء على خواصها على
اللغوية وأصولها الإيقاعية وخصب مناهجها في الاشتقاق وقياسية أوزانها، وشدة
حرصها على جمال الأسباب وأنواع مهووعة من البلاغة والبيان، وسعة صدرها
للتعريب وصياغة المصطلحات العصرية إلى جانب مكانتها الاجتماعية الدولية
وقدرتها الاقتصادية وأهميتها السياسية المعروفة".¹

Arabic (العربية - arabiyyah - singular masculine, عربي) means the language of the ancient Arabs- classical or
singular feminine) means the language of the ancient Arabs- classical or
literary.² Arabic is the most wide spread living representative of the

¹ . Dr. Muhammad Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, -Al-Tawasil al-Hadhari al-A'lami: al-Hind wa Iran Namuzijan, Kuwait University, Part-I, 2007, P-282

² . Cawan J.M. – A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic 3rd edn New York, P- 601

family of Semitic languages. It was by the Arab conquests in the 7th Century and the later migration of wandering tribes and is spoken today by the people of Iraq, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, most of North Africa and the Northern Sudan. Fariq has mentioned that Arabic belonged to the Semitic group who lived at one home land where they spoken on language.¹ But when the Semites immigrated to new countries they began to speak the local languages as a result of which languages changed partially or fully under the impact of the languages current in their new homes.²

Arabic as a language of trade and Islamic culture and religion, has wide spreading influence. The area, in which Arabic language is spoken extends from central Africa and Middle- East into the Soviet Union and Indonesia, the Arabs definitely belonged to Semitic group which was scattered over the whole of Asia.³

Al though all Arabic speaking people are called Arabs, they include many millions who are descending from races such as Copts in Egypt and Berbers in North- West Africa; while in some people are found to have used their own dialect, which is a bit difficult to understand, so there is one common written language which is identical in all countries from Morocco to Baghdad. This is based on classical Arabic, the written Arabic of the Middle Ages when Arabic was the universal language of the near and Middle- East.⁴

¹ . Oxford Junior Encyclopedia, vol. 4, P- 30

² . Fariq K. – A History of Arabic Literature, P- 22

³ . A New Standard Encyclopedia, vol. 8, P- 62

⁴ . Huart. C. – History of Arabic Literature, PP- 4-5

Arabic has occupied an important position all over the Muslim World by virtue of its being the language of the Holy Quran as well as the Hadith (Tradition) and the prayer of Islam. It has also served as the vehicle of literature extending from Pre- Islamic period up to the modern times. It is also the principal medium of scientific and philosophical thought for some centuries as it has left much influence over the languages of Europe, especially in chemical and astronomical terms such as alcohol, elixir, azimuth and Nader.¹

The present Arabic has developed out of its two forms: The South Arabic and the North Arabic. Differences in grammar, vocabulary and script are found in these two forms. South Arabic is known today only through inscription and North Arabic is known as Arabic language.²

P.K. Hitti observes that about 4,000 inscriptions related to South Arabic language are found at present, through which it was come to light that South Arabic had twenty nine letters of alphabet. This shows the richness and the standard of progress of the Arabic language in its early stage. On the other hand the decay of Yemeni culture, South Arabic disappeared and North Arabic occupied its place.³

Several states existed in North Arabia and Nabataea Kingdom which extended, for some times, to Damascus, used Arabic language as an everyday language and their cursive script developed in the third Century

¹ . Oxford Junior Encyclopedia, vol. 4, P- 31

² . New Encyclopedia, vol. 2, P- 188

³ . Hitti P.K. – History of the Arabs. PP- 51-52

of our Era and proved to be the precursor of the script of North Arabic language, the Arabic of the Quran and that of the present day.¹

The classical Arabic (العربية الكلاسيكية) is called the Arabic language which used for all written purposes and for certain formal types of speaking, is the Arabic of the Holy Quran and the classical language of Pre- Islamic period.

Al though the classical Arabic is relatively uniform in the Arabic World having minor difference in vocabulary and syntax in different regions, the colloquial is into various dialect are as with multifarious divergence in sound, grammar and vocabulary. With the spread of literary advancement in the Arab World the classical Arabic is becoming more and widely known as a result which thinkers and leaders hope that the classical or the middle language (اللغة الوسطة) will be eventually a common spoken language of Arabs, preserving essential features of the classical with some changes introduced from colloquial form.²

The Standard Arabic (اللغة العربية الفصحى):

By language specialists the written Arabic language is classified as:

1. Classical Arabic: the language of the Holy Quran and early Islamic Arabic Literature.
2. Middle Arabic: a generic term for Pre- Modern post Classical efforts to write classical Arabic, characterized by frequent hyper

¹ . Alam Zafar- Education in Early Islamic Period. P- 15

² . Encyclopedia Britannica vol. 2, P- 184

corrections and occasional lapse into more colloquial usage, not a spoken language.

3. Modern standard Arabic: Modern literary (nonnative) language used in formal media and written communication throughout the Arab World, differing from classical Arabic mainly in numerous neologisms for concepts not found in Medieval times, as well as in occasional calques on idioms from western languages.
4. Numerous Modern Arabic spoken dialects: roughly divided by the Anthologies into Eastern Arabic dialects and Arabic peninsular dialects.

Distinctive Features of Arabic Language:

Phonology: The second system of Arabic language is quite different from that of English and other languages of Europe and Asia. It includes six throat consonants (ح، خ، غ، ف، ق، ه) of particular difficulty for speakers of English and a series of emphatic consonants (ظ، د، ث، ت) which influence strongly the pronunciation of the surrounding vowels; these are three short and three long vowels viz. a- i- u, a- i- u (أ، ع، ي). Arabic words start with a single consonant followed by a vowel but long vowels are rarely followed by more than a single consonant and there are never more than two consonants together.¹

Morphology: An Arabic word consists of two parts: 1. The root which generally consists of the consonants and provides the basic lexical

¹ . Encyclopedia Britannica vol. 1, P- 509

meaning of the word and 2. The pattern which generally consists of vowels inter locked with the root consonants and gives the more specific grammatical meaning of the word. Thus the word 'kitab' (كتاب) consists of the root k- t -b (ك- ت- ب) which has do with writing and the pattern a-i 'katib' (كاتب) which identifies the active participle; the word 'katib' means one who writes especially often a 'clark'. In addition to the primary words the stem of which consists of root plus pattern (i.e. katib, kitab, uktub), there are directive word; the stem of which contain an additional element such as a soubling of the second root consonant 'sharib' (شارب) one who drinks to excess) or an infix after the first root consonant. The Arabic language also makes use of prefixes and suffixes which act as subject makers, pronouns, prepositions and the definite article.

Conjugation: In conjugation verbs in Arabic are always regular and are having two tenses: the perfect formed by the addition of suffixes which is often used to express past time and the imperfect formed by the addition of prefixes and sometimes containing suffixes indicating number and gender which is often used for expressing present or future time. In addition to two tenses there are imperative forms and active participle, a passive participle and a verbal noun. Verbs are inflected for the three persons, three numbers (singular, dual and plural) and two genders (masculine and feminine). In classical Arabic there is no dual form and no gender differentiation of the first person and the modern dialects have lost all dual form for the passive voice.

Pronouns: There are three cases (nominative, genitive and accusative) in the declensional system of classical Arabic nouns; nouns are no longer declined in the modern dialects. Pronouns occur both as suffixes and as independent words.¹

Syntax: This dichotomy in case and mood made it possible for Arabic language to a much more flexible and delicate mechanism of expression that is found in the Semitic languages. In place of staccato coordination of short phrases there is a modulated flow of speech, precisely and organically graded with such capacity for expressing shades of meaning as enabled Arabic to become a medium of philosophical thought. To this there contributed also the logical arrangement of words in the sentences and another morphological invention the formation of abstract nouns and generalization in rhetoric and poetry. Another notable feature of Arabic language is that with all the richness, it relatively remained free from admixture. The recognizable loan words in Classical Arabic are restricted to certain limited categories, although several words are incorporated and adjusted to Arabic structure from earliest times as happened again in the Middle Ages is still going on.²

Richness of Arabic Vocabulary: Arabic has a vast vocabulary. According to Fariq "It has an over abundance of words of varying shades of meaning and each of its verbs can be moulded into dozen of new forms such as it has sixteen synonyms for the moon, thirty four for the rain, twenty one for the light fifty two for darkness, fifty for the cloud, ninety

¹ . Encyclopedia Britannica vol. 2, P- 185

² . Chamber's Encyclopedia, P- 508

one for long and one thousand and sixty for short. It has separate names for every hour of night and over a dozen for the twang of the bow.¹

Bringing all the characteristic features of Arabic language into account, the linguistic thinkers and leaders have spread that it is the leading languages of the world and it has occupied an international position similar to that of English at the present time. People of different countries spoken or wrote it in Asia, Africa, Europe and Mediterranean countries. It is the language of a vast literature, politics, culture, history, biography, geography, medicine, economics, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, music, chemistry, physics, botany, optics and profane literatures besides the religious and legal science of the Muslims. The foundation of modern civilization and its scientific development rests to considerable extent on the literature of the Arabic languages.² Nicholson says, “During the middle ages Arabic was spoken and written by all cultivated Muslims of whatever nationality they may be, from the Indus to the Atlantic. It was the language of the court and the church, of law and commerce, of Diplomacy and literature and science”.³

The French savant Ernst Renan, after summing up astonishing intellectual of Arabia in the 6th Century A.D., remarks, “Of the features presented by this unexpected appearance of a new consciousness in mankind, the strongest and most inexplicable is perhaps the Arabic language itself. This language unknown before, suddenly displays itself to

¹ . Fariq, K.- A History of Arabic Literature, P- 26

² . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 31

³ . Nicholson R.A.- A Literary History of the Arabs, P- xxiv

us all its perfection, with its flexibility and its infinite richness. So completely developed that form that time to our own it has undergone no important change for it, there is no childhood no old age, once, its appearance and its prodigious conquests have been described there is nothing more to be said about it. It do not know if one could find another example of a form of speech coming into the world as this one did, without an archaic phase without intermediate stages or tentative adjustment".¹

Arabic Literature:

The Arabic term for literature is 'adab' (أدب) which is derived from the root word 'adab' (أدب) which means persistence, persevence, tirelessness.² The Arabic term 'al- lughah al-Arabiah' (اللغة العربية) means Arabic Language, hence 'Adabul Lughah al-Arabiah' (أدب اللغة العربية) will mean Arabic literature in the literal sense of the term. A quotation available in the Encyclopedia of literature has extended the hands of assistance for clarifying the significant meaning of the literature which runs as; Nallino suggested that the term 'adab' for literature implies the sense of 'adab' steady work, continued striving. But the word can note what Goldziher earlier had designated as the noble and human tendency of the character and its manifestation in the conduct of life and inter course. Equally arresting are those definitions that make artistic expression equal to two thirds religious or that esteem knowledge of

¹ . Chamber's Encyclopedia, P- 508

² . E.A.E. - The Dictionary English Arabic, P - 15

literature as a process leading to an intellectual culture of a higher realm of philology, poetry, exegesis and ancient history.

Following the period of urbanization (632-750A.D.) and the gradual increase of secular composition under Persian, a more specialized application of the term literature gained acceptance. When the holy Quran, Hadith and Jurisprudence were treated as science, belles-letters, skill in sports and games were recognized as part of the literary art 'adab' curricula of adab schools, include course on literary criticism and history in addition to the old subject of grammar, calligraphy, lexicology, poetic rhetoric, theory of style and logic in Arabic literature.¹

Arabic literature begins with the poems and proverbs of the northern Arabia in the 5th & 6th Century A.D. of written literature before the redaction of the holy Quran nothing is known. Arabic literature as an extent works dates from the early 6th Century. The literature has continued since in both what is still in the Arab World and in medieval times, Persian, Spain and Sicily.

Though historical evidence to establish the earliest existence of Arabic literature is not available but Arabic poetry makes its appearance in such a developed form and in such a well evolved language that each and every body can say without hesitation that it must have had long carrier of growth before the fifth Century. Arabic literature may be

¹ . Encyclopedia Britannica vol. I, PP- 20- 21

classified age wise such as Pre- Islamic, Early Islamic and Modern Arabic literature.¹

Pre- Islamic Arabic Literature:

Pre- Islamic Arabic Literature that has come down to us belongs to a period of about a Century and a half before Islam.² It has been so because we do not possess any literature of an earlier age nor we have any historical evidence to establish its earlier existence.

The Pre- Islamic Arabic literature unlike other literatures of the world had not been recorded when and as it grew. This accounted for by the fact that the Arabs were by and large, an unlettered and nomadic people with no association with reading and writing. Whatever they deemed worthy of preservation, was retained in memory. In other words the Arabs kept their history, genealogy and poetry alive by oral transmission and since memory was their main stay, they took great interest in developing its retentive power. A good memory therefore, happened to be national characteristic of the Pre- Islamic Arabs. Besides dependence on memory many tribes, sub-tribes and classes had also professionals who preserved their national disciplines.

¹ .Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 33

² . Fariq, K. -A History of Arabic Literature, P- 29

The pre- Islamic Arabic literature chiefly consists of poetry literature and prose literature, which are found to have preserved by oral tradition from 500-622A.D.¹

Poetry Literature in Pre- Islamic Period:

Nicholson has observed that the Pre- Islamic poems which have come down to us belong to the Century preceding Islam. These poems were preserved by oral tradition for hundreds of years and were committed to writing by the Muslim scholars between 750- 900 A.D. it is a fact that the language of these poems is one and same.² In his another book he says that oldest form of poetical speech in Arabia was rhyme without metre (saj) which later on because only a rhetorical ornament, the distinguishing mark of eloquence whether spoken or written adopted by poets, Sooth Sayers etc. from the metre (saj) there developed the 'rajaz' (an irregular iambic metre) and from the 'rajaz' other forms of poetry.³ In form and content the poems of the Pre- Islamic period fall into two groups on one hand there are the occasional poems of form 2 to 20 lines called out principally by the emotion of war or revenge, praise of his own tribe and satire of its enemies, were really the original functions of the primitive poets. Another impotent position was occupied by elegies for which a number of poetesses, notable Khansa, are specially famed. Distinct from these poems is the elaborate ode (قصيدة) of from 60 to 100

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-34

² . Nicholson R.A. - A Literary History of the Arabs, P- xx

³ . O.pcit, P-39

lines. In the opening verses of these odes the poet is supposed to be a journey. He halts at deserted camping ground whose ruined relics, recalls the memory of an ancient passion and tells of his love and the sorrows of his partings. In course of his journey, he compares his riding beasts with some wild animals of the desert. The natural account of the chase introduced in this connection, form the most attractive part of the poems. His journey, at last leads to the occasion of the poem which may be praise of his tribe or of his own gallantry description of camel or desert life or panegyric of some patron in whose honour the poem has been composed and from whom the poet expects a reward.¹

The compositions of these odes were carried out through oral transmission over a period of from 150 to 250 years by a class of professional reciters. The poems attributed to the early bards have come down to us in two kinds such as diwans (collected poetical works of the individual poets) and in particular of all the principal bards- Imraul Qays, Zuhair, Nabigha, Asha, Tarafa, Labit, etc. in addition, the diwan of several minor poets have been edited Lyall's edition with translation of Abit- Ibnal-Abras, deserves special mention among many other poets of whom only a few pieces survive to robber poets and outlaws Tabbat Sharra and Shanfara are specially celebrated and the poems attributed to them breath in magnificent language a courage and hardy hard rarely even equaled in any literatures.²

¹ . Nicholson R.A. - A Literary History of the Arabs, P- 39

² . Dr. Ali C.M. -A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-35

Besides these two robber poets or brigand poets, there was another poet called Arwat bin al Warud, though he is counted as brigand poet, he was full of humanism. Hazrat Muwayia praised saying that ibn al- Warud helped the oppressed. Communicated or the poor and he refrained from oppressing the weak.¹ Abu Tamman's famous anthology namely 'Diwanul Hamasa' denotes the virtues most highly prized by the Arab bravery in battles, patience in misfortunes, persistence, in revenge, protection of the weak and defiance of the strong. The Mufaddaliyat compiled by Mufaddal Dabbi (d. 786 A.D) comprising 128 odes, has become a rich stock of Arabic literature in Pre- Islamic Age. Another prominent stock of Pre- Islamic Arabic literature is Saba' Muallaqat (سبع معلقات) (seven hung up odes) the collection called Muallaqat contains seven Pre- Islamic odes by seven famous bards. These Muallaqat are still honoured throughout the Arabic speaking world as master piece of poetical composition. Each of these odes was awarded the year's prize at the fair of 'Ukaz' (عكاظ) and was inscribed in golden letters and suspend on the wall of the house Ka'ba.² That is why these odes are called Muallaqat. The poets of these famous odes may be mentioned as 1. Imraul Qays 2. Zuhair bin Abi Sulma 3. Tarafa bin al Abd 4. Labit bin al Rabia' 5. Antarah bin Shadad 6. Amar bin Kulthum and 7. Harith bin Hilliza.

¹ . Nadwi M.U.A - jaziratul Arab, P- 183

² . Dr. Ali C.M. -A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-36

The Anthologies:

"الشعر دوان العرب" 'The poetry is the Register of the Arabs'. All the records were recorded through poetry in the ancient Arabs. There was not any prose in ancient time. The Quran is the first prose literature in Arabic. Poets and poems were honoured by the ancient Arabs.

Old Arabic poetry dated from several centuries before the birth of Muhammad (PBUH) the Prophet of Islam, on account of the annual gathering of all Arab tribes of Mecca and the baric contests held Arabic poetry soon assumed a 'National' character and the greatest honour an Arab poet could win was to have his poem installed in the sacred percents of the Ka'ba,¹ which is Muallaqat. The Muallaqat are seven in number. These Muallaqat are still honoured throughout the Arabic speaking world as master piece of poetical composition.

The Muallaqat (plural number of Muallaqah, derived from the root word 'ilqun' (علق) meaning hanging) which is the title conferred upon a collection of seven odes by 1. Imraul Qays 2. Zuhair bin Abi Sulma 3. Tarafa bin al Abd 4. Labit bin al Rabia' 5. Antarah bin Shadad 6. Amar bin Kulthum and 7. Harith bin Hilliza. To these Qasidas another two odes composed by al- Nabigha al- Zubiani are sometimes added. The compiler of this anthology was probably Hammad al-Rawiya, a famous rhapsodist

¹ . Nicholson R.A. - A Literary History of the Arabs, P- III

of Persian descent, who flourished under the Ummayyads and died in the second half of the eight of our Era.¹

Prose Literature in the Pre- Islamic Period:

So far as the prose literature of Pre- Islamic period is concerned there is no evidence to suggest its existence with written form. The oral character of the Pre- Islamic literature gave Pre- Islamic prose a deep anecdotal tinge. It did not have the form of a continuous and long narrative but was made up of short, independent pieces of information called rivaya (traditions) and handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Each tradition enumerated its starting in a descending order, the names of those who had transmitted it form is its source. On the rise of Islam the Muslims took to conquests in and outside Arabia, as such many of them who remembered the Pre- Islamic prose as well as poetry, were killed in the wars and with them a good deal of literature perished. Yet a considerable prose literature was still available in the form of hundreds and thousands of traditions when the codification of knowledge began in sporadic form during the Umayyad period. These traditions served as the raw materials for the edifice of Pre- Islamic prose literature. The work of its collection classification and compilation belongs partly to the Umayyad but chiefly to the early Abbasid period (749-864 A.D.) the Pre- Islamic prose literature based on history, genealogy and belles-

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP- 59- 60

letters or light literature consisting of stories, tales descriptions, proverbs and maxims.¹

The language of Pre- Islamic prose corresponded with the themes of its own; the prose of the seers was almost invariably couched in short rhyming sentences, full of odd words, sometimes breathing an air of obscurity, the prose of speeches delivered in the presence of the princess in literary competitions and on the occasions of glorifications by the Arabs of their fore- fathers was also high flown, often with phrases of matching rhyme that added little of the sense, Idioms, figures of speech, verses and proverbs also figured in the speakers to render them more impressive.

Besides these there survived, in the Pre- Islamic period, wisdom literature, tradition has handed down the lilts of a number of wise men and women of the Jahiliya such as Aktham ibn syfi, Hajib ibn Zurara and Hind, the daughter of al- Khus, we may find the specimens of this Pre- Islamic wisdom literature in the *Maj ma'al Amthal* by al Maydsny (d. 1124 A.D.) and in the *Amthal* by al- Arab of Mufaddal al- Dabbi (d. 786 A.D.).²

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-65

² . Hitti P.K. -History of the Arabs, New York, P- 91

Poetry Literature in the Early Islamic Period:

Poetry Literature in the early Islamic period consisted mostly of poetry composed on Islamic feelings. The Prophet of Islam and his first four caliphs did not ignore poetry literature totally excepting that part which had inciting, glorifying, satirical content. There is sufficient proof to show that he and his four caliphs liked good poetries. Ata bin al-Hadhrami, the future conquered of Bahrain, was asked by the Prophet to recite poems.

Prophet (PBUH) happened to accompany many of his compositions who exchanged poetic recitation and sometimes discussed Pre-Islamic topics while the Prophet listened and smiled with them.¹ About a dozen of poets, who attached to the Prophet, championed the cause of Islam and sometimes praised him in simple terms. Amongst them namely Hasan bin Thabit, Ka'b bin Malik and Abdullah bin Rawa were most ardent and constant defenders of Islam. Hasan bin Thabit celebrated the Prophet and Islam in manner of a Pre-Islamic poet celebrating lord and tribe, while the continuance of the Jahiliya manner into Islamic time suggests that the claims of Islam and the factors within it roused something of the same responses as the earlier tribal disputes.² A tradition suggests that all the first caliphs were poets with Hazrat Ali at the top but they were not professional poets at all. They recited the verses of other poets or their own only to lend vigour and poignancy of their words.

¹ . Fariq, K. - A History of Arabic Literature, P- 30

² . Cassell's Encyclopedia of Literature. P- 30

It appears from various sources that poetry literature was also in vogue along with the Quran and Hadith literature in the early Islamic period. According to Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 A.D.) the most of the learned among the first Muslims who excelled in the religious or intellectual science were non-Arabs. At that time the Arabs did not know the way by which learning is thought of the art of composing books and of the means where by knowledge is unregistered. Those who could repeat the Quran and relate the Hadith were called the readers. This oral transmission continued up to the days of Harun al-Rashid (786-809 A.D.) who caused the Hadith to be set down in writing. Meanwhile the purity of the Arabic language gradually became impaired, hence arose the science of grammar and the rapid progress of law and Divinity thought about other sciences like logic and dialects which were chiefly cultivated by the Persian Scholars.¹

During the forty years beginning with the migration of the Prophet to Medina and the assassination of Hazrat Ali in 660 A.D both poetry and prose thrived. The struggle of Prophet against the Quraish and other enemy tribes followed by the ridda wars in the caliphate of Abu Bakr and wars of conquest and expansion in that of Umar, the rise of dissensions among the Muslims during the regime of Uthman and civil wars in that of Hazrat Ali produced a rich harvest of poetry. The poetry was not dull or artificial and situations, joys and sorrows. Though the bulk of it did not survive owing to non-preservation numerous specimens of it exist in historical and belletristic works such as *sirat al-Nabi* by Ibn Hisham,

¹ . Ibn Khaldun - *Muqaddama*, Beirut 1900, P- 543

Tarikh al- Umar by al- Tabari, al- Iktifa by al- Kalajj al- Balansi and al- Aghani by Abul Faraj al- Isfahani. Much of these poetries were produced in towns or on the battle fields by non- professional poets. Those who had been pursuing it as a profession from Pre-Islamic period are entitled as Mukhadrim poets. They continued to cultivate the poetic art panyrists of the town and desert patrons.

A lot of poetries during this period can be called Islamic because it contained idea introduced by Islam such as the Unity of Allah, His power, majesty and glory or condemned pre-Islamic practices such as idolatry, superstitions and pre- judices or advocated virtues recommended by Islam, such as fear of Allah, unity restrain, justice and fair play.

Among the Mukhadrim poets the most famous poets are Hasan bin Thabit, al- Khansa, Ka'b bin Zuhair, al- Hutaia etc. they occupied an illustrious position in Mukhadrim literature.¹

Similarity with Quranic Language:

The Pre-Islamic poetry as a whole possesses a large number of proverbs and maxims of that age. It bears ample testimony of different dialogues. The holy Quran was revealed in those dialogues and in order to realize the holy Quran assisted very much. The style and purity of this poetry becomes the light house of those later poets. The Pre- Islamic poetry has come down to us through many collections such as Muallaqat, Diwanul Hamasa, Diwanul Buhtari, Mufaddaliyyat, Kitabul Aghani etc.

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP-76-77

which edited by different commentators for its literary excellence. The Pre- Islamic poetry is a valuable treasury of Arabic literature. It offers a rich mind to the students of Arabic poetry. The foreign commentators are greatly surprised observing its manifold beauty and charm. It is unparalleled not only in historical field but also in that of world literature.¹

In the Pre- Islamic period, there was no written code, no legal sanction, no kingship, no government and no ministry but the tribal heads and Bedouins were spirited members of the respective tribes. All these were revealed in poetry vividly. Therefore, poetry is considered as the history of the pagan age (الشعر ديوان العرب). It was recorded all the movements of the desert life even the Geographical position of the trade centres and their climate. The routes and important places were also recorded in their poetries.

Early Islamic Arabic Literature:

The Arabic literature of this period began with the Prophet Hood of Muhammad (PBUH) in 622 A.D. who gave a new shape and direction to it. The early Islamic Arabic literature comprises absolutely, the Quran, the Hadith, Poetry, Tafsir, Fiqh, History and Prose.

The Holy Quran: it is the widely professed belief of every Muslims of the world that the Holy Quran is a collection of divine message conveyed to the Prophet through the Angel Gabriel. It was

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP-64-65

revealed part by part for a period of about twenty three years. It consists of one hundred and fourteen chapters of which ninety three chapters were revealed in about thirteen years at Mecca and twenty one in the remaining ten years at Medina where he had emigrated from his native land (Mecca). The Holy Quran, undoubtedly, stands as a great land mark in Arabic literature.¹ Some reliable sources inform us that the rules and faith which the Prophet had laid down were collected by Abu Bakr, the first caliph, after his death and published by Uthman, the third caliph and constituted the Quran.² Another source as regards the collection and compilation of the Quran, suggests that Abu Bakr on the recommendation of Umar, the second caliph, who had observed that the Quran memorizers were becoming extinct, ordered that the scattered portions of the Quran be collected. Zaid bin Thabit, the former secretary of the Prophet, was entrusted with the work of collecting and compiling the Quran, fragments from ribs of palm leaves and tablets of white stone and from the breasts of men were collected together and a text was constituted in the caliphate of Uthman (644-656 A.D.) differences in reading arose due to the defective nature of Kufic script, so Uthman appointed Zaid ibn Thabit, a chairman of revision committee in 651 A.D. Abu Bakr's copy kept in the custody of Hufsa, used as a basic. The original codex of the new version was kept in Medina; three copies of this text were made and forwarded to the three military camps of Damascus, Basra and Kufa and all other were destroyed, Uthman finding divergent readings in Arabia, Syria and Iraq

¹ . Hitti P.K. History of the Arabs, New York, P- 96

² . The New Gresham World Encyclopedia, Delhi 1991, P- 123

colonized the Medina codex and ordered all others for destroyed.¹ “The text was finally fixed by the two vizirs- Ibn Maqlah and Ibn Isa in 933A.D. with the help of the learned Ibn Mujahid”.

The holy Quran, the book of Islam, being a piece of Arabic literature occupies a unique position which no other book in the world has ever been able to do so. It was with the Quran that Arabic has been a power full language and is spoken in many countries of the present world.²

The Quran has enabled the people of many countries to have Arabic as their mother tongue and has produced a literature which is the basis of the culture of powerful nations from one end of the world to the other. Its language is rhymed but never poetical. Appreciating the literary merit of the Quran, Nikhil Sen remarks, “The Quran is the model of ancient Arabic literature”.³ The Quran is the earliest and ever since remains the model prose work, the rhymed prose style of the Quran has set the standard which almost every conservative Arabic writers of modern age consciously strives to imitate, Hitti remarks, “Its literary influence may be appreciated when we realize that it was solely due to it that the various dialects of the Arabic speaking people have not fallen apart into distinct languages as have the Romance languages”.⁴

¹ . Ibid, P- 23

² . Hanifi M.A. – A Survey of the Muslim Institutions and Cultures, Delhi, 1992

³ . Sen N. -Asian Sahitya, Calcutta, P- 285

⁴ . Dr.Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 68

While speaking about the various literary contribution of the holy Quran, Fariq says, “The Quran became the nucleus of all the religious and philological science of the jurisprudence (علم الفقه), the science of inheritance (علم الفرائض), the science of rhetoric (علم البيان) and the science of the figure of speech (علم البديع). It indirectly influenced other branches of the literature. It preserved and standardized the Arabic language and literature”.¹

The information from Encyclopedia of literature, while summing up the contribution of the Quran, suggests, “Its primacy in Arabic literature and the history of the world thought is beyond computation. It is inherent in itself that is in what it meant to the Arabic and Muslims and in the nature of the revolution that it set in motion, Arabic grammar, lexicography, history, tradition, exegesis and theology owe their inception to the central interest in the book of Allah”.² According to the source the Quran is unsurpassed in majesty and aural beauty the book is the centre of Arabic literary and educational tradition; the study of the Quran and its language created the study of certain Arabic literature as ancillary and it has fixed the written language as an unchanged from paying little regard to divergences of spoken form.³

Above all, the Quran supplies the most authentic materials for writing history of different periods of the world. It is the most potent as well as the unique production in the world’s literature. The greatness of its

¹ . Fariq, K. - A History of Arabic Literature, P- 132

² . Encyclopedia Britannica vol. I, P-24

³ . Cassell’s Encyclopedia of Literature vol. I, P-30

meanings, sublimity in its style, suppleness off its language and sincerity of its expression are unsurpassed until now. It is the only book to deal with various subjects, political, social, economical, religious, judicial etc.¹

In short, the Quran, as a piece of literature, contributes much to the development of Arabic language and literature to a great extent and becomes truly the mother of all branches of Arabic literature. The language of the Quran is universally accepted as the most perfect from of Arabic tongue. At the same time, we must not forget that the acknowledged claim of the Quran to be the words of Allah, have made it impossible for any Muslim to criticize to work and it has become the standard by which other literary compositions have to be judge.²

According to another source, the Quran, the first great work of Arabic prose, occupied a paradoxical position in literary history, the fact that it was as divine revelation mean that it was above both criticism and imitation, any attempt to use it as model would have been regarded as sacrilege. Yet it was so basic to the whole Islamic thoughts that its styles, rhythms, and phraseology penetrated the sub consciousness of every Arabic writer.³

¹ . Hughes T.P. -Dictionary of Islam, New Delhi, 1977, P- 20

² . T&H. - The World of Islam, London,1976, P- 156

³ . Dr. Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-9

The Hadith (الحديث النبوي):

The next literary source of Arabic literature in the early Islamic period is the Hadith (Saying of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) of Islam). The Hadith or the Saying of the Prophet has undoubtedly been the secondary religious as well as literary in the Muslim world, while defining the Hadith Fariq says, “By Hadith is meant all that the Prophet said or did or approved. It comprehends the whole range of the Prophet’s private and public life such as his behests, religious practices, his dealings with men and women, his wars agreements and correspondences”¹.

While defining the Hadith al- Tibrizi says, “Hadith originally means a piece of news, a tale, a story or a report relating to present or past event. In the technical sense it stands for the report of the words and deeds, approved or disapproved of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).”²

The Quran is the fountain head of Muslim Laws and is absolute as well as final authority in all cases relating to Islamic laws, but Hadith as we told above, constitutes the secondary source of the Muslim Laws. It has already been accepted by all the Jurists that Sunnah ‘سنة’ (the activities of the Prophet) completes and explains the Quran. The Muslims consider the Quran and the Hadith as two factors out worldly equal in importance, distinctly to fix the rules of religious life.³

¹ . Fariq, K. - A History of Arabic Literature, P- 135

² . Tibrizi Oliuddin – Miskatul Masabih Translated by AH Siddique, vol. I New Delhi, 1984, P- xiv

³ . Dr.Ali C.M. –A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P- 70

So long as the Prophet was alive the Muslims did not feel the necessity of collecting the Hadith as because they had the fortune to meet up all the problems by discussing the Prophet. Different Hadith rested in the memory and writings of different companions which were of very irregular nature and it was also impossible for any companion to know all the Hadith of the Prophet. Moreover, the Prophet did not like his Sayings to be recorded as the writings of the Quran (which were being operated) might have been mingled with the Hadith. The death of the Prophet caused his companions to spread abroad world, as a result the people of one place did not get the benefit of all the Sayings of the Prophet, because it rested piece meal with different individual, then scattered in various places, so there arose the necessity of collection of all the Hadith from different traditionists so that the general people might get the benefit of all the Hadith.

With the spread of the Muslim Empire over different territories, there arose various political administrative and judicial problems among the Muslims. They tried to solve all those problems through the dictates of the Quran. But the Quran deals only with the broad principles and there are many problems for which there are no references in the Quran. For example the two most important religious order of Islamic Prayer salah 'صلاة' and zakah 'زكاة' have only got mention in the Quran but no detail can be had from it. So, for performing these two items, the Muslims had to follow the Saying of the Prophet who gave everything in details.

For the development of the Hadith literature, various centres came into existence. Among them the Hijazi and Iraqi schools of Hadith have rendered valuable services to the development of Hadith literature. A Syrian school grew up at Damascus whose leader was Imam al- Sha'bi but it was not so famous and popular.

The Hadith is also regarded as one of the most important sources of Islamic history. The study of Hadith and its methods of collection gave a great impetus to the growth and development of Muslim historiography. In fact, the study of the Hadith was the main foundation of the growth and development of Islamic history.¹

The writing of Islamic history started with the study of the Hadith. The life and activity of the Prophet were an ideology to be followed by all Muslims. So they were very much interested in knowing the life and activity of the Prophet. Their sincere efforts resulted in the collection of the lives and activities not only of the Prophet and his companions but also a large number of important Muslims who were connected with the transmission of the Hadith. Thus they gave to the world the richest store of bio-graphical materials which formed the basis of Muslims historiography. They preserved the records of the lives and characters of thousands of reporters and thus they laid down the foundation of history in Islam.

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP-70-71

Hadith is also a very important source of early history of Islam. It has recorded all activities and teachings of the Prophet and his wars and peace, his policies, his method of war and his principles of government.

The study of Hadith has influenced the method of history writing. The 'Muhaddithin' (محدثين) devised various methods to ensure accuracy their works and these methods were followed by the historians. The labour sincerity and devotion exhibited by the Muhaddithin in the study and collection of Hadith have no parallel in the entire history of human efforts to advance the cause of learning. The practice of dating the events by the year, month and even the date which was adopted by the Muhaddithin in the collection and compilation of the Hadith, was followed by the historian. The historians also knew from the Muhaddithin the methods of severe tests of criticism and scrutiny and applied them to the historical events.¹

Hadith, on one hand, formed the basis of Muslim historiography and in the other hand, supplied sufficient materials and various methods for role in the growth and development of Islamic History.

Important Categories of Hadith:

The Hadith (Tradition) has been categorized into three categories viz: sahih (صحيح) means correct, hasan (حسن) means good and dhaif (ضعيف) means weak.

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, PP-71-72

The sahih or correct Hadith which are free from mistakes and in which there is no weak authenticity and are accepted by general view and opinions.

The traditions which are not entirely free from mistakes and there is need (authority is not complete nor the transmitters are taken in confidence by general opinions are called the Hasan (good) Hadith.

The doubtful traditions having no pious transmitters are called the Dhaif (weak) Hadith.¹

The Siha Sittah (صحيح ستة):

There are only six volumes containing sahih or correct traditions which are arranged subject matter wise, are called 'Musannaf' (مسنف) or arranged traditions. These Musannaf traditions are 1. Bukhari Sharif (بخاري شريف) 2. Muslim Sharif (مسلم شريف) 3. Abu Daud Sharif (أبو داود شريف) 4. Tirmidi Sharif (ترمذي شريف) 5. Nesai Sharif (نسائي شريف) 6. Ibn Majah Sharif (ابن ماجه شريف).

These six volumes of sahih (correct traditions) are altogether called the Siha Sittah (صحيح ستة).²

¹ . Sankhipta Islamic Biswakosh, vol. II Bangladesh 1982, P- 533

² . Hanifi M.A. – A Survey of the Muslim Institutions and Cultures, Delhi, 1992. P- 25

A Glance on Siha Sittah and its Authors:

1. **Bukhari Sharif:** Bukhari Sharif by Imam Bukhari (d. 870 A.D.) is regarded as the next to the holy Quran. Imam Bukhari was a native of Bukhara. He began the study of Hadith when he was only eleven years of his age and by the time that he was sixteen had acquired a high reputation for his knowledge thereof. He travelled various countries like Damascus, Egypt, Basrah and other Muslim countries with a view of together as much learning as possible and to make the greatest possible collection of reports of Saying and traditions of the Prophet. He wrote several books on Hadith but the most notable achievement is the Jami al-Sahih. This work, which remains authentic to this days, was the first book by a Muslim scholar in which only those Saying of the Prophet. The genuineness and accuracy of which had been established beyond the slightest doubt, were recorded. He selected only 9,000 Hadith out of 60,000 are recorded them in his sahih volume.

According to Nicholson, Imam Bukhari limited 7,000 traditions which he picked up out of 60,000 traditions but the record contained in the Shankhipta Islami Biswakosh suggest that the selected 7,275 traditions out of 60,000 which he recorded in his collection.¹

2. **Muslim Sharif:** Muslim Sharif by Imam Muslim (d. 875 A.D.) obtained the second place in the genuineness of collecting the traditions of the Prophet. Abul Hasan Muslim was born at Nishapur and

¹ . Hanifi M.A. – A Survey of the Muslim Institutions and Cultures, Delhi, 1992. P- 25

spent early time by learning traditions from the age of eighteen and travelled to Syria, Iraq, Hijaz and Egypt in pursuit of the knowledge of collecting the Sayings of the Prophet. He was contemporary of Imam Bukhari. He selected only 9,200 traditions out of 3,00,000 that he had collected from the view of classification, arrangement of the subject matter of the authenticity of Isnad. The sahih of Muslim is peerless. The sahih of al-Bukhari and that of Muslim are known as two reliable books on the tradition. He died at the age of 57 in 875 A.D.¹

3. Abu Daud Sharif: The collection of Abu Daud has been able to follow Imam Muslim in the correctness and genuinity of collecting the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Daud Sulaiman was born at Sijistan in 818 A.D. He travelled almost all centres of learning Hadith and collected the traditions. Where happened to find, he wrote several books on Hadith and Muslim Law. But his most valuable work is the Sunan which contains 4800 traditions selected out of 5,00,000 traditions. According to the Sankhipta biswakosh he is said to have died in 888 A.D.

4. Tirmidhi Sharif: Abu Isa Muhammad al- Tirmidhi is another authority of collecting and writing Jamius Sahih which is one of the six canonical collections of Hadith. Tirmidhi was born at Tirmidh in Transoxiana in 881 A.D. He was a great traditionist and in his search for traditions of the Prophet travelled through Khurasan, Iraq, Hijaz and collected 5,00,000 traditions out of which he selected only 1,600 for his Sunan.

¹ . Dr. Ali C.M. – A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-73

5. Nesai Sharif: Abu Abdur Rahman ibn Usaib ibn Ali ibn Bahar ibn Sinan better known as Nesai was one of the compilers of Sihah Sittah. He is reported to have travelled various countries for the collection of traditions and at last came to Damascus where he breathed his last. The Sunan of Nesai contains 4482 traditions arranged under 51 chapters containing 1744 sub chapters.¹

6. Ibn Majah Sharif: abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Tazid al Majah was born in Iran in 824 A.D. He visited Iraq, Basra, Kufa, Egypt, Ray and Hijaz in quest of traditions and collected a large number of its which he recorded in his Sunan is commonly known as Ibn Majah Sharif. Eminent scholars of Hadith such as ibn al- Jauzi and Hafiz ibn Majah also conveyed its Excellency.

Besides these six volumes of correct traditions, the Mu'ta of Imam Malik bin Anas (d. 795 A.D.) is also occupied an important place in the Muslim Law which is still in existence intact. He was cautious enough in compiling the tradition; Aliq al- Zubaidi has stated that Imam Malik includes 10,000 traditions in al- Mu'ta. He used to revise his collection every year and dropped a number of traditions until it came to present position.² Some assumed that the Mu'ta of Imam Malik to be included in the six canonical books contradicting the sunan of Ibn Majah which contains some weak traditions.

In third Hijri Era, some more compilations of the Hadith are in vogue amongst the Muslims such as the Sunan Darami (d. 868 A.D.)

¹ . Sankhipta Islamic Biswakosh, vol. II Bangladesh 1982, PP- 537-538

² . Iqbal Afzal - The Culture of Islam, Delhi.1985, P- 203

whose compilation has not been able to obtain popularity like Siha Sittah and Mu'ta of Imam Malik. We have been informed of another compilation of Hadith of Baghawi (d. 1116 A.D.) which is generally known as Masabih al- Sunnah, has arranged the traditions excluding the isnad of the same. Wali al- Din al- Tibriz has modified this compilation of Baghawi and selected 4,434 traditions out of various compilations. He arranged them on the authenticity of the Hadith and re- named it as Miskatul Masabih. Wali al- Din Tibrizi made an edition of 1,511 traditions of Masabih as Sunan and raised the total from 4,434 to 5,945 traditions.¹ In connection of the later compilations of the Hadith we may mention Jamiul Ja'mi and al- al-Sagir of al- Sayyati (d. 1505 A.D.).

The scholars of Hadith perceived the necessity of analyzing or explaining the traditions for better understanding to the general readers. In this connection the volumes on the commentaries of Ibn Hajar al- Askalin (d. 1448 A.D.) and al- Kastallani (d. 1517 A.D.) on the Sahih al Muslim are an addition to the richness of the Hadith Literature in the Present days.²

¹ . Tibriz - Miskatul Masabih trans. A.H.S. vol. I, P- xxi

² . Dr. Ali C.M. -A Study of Literary History of the Arabs, Guahati , 1996, P-5

Arabic in Modern Age:

The Modern Arabic Literature is developed in full glare of western literary influences. A new chapter is opened when Napoleon Bonaparte conquered Egypt In 1798. As a result, a great revolution was started in Egyptian culture and literature because the Egyptian scholars started writing in their own influenced by France literature, which is called the Arabic Renaissance (النهضة العربية).

In the renaissance of Arabic, translation played as vital role as the printing press. They started translation from France. In this regard we can cite the name of Rifa'at al- Tahtawi (Egypt), Muhammad Uthman al-Jalal (Egypt), Najib Tarrad (Lebanon) etc. Rifa'at al- Tahtawi translated 'Telemaque' of Fenelon. He gave an Arabic version to the title referred to as coupling and called his book 'Mawaqai'i al-aflak fi waqai' Telemek (مواقع الأفلاق في وقع تلمك). Muhammad Yusuf Najm lists seventy France novels and short stories as example of translated works published in Egypt from 1870 to 1914.¹

The Arab renaissance was an outcome of the contribution of the men of letters of the Levant and Egypt and the leaders of important reform movements. Here we may mention the pioneers of the renaissance movement of Arabic literature like Nikula Yusuf al- Turk (1763-1828), Butrus Ibrahim Karama (1774-1861), Amin al- Jundi (1814-1878), Ahmad Faris al- Shidyaq (1805-1887), Butrus al- Bustani (1819-1883), Sulaiman al-Bustani (1856-1925), Ibrahim al-Yazigi (1847-1906),

¹ . Mahdi, Ismat, - Modern Arabic Literature, P-12

Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838-1898), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and other prominent figures who contributed lot for the development of Arabic literature and in other fields.

Poetry: In modern period the poetry has been developed in full swing as the poets of Neo-Classicism and Pre-Romanticism were contributed as their best for its development. The distinguishing feature of Neo-Classicism is mainly the transformation of the content in Arabic poetry. The themes dealt with contemporary issues, such as the conflict of the Arabs with the imperialist power, their struggle to ameliorate the lot of the poor and a plea for social uplift and education.

The Neo-Classicism or the conservative (محافظين) poets were concentrated on the old Arabic models of poetry. Among the Neo-Classicalists we may mention here the names who contributed for the Arabic poetry were Mahmud Sami al- Barudi (1838-1901), Ismail Sabri (1853-1923) and Ayesha Taymura (1840-1906) of Egypt, Ibrahim al-Yazigi (1847-1906), Khalil al-Khuri (1836-1907) and Sulaiman al-Bustani (1856-1925) of Levant.

Arabic poetry literature, till the end of World War-I, was marked in a lesser degree by the influence of pre-romanticism. This school emerged as a consequence of the impact of European literature. Setting of high emotional values, change of contents and change of monorhymes are the main features of pre-romantic poetry. In this field we may quote the names like Abdur Rahman Shukri (1886-1958), Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-

Mazini (1889-1949) and Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad (1889- 1964) who started Dewan Movement in Egypt.

During the world war period Arabic poetry had a golden age as it is developed by the poetical works of the great Ahmad Showqi (1868-1932), Hafiz Ibrahim (1870-1932), Maruf al- Rusafi (1876-1945), Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi (1863-1936), Khalil Mutran (1872-1948) etc.

The Mahjar (emigrant) Literature also played an important role in the development of modern Arabic poetry. This literary movement was started in North and South America as some of the Arab scholars went there for their financial assistance. Among them we may mention here the name of Amin Rihani (1876-1940), Mikhail Nu'aima (b. 1889), and Iliya Abu Madi (1889-1957) who contributed as their best for Arabic literature.

Lastly we can mention the name of Umar Abu, Risha (b.1910), Nizar Qabbani (b.1923), Badr Shakir al- Sayyab (1926-1964), Abdul Wahab al-Bayati (b.1926), Nazik al-Malaika (b.1923), Salah Abd al-Sabur (b.1931) etc. whose have a remarkable contribution in the development of modern Arabic literature.

Prose: The growth of modern Arabic prose is comparable to that of poetry but prose is more flourished than of poetry. The modern prose is divided into Essay, Novel, Short Story, Children Literature and Drama.

The Essay: The modern Arabic essay is developed in the form of classical 'risala'; although 'risala' was long and appeared in the formation of a small book.

Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) was one of the early essayists in modern Arabic age. His essays are collected in three volume of 'Al-Nazarat' (views) which published through the Egyptian Magazine 'al- Mu'ayyid'. He concentrated on the social uplift, differences between poor and rich, charity and righteousness and the evil of drinking. In his verse:

وليس حياة المرء إلا أمانيا إذا هي ضاعت فاحياة على الاثر

(The life of man is made of hopes alone;

When they are lost, then life itself is gone.)¹

In the field of the essay, the name like Fathi Zaghlul, Jurji Zaydan, Yacub Saruf and Farah Antun are very well known who has outstanding contribution.

The Novel: The Modern Arabic Novel is influenced by the European literature. Muhammad Muwailihi (1858-1930) wrote his valuable work 'Hadith Isa ibn Hisham' in classical maqama style. The early novel writers were not prepared to follow western models in their entirety. Among the prominent novelists is Jurji Zaydan who wrote twenty two novels which cover the historical span from pre-Islamic to modern times.

Muhammad Hussain Hykal is considered as the original novelist in Egypt. 'Zaynab' is one of his finest novels published in 1911. In this field

¹ . Mahdi, Ismat, - Modern Arabic Literature, P-33

the name Najib Mahfuz is in top who cultivate the Egyptian society throughout his novels. His famous novels are-

1. Al- Qahira al- Jadida (القاهرة الجديدة), 1945
2. Bidaya wa Nihaya (بداية و نهاية), 1949
3. Bayn al-Qasrain (بين القصرين), 1956
4. Qasr al-Shawq (قصر الشوق), 1956
5. Awlad Haratuna (أولاد حارتنا) for this book he was awarded the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1988.

Short Story: The modern Arabic short story is also influenced by the European literature. The short story is more condensed literary genre than the novel and it reflects the feelings of the author and his outlook on life and society. Salim al-Bustani's 'ramya min ghair rami' is considered as the first short story in Arabic literature which published in 1870. Among the early short story writers Jibran Khalil Jibran (1889-1933), Mikhail Nu'aima (b.1889), Mahammad Taymur (1892-1921), Taher Lashin, Dr. Taha Hussain (1889-1973), etc.

Among all, Mahmud Taymur (1894-1973) is outstanding. He has the largest single collection of books and rare manuscripts in Egypt.¹

His famous short story collections are-

1. Al- Shaykh Jum'a wa Aqasis Ukhra (الشيخ الجمعة وأقاصيص أخرى), 1925

¹. Mahdi, Ismat, - Modern Arabic Literature, P-120

2. 'Amm Mitwali (عم متوالي), 1925
3. Shaykh Sayyid al- Abit (الشيخ سعيد العابد), 1926
4. Al- Hajj Salabi (الحج شلابي), 1927 etc.

Children literature: The children literature is a very interesting chapter in modern Arabic literature. Kamil kilani (d.1959) was the most eminent writers of children literature. He closed the gap of depression of Arab children, who were deprived of amusing and readable books in their mother tongue; he wrote in simple and correct classical Arabic language. His books are extensively illustrated maintaining child's interest. His work 'the white elephant' is very famous among his one hundred and fifty books for children.¹

The Drama: The drama is also a fruit of European literature as it is a new form in Arabic literature; although the early Arab scholars translated literary masterpieces from other languages but they left out drama.

The Lebanese writer Marun al-Naqqash (1817-1855) introduced drama in Arabic literature with 'al- Bakhil'. His brother Nukula al-Naqqash also contributed to drama literature by writing some dramas. Yaqub Sanu (1839-1912) was the first man who staged a play in egypt in Ismail's palace.²

¹. Mahdi, Ismat, - Modern Arabic Literature, P-39

². Op.Cit, P-41

Khalil Mutran of Ba'lbek is also very famous for his translation work. He translated Shakespeare's dramas into Arabic like- Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, Merchant of Venice etc.

Among all other dramatists Tawfiq al-Hakim is very popular as he depicted his life for the development of drama. From his childhood he was against the women as his attitude towards women became increasingly hostile and he considered them dispensable inconveniences: as result he was inclined to drama and he wrote many dramas mainly-

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Al-daif al-thaqil | (الضيف الثقيل) |
| 2. Al-mar'a al-jadida | (المرأة الجديدة) |
| 3. Al-khuruJ min al-janna | (الخروج من الجنة) |
| 4. Sirr al-muntahirah | (سر المنتحرة) |
| 5. Ahl al-kahaf | (أهل الكهف) |
| 6. ShaharZad | (شهرزاد) |
| 7. Pygmalion | (بيجملون) |
| 8. Sulaiman al-Hakim | (سليمان الحكيم) etc. |